PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 217

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
18 January—29 January 1993

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ISBN 0 10 681217 3

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 217

ELEVENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 18 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Students

1. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to reform the benefits available to students.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): Income support, housing benefit and, from next April, council tax benefit are available to particularly vulnerable students such as lone parents and those who are disabled. However, in general it is the educational maintenance system which is designed to provide support for students and we have no plans to change this.

Mr. Hain: Is the Minister aware that hundreds of students in Wales are living in abject poverty and that others are graduating with debts of more than £3,000? Their parents are being hit, too. One of my constituents lost almost £50 a week in child benefit, income support and single parent benefit. Why do the Government not restore the vacation hardship allowance, housing benefit entitlement and income support entitlement to students —or do they want all students to be yuppies?

Mr. Burt: I note the hon. Gentleman's concern. The changes in benefit did not take place in isolation, but at a time when the total support for students was increased by £100 million. There is no evidence of any deterrent effect on students. Full-time and part-time student numbers have risen throughout the past decade; since the change in benefits and student loans, they have increased by 20 per cent.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Would my hon. Friend be interested to know that at the last count at my university there were 10 applicants for every place available? The students there work very well and those eligible have taken out student loans. The system is now working smoothly. We should like the hardship fund to be a little larger, but that is all.

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend is right. The total package of support available for students has increased since 1988-89, when the changes in the benefit system took place. I meant what I said about the fact that there has been no deterrent to students going to university. That is evidence that this country provides generously for its students. Some heed should sometimes be paid to those who are paying for the system as well as to those claiming on it.

Mr. Bradley: It is clear that the Minister has no understanding of the financial hardship inflicted on students by Government policies. Has he read the survey undertaken by the north-western students unions, which showed that 61 per cent. of students were in debt, of whom 15 per cent. had debts of more than £500 and 6 per cent. had debts of more than £1,000? The survey showed that the main reason for the debts was the withdrawal of the right to housing benefit and the withdrawal of the right to claim income support during the vacation, when there are no jobs for students to take up. Will the Minister immediately review the financial support for students, especially for students from low-income families, for those with children, and for mature students, so that they do not fall into further debt and hardship inflicted on them by the Government?

Mr. Burt: It is sometimes suggested by the Opposition that all students used to claim benefit. That is just not true. Only a minority of students ever claimed benefit. Some 15 per cent. used to claim housing benefit during term time and only 2 per cent. claimed it in the vacation. Some 20 per cent. claimed income support during the summer. When the student loans were introduced, a calculation was done of the average amount of benefit that students took. At the time, the figure was about £327. The top-up loan was set at £420, so on average more money went to students than they had ever claimed in benefit. These matters are constantly kept under review. The evidence in this country compared with the evidence in many other countries in the western, developed world is that we have a generous system for our students. That should be appreciated by students. Society does not mind paying, but it is nice to hear about society for a change instead of always about those who are receiving the benefit.

Mobility Allowance

3. **Mrs. Chaplin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received mobility allowance in 1979; and how many receive it currently.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): In 1979, 95,000 people received mobility allowance. By 1992, this figure had risen to 660,000—nearly a sevenfold increase. The introduction of disability living allowance will extend help with mobility costs even further.

Mrs. Chaplin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the introduction of the lower rate of the mobility component has helped enormously those people who can work but who, because they have learning difficulties, have difficulty in getting about? Does that not further our aim of providing them with fulfilled lives in the community?

Mr. Scott: I believe that the lower rates of disability living allowance, both for mobility and care, have been an immense success. Some 170,000 awards have already been made.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The Minister has been very frank about the hardship inflicted on disabled people by the chaos in administering the mobility allowance and other disability allowances. As the author of the mobility allowance—the first of its kind in the world and the introduction of which was strongly opposed by many Conservative Members—may I press the Minister to tell us from his briefing folder in how many cases, in each of the past seven months, claims from entitled applicants were not processed before they died? In particular, does the Minister recall the very disturbing case of my late constituent Mr. Ken Vince?

Mr. Scott: I remember the right hon. Gentleman mentioning that case at the last Social Security Question Time. I cannot give the right hon. Gentleman the figure for the number of people who have been in that particularly sad situation, but the Benefits Agency has been increasing its performance steadily in dealing with claims for disability living allowance and attendance allowance. The figure of 95,000 that I mentioned in my original reply was achieved for mobility allowance after four years' phasing in. We have now reached six times that number in one year.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is not one of the advantages of the way in which the matter has been handled the fact that the disability living allowance has not had to be phased in, as was the case with the mobility allowance about which much has just been said? Nevertheless, it has been quite a load. Will my right hon. Friend assure us that all the applications now being handled will be properly backdated?

Mr. Scott: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. As a result of the work of the Benefits Agency, any claim received now or in the future should be dealt with within the targets announced by the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister not be too self-satisfied, as several of my constituents have been waiting well over a year for their cases to be processed? In some cases, I have had to wait three months for a reply from the Benefits Agency. Will the Minister examine the matter closely and provide new resources to ensure that claims for mobility allowance and attendance allowance are processed quickly, speedily, and with sympathy and compassion?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman will already have heard me express my regret at the distress caused during the introduction of the benefit. I still believe with all my heart that it was right to go ahead and introduce the benefit without the phasing that the Labour Government found necessary. We are now at the point where any new claims will be dealt with within the targets that the Benefits Agency has been set. I shall be meeting the chief executive of the Benefits Agency tomorrow to discuss those matters further.

Water Charges

4. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total amount paid out by his Department's regional offices direct to water companies on behalf of claimants for the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: In the year ending November 1992, over £27 million was paid to water companies by the Benefits Agency on behalf of claimants. This represents a great deal of welcome protection for many people who might otherwise have faced the risk of disconnection of water supplies.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful and welcome reply. Can he confirm that direct payments will be made to water companies in precisely the same way as they are paid to the electricity and gas companies? Will he further confirm that all Department of Social Security area offices are empowered to do that? Can he say whether water has equal priority with gas and electricity in the direct payments list?

Mr. Burt: I can confirm that arrangements for the deduction of direct payments for water are applicable nationwide and are similar for water as they would be for fuel. The latest figures show that there were about 160,000 deductions as at November 1992, which is about 3 per cent. of all income support claimants. The figures for my hon. Friend's constituency are about comparable. Although for historical reasons water ranks behind fuel in

terms of priority, there is no evidence to suggest that that is responsible for any refusal to make deductions. As the number of deductions shows, the system works.

Mrs. Mahon: Since the companies were privatised, the cost of water has risen astronomically. Is the Minister aware that that represents a tax on pensioners and on people with low incomes and does the image of politicians no good whatever when his hon. Friends are receiving large sums of money as consultants to the privatised industries? Is that not bordering on corruption and taxing the poor?

Mr. Burt: The hon. Lady's substantive point was about the adequacy of income support and the way in which payments are paid to water companies. Since water companies took on more responsibilities for collecting debts from lower-income people, it has been made clear by the Office of Water Services, for one, that the companies could develop better methods—frequent payment methods—to collect money from lower-income people. The fuel companies have done this rather more successfully than the water companies. We urge the water companies to look carefully at their low-income customers to try to make sure that they do not get into debt.

Pensioners' Incomes

5. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the trend in pensioners' real income since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): The trend in pensioners' income in real terms between 1979 and 1988 has been upwards.

Mr. Booth: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is to be welcomed that even the chairman of Pensioners Voice recently said that our public sector provision compares well with that provided in Europe? Does my hon. Friend welcome the fact that real income from savings has more than doubled since 1979—it actually fell by 16 per cent. between 1974 and 1979—and that Opposition Members will never ever understand that?

Miss Widdecombe: I am pleased to confirm both points. Pensioners' incomes from all sources have increased by about a third in real terms since 1979, which is a tribute to our policies for looking after pensioners. In contrast with what happened under Labour, when income from all sources rose less year by year, we have a proud record indeed in comparison with the rest of Europe. It is confirmed by independent actuaries that for those on low earnings—that is, half average earnings—we come out among the best countries in Europe.

Mr. Winnick: Why cannot complacent Ministers understand that literally millions of pensioners—single and married—in this country are living in poverty or near poverty? Even in the reply that I received from the hon. Lady herself last week, it was admitted that 61 per cent. of single pensioners have an income of less than £5,000 a year. How many Ministers would like to try to live on the incomes that many pensioners in our constituencies are forced to live on? How would they like to live in such poverty?

Miss Widdecombe: It is precisely because we are concerned for those who depend entirely or almost entirely on the state pension that, for the past three years, we have directed immense extra resources towards raising pensioner premium and income support so that we can bring many more pensioners into the safety net. When they come into that safety net on income support, with up to 100 per cent. of rent, maximum local taxation rebate and access to cold weather payments, the value of the state pension can sometimes double just through that measure alone.

Benefit Expenditure

6. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure on social security benefits in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992, at constant prices.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): At 1992-93 prices, expenditure for the years in question was £47·1 billion, £57·7 billion, £68·4 billion and £71·6 billion respectively. Benefit expenditure between 1979 and 1992 increased by 52 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the figures show the Government's commitment to improving the position of the less well-off members of society? Does he also accept, however, that the lot of the less well off provides no grounds for complacency?

Mr. Lilley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That is why in this year's public expenditure round I announced not just that we had kept our pledges to uprate all benefits, particularly those for the elderly and for families, and that we had protected those most affected by the recession from its effects, but that we could channel an extra £1 billion of resources to those in the greatest need. I am sure that my hon. Friend, like all Conservative Members, welcomes that.

Mr. Frank Field: As the Government's own figures show that under the Government's stewardship the number of people on half average earnings has risen from 5 million to a staggering 12 million, will the Secretary of State tell the House whether his Department has any working parties—formal or informal—to look at ways of spending the £80 billion budget more effectively?

Mr. Lilley: That is the substance of all that we do. Our priority is to ensure that the money spent on social security is well focused on those in need with a genuine entitlement. I know that the hon. Gentleman has contributed to that process. We seek to achieve those ends, and always will. We are waiting to discover the Opposition's intention. Apparently, they have had to commission a search for policies and principles on the issue.

Mr. Clappison: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in considering the value of benefits one must also take account of the rate of inflation, as benefit recipients under the last Labour Government knew only too well when in one year the level of benefits was eroded by 25 per cent. as a result of inflation?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Anyone who is a friend of inflation is an enemy of the poor. The Labour party always has been, still is and always will be a friend of inflation.

Mr. Kirkwood: Notwithstanding the global increases in the social security budget in recent years, does the

Secretary of State share my concern that the take-up of those benefits cannot be objectively analysed as there was a different system before 1988? Is it not a matter of concern that the statistical review recently published by the Department could not reach conclusions on take-up, but concluded—among other things—that 1·3 million people who were entitled to social security income support payments did not receive them?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member is right: take-up is important. If we are to get the policy on take-up right, it is important to be able to measure it. That is why I announced some time ago the introduction of a new survey to provide us with better and targeted information on household income—in place of the family expenditure survey used in the past, which was geared to establishing expenditure and not income. We shall be in a better position in future to measure income. In the meantime, we can take comfort from the fact that the measures suggested that more than 90 per cent. of benefit money is claimed by those entitled to it. By and large, those who do not take up their benefits tend to be those with the lowest entitlement in cash terms.

Mr. Dewar: The Secretary of State has been talking about the figures with some complacency, but has not the total expenditure risen because of the frightening increase in the number of people forced to claim benefit? What possible satisfaction can be taken from the fact that 4·3 million people were dependent on supplementary benefit inn 1979 but that by 1991 7·7 million were relying on income support? Shamefully, the latest figure included 2·4 million children. Is that not the bitter harvest of the Government's economic failure? Would not the best way to take the strain off the DSS benefit budget and help those on income support be to tackle the problems of unemployment with considerably more energy and imagination than the Government have shown?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member implicitly uses as a measure of poverty the amount of help given to those in need. Such an attitude was recently debunked by the Select Committee, which showed that if we take the number receiving benefit, as the levels of benefits have risen, the number of those on that level of income and below has increased. But the number on incomes below the supplementary benefit that the last Labour Government thought was sufficient has fallen. We must recognise that, through the social security system, the people of this country make a considerable contribution to the needy, the elderly and the sick. The average contribution from every working person every working day through the social security system is £10—a considerable sum, which shows the generosity of the British people as channelled by this Government.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the more effective ways of helping poorer families even more would be taxing child benefit and using part of the proceeds to increase family credit?

Mr. Lilley: Logically, that is one of the measures which would achieve that end. As my hon. Friend will know, it has been looked at by a number of Ministers. It is essentially a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and for the Financial Secretary—the latter being a post which I held. It would be much more difficult to do in a world of independent taxation than it might have been in the past when man and wife were not independently taxed.

State Pension

7. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations during the last six months he has received from pensioners' organisations about the level of the basic state pension; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: My ministerial colleagues and I receive many representations from pensioners' organisations. During the past six months my colleagues and I have met seven delegations to discuss issues of general concern to pensioners, many of which included the level of basic state pension.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that those delegations and the very large number of representations that she and her colleagues have received are a sign of the difficulties that people on basic state pensions with no other income face in coping with fixed costs and standing charges—fuel costs, water costs, television licences and so on? Can the Government not find more resources to give greater priority to those with no income besides the basic state pension, especially single pensioners, who are suffering so much?

Miss Widdecombe: If a pensioner has nothing besides the basic state pension and only minimal savings, that pensioner is entitled to income support, with all the fringe benefits that I enumerated earlier. What I do hear when pensioners' organisations come to see me is that they value the fact that their savings are now safe and not being wiped out by the sort of inflation that occurred in the 1970s under Labour. They tell me that they are proud of the fact that we maintain one of the best safety nets in Europe and that we give extra help, particularly to the less well-off pensioners. Although there are obviously still improvements that they want, I never hear from them any suggestion that they would like to return to the dark days of the 1970s and the Labour Government.

Mrs. Roe: Does my hon. Friend agree that since 1989 £700 million in extra help has been made available to the poorer pensioners, and that that is impressive evidence that the Government are fully committed to providing assistance to the most needy pensioners? Will she confirm that the only threat of means-testing the basic pension has come from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)?

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, indeed. Not only has that been the only source from which the threat has come, but it is combined with a threat to private occupational pensions and personal pensions. Those threats, taken in conjunction, would mean a severe diminution of pensioners' overall incomes.

On the subject of pensioners' incomes, perhaps one of the most telling points that my hon. Friend might like to consider is the considerable rise in the percentage of pensioner households owning large durable goods. Since 1979, the number owning a telephone has increased by 37 per cent., the number with central heating has risen by 24 per cent., and so on. That is a clear sign that pensioner households are sharing in the prosperity of the nation—as

is the fact that fewer pensioners are in the bottom decile of income distribution and that half of all pensioners are now in the top half of income distribution.

Mrs. Golding: As the Minister well knows, the Labour party has no plans for means testing. That is a scare being put out by the Government, and we frequently deny it. Is the Minister aware that Pensioners Voice is still concerned that the basic pension is now below subsistence level as defined by the level of income support? That causes great distress to those who have retired on small occupational pensions which make them just ineligible for the additional benefit of income support. What plans, if any, do the Government have to do anything about this poverty trap faced by people on small occupational pensions?

Miss Widdecombe: In terms of the first part of the hon. Lady's remarks, she should ask her right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition to inform the Commission on Social Justice that it should no longer consider the future of universal benefits. When we hear that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has issued that guidance, perhaps we will believe the hon. Lady. She asked about people who are managing on small occupational pensions. Not only do nearly 70 per cent. of those retiring have occupational pensions, but the average value is now nearly on a par with the state pension. We shall continue to encourage the occupational pension sector so that the value of those pensions continues to grow and forms a major part of retirement income.

Fraud

9. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action his Department is taking to reduce fraud.

Mr. Lilley: I am consulting local authority associations about the new initiative to combat housing benefit and council tax benefit fraud. The Benefits Agency is deploying more specially trained investigators and making greater use of new technology to weed out false claims. I am allocating an additional £10 million a year of resources to fight fraud.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the vast majority of state benefit recipients are not welfare scroungers and are not seeking fraudulently to abuse the system? Does he also agree that every £1 lost means that there is less money for those in genuine need? Does he accept that the Government have a moral commitment to track down all fraud as efficiently as possible to ensure that the maximum amount goes to those that the system is designed to help—the people who are most in need?

Mr. Lilley: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. The vast majority of social security claimants are as honest as the day is long. There is no similarity at all between the ordinary, honest, genuine claimant and the fraudster. It is the Labour party which identifies the two when it criticises any attack on fraud as an attack on the poor. We believe that an attack on fraud is right because every £1 wasted on fraud means that £1 less is available to those who are in real need.

Mr. Rooney: Is the Secretary of State aware that the report of non-receipt of a Giro is now considered fraudulent and that benefit claimants have to wait between seven and 11 weeks for replacement? Consequently, they approach the DSS for a crisis loan and single people are offered £2 a day. What does he think about that?

Mr. Lilley: It is not automatically assumed that anyone in that position is a fraudster, but we have to tackle the problem of false claims. About £230 million worth of orders of the type about which the hon. Gentleman speaks are reported missing every year and about £85 million worth of them are subsequently claimed. By working closely with the Post Office, we are trying to improve our work to prevent the illegal encashment of such orders. That must be for the benefit, and in the interests, of most people. We also want to stop theft, which is often wholesale when the encashment is organised not by ordinary claimants but by criminal gangs. We want to stop that and we have had some success in doing so.

Long-term Sick and Disabled People

11. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the most recent figure for the increase in spending on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people since 1979.

Mr. Scott: Spending on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people for 1992-93 is £13·7 billion—an increase of £8·7 billion or 173 per cent. in real terms over spending in 1978-79.

Mr. Evans: I am delighted with those figures, as will be those who receive the benefits. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that extra resources have been made available for the telephone service for those who are claiming disability living allowance and wish to telephone, and for the hotline telephone service made available to Members of Parliament? Will he further confirm that those who have awards payments made to them late will have them fully backdated?

Mr. Scott: I can confirm the last point. Members of Parliament on both sides of the House have complimented those who have been running the hotline for Members of Parliament on the efforts that they have put into speedily resolving some of the difficult cases with which they have been presented. The benefits inquiry line has dealt with 720,000 calls, 85 per cent. of which are getting through the first time that people call. Minicom and tape facilities are also available to speed up the preparation of application forms and the dealing with claims.

Mr. Skinner: Is not the truth of the matter that hundreds and thousands of people have claimed disability benefit in almost every constituency in Britain but have not been able to get their benefits because the computer is stuck? Is it not remarkable that the computer that the Inland Revenue uses always works, so it can get its money quickly? However, with the computer that pays out benefits, people have been waiting for two years for their benefits to be paid out. Is it not a scandal that the Government have a system that operates on behalf of those whom it likes and a hotline that works for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and all those others who get payment for libel cases when nobody else can get one?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman performs to form. I do not know whether he was here earlier when I reminded the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr.

Morris) that his party had to phase in mobility allowance while we have been able to do it at a stroke. Some 710,000 claims for disability living allowance have been dealt with, which is an improvement of 71 per cent. over last year's performance of attendance allowance and mobility allowance. Immense efforts have been made by the staff of the Benefits Agency and Ministers to ensure that people get the benefits to which they are entitled under the Government.

Social Fund

12. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to change the balance between grants and loans in the operation of the social fund.

Mr. Scott: The social fund discretionary budget for 1993-94 will be around £340 million, an increase of over 12 per cent. over April 1992. No final decision has yet been made on the split between grants and loans.

I am also pleased to announce, in addition to the increase of £8 million announced by my right hon. Friend on 2 November, that I have today authorised the allocation of a further £7 million to the discretionary social fund loans budget for this year. Details of individual district allocations will be placed in the Library shortly.

Ms. Quin: Is the Minister able to give us the proportion of grant applications that is successful? Will he accept that, at a time of rocketing unemployment and when people are coming back into the community under community care schemes, the pressure on grants is such that only the most needy of cases can be met? Furthermore, at a time of increasing personal indebtedness, does it not make much more sense to give priority to grants rather than loans?

Mr. Scott: We have not neglected the grants aspect, because we increased allocations for grants by 30 per cent. between April 1991 and April 1992. We shall be looking carefully at grants when we come to decide the split of the discretionary budget for the coming year. The success of the loans system has meant that many more people have been helped as a result of the recycling of loan money and that is the primary reason for the new allocation that I announced today.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that not only is there a benefit from recycling money and thereby helping many more people, but that we were confronted with rackets and frauds set up by people who opened what they called antique shops but which were really house clearing shops? Those people gave out shopping lists of 105 or more items that one could get from social security. Someone had to have the common sense to stop those rackets, and we have done so by ensuring that people make proper applications, and prove their need. They are then given help and they slowly repay the loans so that the money can help someone else. The taxpayers are not a soft touch.

Mr. Scott: I understand my hon. Friend's strength of feeling on the matter. I do not agree with every word that he uttered, but I think that we all know that the old single payments scheme was entirely out of any sort of financial control and that it was subject to widespread abuse in various parts of the country. It was right to bring the scheme under proper budgetary control, which the social fund has achieved. The magic of the recycling of loans has enabled many more people to be helped than we were able to help before.

Disability Living Allowance

13. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding delays in dealing with disability living allowance cases.

Mr. Scott: I have received many representations about delays in dealing with disability living allowance claims. I have already expressed my personal regret that disabled people have not received the standard of service that they are entitled to expect. The Benefits Agency took urgent action to deal with the problem and it has now made around 300,000 new awards.

Mr. Pike: I am sure that everyone will be glad that the Minister has expressed his personal regret that, as a result of the changeover, many people had to wait an unacceptable time to have their allowances dealt with. It should never have been necessary to have a hotline to enable Members to expedite cases.

Is the Minister able to assure us that when we have the standard format this year we shall not have the delays that were so common in the payment of attendance and mobility allowances? Will he confirm that the aim is to handle these matters much more quickly?

Mr. Scott: I said in answer to an earlier question that any new claims will be dealt with within the targets that the Benefits Agency has set. We anticipate that new targets will shortly be set for the coming year. We are determined to keep to those targets and ensure—as I said in response to an earlier question—that claimants get the benefits to which they are entitled on time.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Racial Violence

30. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent representations he has received on prosecutions relating to racial violence.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The most recent representations that I have received were questions asked by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Walker). I refer the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) to the answers given by the Solicitor-General on 7 December 1992 at columns 587-88.

Mr. Winnick: Is there not some conflict at least between existing legislation on incitement to race hatred and the way in which various organisations—fascist in the main—do their utmost in certain parts of the country to promote race hatred? Is the Attorney-General taking all that on board?

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service and the police are certainly astute respectively to investigate and, where the evidence is available, to prosecute incitement to racial hatred. I read carefully the speech that the hon. Gentleman made when introducing his ten-minute Bill. Racial motive is expressly a factor to be considered by the prosecution under the "Code for Crown Prosecutors". Is is also a factor which judges can

and will take into account when sentencing. To make it an added and separate ingredient for an offence would be likely to make it more difficult to obtain convictions and could, therefore, hamper its proper consideration when it came to sentencing.

Police Officers (Criminal Misconduct)

31. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Attorney-General how many cases involving allegations of criminal misconduct against police officers were considered by his Department in each of the last three years; and how many of these resulted in prosecutions being brought.

The Attorney-General: The number of such cases referred to Crown prosecution service headquarters in the three years to 1992 were respectively 4,011, 4,012 and 3,696. Proceedings were instituted in 1990 in 187 cases, in 1991 in 186, and to date 108 in respect of 1992.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Attorney-General accept that the discrepancy between the number of referrals and the number of prosecutions may possibly give cause for concern? Will he comment on the impact of the procedure whereby an 80 per cent. prospect of success is normally required by the CPS in such instances, whereas a lower margin of about 50 per cent. would be required in cases involving allegations against other members of the public?

The Attorney-General: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's last evaluation is correct. There are two important points to bear in mind. First, under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the police are required to report all cases involving police officers, other than minor motoring offences. Consequently, a large number of such cases are reported to the Crown prosecution service headquarters, many of which would never be reported if they involved ordinary citizens. Therefore, the weeding out is done from a much wider band.

Secondly, it is important to remember that the same standard of proof applies to all prosecutions. A factor might arise that would cast sufficient doubt on the reliability of evidence to render a conviction unsafe, without necessarily providing sufficient reliable evidence to justify the prosecution and conviction of someone else.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that concern about the rises in the number and the type of offences committed by people other than police officers are the matters which especially concern members of the public? In their minds, it is quite inappropriate that Labour Members should concentrate almost exclusively on allegations about police officers.

The Attorney-General: The point is that whoever is involved, the prosecution process must be—and it is—carried out without fear or favour, affection or ill-will. The wider questions to which my hon. Friend rightly referred are being carefully considered by the royal commission.

Mr. John Morris: Will the Attorney-General underline the assurance that I think he has given to the House, which is that the same standards prevail in deciding whether to prosecute a police officer, and that the chances of conviction are considered in exactly the same way as for any other citizen?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to confirm that there is no difference in the standard applied, whether it be to a police officer or to any other member of the public.

Crown Prosecution Service

32. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the staffing of the Crown prosecution service.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): In the last year, recruitment in the Crown prosecution service has resulted in an extra 202 lawyers in post, bringing the total complement to 2,141. The number of administrative staff in post is 4,225.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that, welcome though those increases are, there are still cases that take 18 months or two years for the court finally to determine the guilt or innocence of an accused person? Such delay is the cause of great financial, physical and psychological hardship. Will my hon. and learned Friend try to reduce the delays to a minimum?

The Solicitor-General: The problem is being tackled on two fronts—first, by increased staff and, secondly, by increased financial resources. Over the past three years, the number of lawyers in post in the Crown prosecution service has risen by 694. In the year 1991-92, expenditure was £226 million, up 13·8 per cent. on the previous year. In the year 1992-93, it is estimated that expenditure will be £263 million, an increase on the previous year of 16·4 per cent. If we add together those two increases over two years, that makes an increase of more than 30 per cent.

In addition, the national operation practice setting out improved standards of service, which the CPS provides to others in the criminal justice system, will be in operation by the summer of this year. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that last week Judge Denison, at the Central Criminal Court, observed that the backlog of cases had sunk from 1,260 to 400.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Solicitor-General direct the attention of the Crown prosecution service to a recent television programme on HTV Wales that alleged that the firm of Ring and Brymer has been involved in fraud in my constituency? As the parent company of that firm contributed £86,000 to the Conservative party this year, is not it a serious matter that the Conservative party might be living on the proceeds of social security fraud and that some members of the Government might have their legal aid financed by the proceeds of fraud?

The Solicitor-General: If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence of a criminal offence, he is duty bound as a citizen to put it before the police. The police will then investigate and the Crown prosecution service will decide whether to bring proceedings. It will make that decision in just the same way as it does in every other case, following the rules laid down in the "Code for Crown Prosecutors".

Prosecution Policy

33. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on prosecution policy.

The Solicitor-General: The principles governing the prosecution policy of the Crown prosecution service are

set out in the "Code for Crown Prosecutors", which is issued under section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. A copy of the code is in the Library.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What is the policy on prosecuting for phone tapping, particularly in the light of Camillagate, where it seems likely that a fixed telephone in a private house was tapped by an individual phone tapper? Does not that appear to constitute an offence? Why has not the DPP asked the police to investigate, to see whether it is possible to establish who was that person?

Mr. Cryer: They know that it was MI5 or GCHQ.

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman will be familiar with the observations of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary over the weekend. He said that there is absolutely no evidence that the security services were involved. To answer the hon. Gentleman's question directly, if there is prima facie evidence that a criminal offence has been committed, it will be dealt with in exactly the same way as all other cases; that is, if there is evidence of an offence that affords a reasonable prospect of conviction and if it is in the public interest to institute proceedings.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Yugoslavia

40. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest report he has received on the arrangements for delivering relief to former Yugoslavia.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The area of greatest need is Bosnia and we are concentrating our effort there. We estimate that about two thirds of the needy there are getting the essential supplies that they need, but, in Sarajevo and other besieged enclaves in eastern Bosnia, increased fighting and the winter have greatly increased the difficulties faced by all those delivering relief supplies. Since they were first deployed, British troops have, up to 12 January, escorted about 150 relief convoys, which have carried into Bosnia a total of about 12,000 tonnes of relief supplies. British civilian lorries delivered 3,342 tonnes of supplies into Sarajevo during December alone—just over half of the supplies reaching that city.

Mr. Bowis: Of course we congratulate British aid workers and service men on their achievements in Bosnia, but does my right hon. Friend agree that they went in because of Serbian aggression, yet the young British soldier who was killed the other day died not from Serbian bullets but from bullets fired between Muslim and Croatian forces? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that British forces do not become part of a four-way civil war and, to that end, that United Nations figures, which are released locally on a daily basis, on the locations from which guns are firing at Sarajevo and at British aid workers and service men are published, so that the British public can be aware of them?

Mr. Hurd: It is often extremely difficult, particularly in Sarajevo, to establish who is firing and for what reason. However, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that where such information is reasonably reliable, it should be made available so that the public can understand the sheer complexity of the situation and the reason why we do not intend to allow British troops to become involved in civil fighting. Of course one can imagine circumstances in which the risks are so great that we will have to pull them out—but in that case, many more people would die.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Secretary of State aware that we in Cheshire are very proud of our regiment's involvement in helping those most in need? However, that does not mean that it is understood why a regiment that is being badly treated in the reorganisation should be at the sharp end. There is also the question whether there is the same understanding by the Foreign Office of the need to protect British soldiers if the situation becomes even more dangerous. It would be wrong to allow British citizens to be caught in a web that is not of their own making, and which they cannot affect, without the right to defend themselves, just because the British Government are not prepared to accept that the situation has now gone beyond their control.

Mr. Hurd: Of course British citizens have the right to defend themselves: that is essential. I do not think that any hon. Member disagrees with that, doubts the value of the work that the Cheshires are doing or questions the possibility of circumstances in which it might be too risky to ask them to continue that work. Meanwhile, as the hon. Lady has said, they are doing an excellent job. I hope that the details—the facts and figures—of that job, and the job done by the Overseas Development Administration's British civil workers, will become more widely known.

Lady Olga Maitland: Are medical supplies now being included in the aid of convoys? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is no repetition of the occasion on which convoys arrived at Srebrenica without a single aspirin? I asked the same question before Christmas, but received an unsatisfactory reply; perhaps my right hon. Friend now has a clearer picture of what is going on.

Mr. Hurd: As I understand it, medicines have always formed a major part of the supplies, especially British medicines. We have supplied a high proportion of the medicines that have gone into Bosnia in recent months. I shall look into the point that my hon. Friend has raised about a specific convoy, and let her know the details.

Mr. Meacher: Will the Foreign Secretary acknowledge that aid supplies to Yugoslavia will constitute a mere stop-gap cosmetic until the consequences of the war are confronted? Will the Government insist that sanctions are maintained until the areas stolen by ethnic cleansing are demilitarised, and until at least a majority of the 2·5 million refugees are permitted to return home in safety?

What action—along the lines of the action taken by the French—does the Foreign Secretary propose to stop the systematic rape of thousands of Muslim women in Bosnian prison camps? Does he accept that the war will not end until the Serbs accept that Bosnian-Muslim resistance—or, at least, international intervention and the threat of such intervention—has reached such a point that it is no longer in their interests to fight on? What action does the right hon. Gentleman propose to make that threat a real one?

Mr. Hurd: Relief supplies are not a cosmetic to people living in villages or towns, cut off for many months, who

depend on those supplies if they and their children are to be alive in two or three weeks' time. I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is talking about. If he means that the supplies are not enough, of course he is entirely right.

As for the allegations of mass rape, it was the present Government, when they held the EC presidency, who asked Anne Warburton, the head of a Cambridge college, to lead a mission to the area. The accomplishment of that mission put beyond contradiction the fact that those atrocities had occurred. They are no longer allegations; they are fact. That is why we agreed last week to take the initiative in setting up a criminal court—probably through the Security Council—to remind the perpetrators of such atrocities that they are personally responsible, whatever orders they may have received. There is no difference between us and the French in that regard.

The hon. Gentleman was right in his other two points. It is essential to maintain and, indeed, to intensify the pressure of sanctions, particularly at a time when there are signs that they are having some effect. Ultimately, however, these horrors will be brought to an end by a peace settlement within the framework that David Owen and Cyrus Vance are attempting to negotiate.

Africa (EC Aid)

41. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on joint EC aid initiatives in relation to Africa.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The United Kingdom is contributing £1·3 billion over five years to the European development fund, over 90 per cent. of which goes to Africa. In addition, there are substantial European programmes of food aid and humanitarian relief.

Mr. Kirkwood: I warmly welcome the recent pledging of 680,000 tonnes of EC food aid under the food aid programme for Africa. Does the Minister accept, however, that real problems are involved in the delivery of that vital food? Will he consider setting up an EC-sponsored Africa special recovery plan to upgrade the logistics, transport and distribution facilities available on the ground, so that the aid can reach those who need it?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman is right about the difficulty of delivery, but I am afraid that it cannot be achieved in the way that he suggests. There has been some help in Somalia for relief and rehabilitation purposes by means of unutilised funds, but we cannot extend the use of unutilised funds in the way that has been previously suggested by the hon. Gentleman, because the Community works on commitments, not on disbursements. That system is different from the British system.

Sir John Stanley: Can my hon. Friend give the House an assurance that the British Government's aid effort to Somalia will be sustained for as long as famine conditions persist in that country?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, I can confirm that the United Kingdom has a continuing programme of relief for Somalia. We are the world's third largest bilateral donor to the relief effort in Somalia. I have no doubt that we shall continue to give relief generously.

Flooding (Perthshire)

3.30 pm

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the flooding in Perthshire.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): The Government fully appreciate the seriousness of the flooding, and have every sympathy for those who have been affected. The flooding has been caused by the combination of heavy rainfall and a rapid thaw of earlier snow. Large areas of land have been inundated and many properties have been flooded, requiring temporary evacuation of occupants.

The response to the emergency is of course primarily a matter for the local authorities, and they and the emergency services have responded well and are continuing to provide assistance. However, my right hon. Friend and I are keeping in close touch with the developing situation.

Scottish Office officials have been in regular contact with the emergency control centre in Perth and are at the ready to provide what assistance they can in response to requests from the local authority. Scottish Office officials are also in the area to conduct preliminary inspections, but the full damage will not be apparent for some days until the flood waters recede. In addition, the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force have given extremely valuable support.

I am also pleased to announce the Government's decision to make special financial assistance available under the Bellwin scheme to the local authorities affected in the Tayside area.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that statement. May I add my praise to all those—the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, the district authorities, Perth district council, the fire services and the local community, who—in the most appalling situation, in which at the moment the water in some parts of Perthshire is 7 ft high—have supported one another and given service? Can my hon. Friend say what assistance in the short term, financial and actual, the Government propose to give, what recompense, in the short term and the long term, the Government propose to provide, and what recompense and assistance he is going to give to farmers and householders who have been put in the appalling position of temporary if not permanent loss?

Sir Hector Monro: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I am sure that his comments about the outstanding work of the community would have been shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), had he been able to get here. My hon. Friend was absolutely right to give that praise, because everything I have heard about has been of the highest quality. It has been a tremendous community effort. Other than the practical assistance from officials that I have already announced, now that the Bellwin scheme has been triggered, it will be brought into operation as soon as possible and as soon as Scottish Office officials and local authorities have worked out what is involved.

As a farmer myself, I appreciate the extreme difficulties and major problems that are facing many farmers. I have seen pictures of farms under feet of water. That inevitably will damage flood banks, fences, dykes and hedges, which will need to be repaired. Two years ago, a special increase was made in the grant for flood banking, and the normal capital grant scheme will be available for hedges, walls and fences. All this will be looked at most carefully as soon as the waters recede and we know what is required.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I echo what the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) said about the floods, which are unprecedented. I am informed that the rate of flow is 500 cu m greater than the floods of 1990 and that they dropped to 1990 levels only late last night. Tayside regional council and Perth and Kinross district council have been working flat out on the problem, but has the Scottish Office learned any lessons from the 1990 floods? Both local authorities have instituted emergency planning procedures since 1990 and are concerned to ensure that the Scottish Office is involved in the commissioning and management of investigations into flood protection.

I have a letter dated 15 May 1991 from Lord Strathclyde, the then Minister with responsibilities for agriculture and fisheries at the Scottish Office, which says that it would not be

"appropriate for the Scottish Office to be directly involved in the commissioning of investigations"

of the type mentioned. That is abrogation of responsibility by the Scottish Office, and what has happened in Perth and Kinross could have been avoided if it had been involved.

In addition, the chief executive of Tayside regional council informs me that the helicopter search-and-rescue service performs an invaluable service. We all know that that service is being withdrawn from the area, but at this late stage will the Minister praise it and reconsider his decision to abandon it?

On the issue of compensation, Council chiefs' involved in this operation informed me only 15 minutes ago that the Bellwin scheme is insufficient and restrictive, and that the whole of Tayside region has been affected by this emergency. Will the Minister do something to help Tayside region, the community, farmers and elderly people who are isolated in their areas? Will he give us a commitment now to help Tayside region and tell us precisely what the Government intend to do?

Sir Hector Monro: Of course I echo the hon. Gentleman's praise for the community and the Royal Air Force crews who operate search-and-rescue helicopters. His comments will be noted by the Ministry of Defence.

I accept that flood levels in Perth were the highest recorded for the Tay. Since 1990, we have had an early warning system for the flow of the river, which proved very effective and facilitated the evacuation of people and stock from farms early yesterday. I have explained that the Bellwin scheme has been triggered and agreed by the Treasury, the details of which will have to be worked out in discussions between the local authority and the Scottish Office. We shall consider everything as favourably as possible, because in a serious situation such as Tayside everything must be resolved.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Minister will be aware that there has been substantial flooding in my constituency in the communities of Auchtermuchty, Dunshelt and Strathmiglo. I should like to pay tribute to Fife regional council, the fire service,

police, personnel from RAF Leuchars and the voluntary organisations such as the Scottish Women's Rural Institute and the Women's Royal Voluntary Service.

Since some of the roads involved are trunk roads, will the Minister now agree to order an immediate engineering assessment to see what lessons can be learned with a view to preventing such flooding from happening again? Will he look extremely favourably on claims for compensation and ensure that Fife regional council suffers no financial prejudice as a result of its efforts on this occasion?

Sir Hector Monro: I note what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said, and I share in his commendation of the outstanding work done by voluntary services and all the other organisations which he mentioned—including, of course, the fire service and RAF Leuchars, which is where the helicopters have been based.

I said that Scottish Office officials are in the area, but it is difficult to make any firm comment on the future until we are able to see the damage once the flood waters have receded. However, as soon as that has happened, we shall be in a better position to consider the future.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Minister undertake a complete assessment of the disruption of communications which resulted from this tragedy, because north-south and east-west communications in Scotland have been severely disrupted? That has a knock-on effect on economies elsewhere in Scotland, not only in Tayside, where obviously the main crisis occured. Does the Minister accept that Tayside authority must not be expected to bear the brunt of repairs to communications services, but that it must be a Scottish Office priority? Is he satisfied that the Bellwin formula is suitable in these circumstances, given the nature of the disaster?

Sir Hector Monro: I note what the hon. Lady says, and of course one appreciates the fact that there has been very severe weather in the north of Scotland and in Morayshire, with trees blown down and much damage to property. Yes, communications are a serious problem—for example, the A9 has been opened and closed and opened and closed again in the past fortnight—which have disrupted economic progress in Scotland and must be borne in mind; but, at the same time, we must pay tribute to the men who drive the snow ploughs and gritters and who have kept the roads open in particularly ghastly conditions in the past fortnight. However, everything that the hon. Lady said will be carefully borne in mind.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Although there will be a general welcome for the special assistance being offered by the Minister to the victims of flooding in Perthshire, will he ensure that the assistance is not limited to Perthshire but will cover victims of flooding in whatever geographical area they happen to reside? In view of the very severe weather suffered recently by almost all of Scotland—not only flooding but very low temperatures —will the Minister have a word with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security with a view to expediting the payment of cold weather allowances to people who require them, bearing in mind the fact that, not all that long ago during a previous winter, the Prime Minister personally intervened to ensure that cold weather payments were made to people in the south of England suffering severe weather conditions?

Sir Hector Monro: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. As he knows, the cold weather payments are triggered by particular circumstances at particular meteorological stations, and that, if they are triggered by particular areas of cold weather, that is dealt with by the Department of Social Security, which monitors the situation carefully. However, I shall certainly bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Iraq

3.43 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, I should like to make a further statement on coalition military action against Iraq.

Yesterday and earlier today, the coalition took further military action against Iraq. There were a number of separate operations.

At 8.45 am GMT today, four RAF Tornado GR1 aircraft and two Victor tankers took part in a further coalition operation, involving over 40 United States, British and French aircraft, against Iraqi air defence facilities and command and control facilities in southern Iraq, which had continued to pose a threat to coalition aircraft in the no-fly zone. Attacks were also carried out to suppress air defence installations which threatened the security of coalition aircraft participating in the operation. All coalition aircraft and aircrew returned safely.

Four RAF aircraft participated in the attack against an air defence operations centre at Al-Najaf. Two Tornado GR1 aircraft were to use 1,000-lb laser-guided bombs against targets designated by the thermal imaging airborne laser designator pods, carried by the other two aircraft. One of the Tornados was unable to clearly identify the target and did not release its weapons in order to avoid the possibility of damage to other buildings in the area and civilian casualties. However, the other Tornado successfully completed the attack.

Like the operation on 13 January, this action was taken in self-defence to ensure the safety of coalition aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone below the 32nd parallel in support of United Nations Security Council resolution 688. This was a follow-up to the action taken on 13 January. Early indications are that further significant damage has been inflicted on Iraq's residual air defences in the southern no-fly zone. Assessment of the results is continuing.

This followed action in the latter part of yesterday, when cruise missiles, launched from United States navy ships in the region, attacked a facility connected with the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programme. The early indications are that the facility was extensively damaged. This action was taken to ensure that Iraq complies with its mandatory obligations under United Nations Security Council resolution 687 and related resolutions. Iraq has committed a number of material breaches of resolution 687 and has wilfully ignored the warnings given by the Security Council, and by the United States, United Kingdom, France and Russia on 11 and 14 January respectively.

There has also been a number of incidents in the norther no-fly zone. On 17 January, an Iraqi fighter aircraft violated the no-fly zone in the north of Iraq. The Iraqi aircraft was engaged and shot down by coalition aircraft. In addition, coalition aircraft were illuminated by Iraqi air defence radars on a number of occasions in the past few days, including an RAF Jaguar on 16 January. This was in violation of the coalition demarche of 14 April 1992, which warned Iraq against a number of specific actions which would be taken as indicators of hostile intent.

Following one such incident, a surface-to-air missile battery was attacked on 17 January by coalition aircraft armed with the high-speed anti-radiation missile. Initial damage assessments indicate that the SAM system was put out of action. Iraqi air defence radars were again attacked using those missiles on 18 January.

These coalition actions have clearly demonstrated to the Iraqis the seriousness of our demand that Iraq should comply with United Nations resolutions and our continuing determination to maintain the no-fly zones, in the north and south of Iraq. Should the need arise, the Government will consider the need for further action in consultation with coalition partners.

The House would not wish me to conclude without expressing again our appreciation of the continuing efforts of our service men and women serving in the Gulf. They can be assured that they enjoy the whole-hearted support of the vast majority in the House and of the British public at large.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I thank the Secretary of State for informing the House at the earliest possible opportunity of British involvement in the allied action against targets relating to the no-fly zones in Iraq. I pay tribute to the skill of our personnel involved, and I am glad that all the aeroplanes and the personnel in them returned safely.

The Opposition have always maintained that we shall give our full support to any actions that are in accordance with United Nations resolutions and with international law. In that light, I yet again offer my support to the Government in this case.

We support the military action in the knowledge that the Kurds in the north and the Shias in the south face terrible persecution if the no-fly zones are rendered ineffective. If allied aircraft cannot enforce those no-fly zones because of the deployment of surface-to-air missiles, clearly they will become ineffective with the resultant genocide of the Kurds and the Shias. We know that tens of thousands upon tens of thousands of people have already died at the hands of the Iraqi dictator.

With that in mind, I was delighted to see that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali, had affirmed that last Wednesday's strike was within the

"mandate of the United Nations resolution 687."

If that is the case, and if that is the judgment of the United Nations Secretary-General, I assume that the latest strike was, also within the remit of resolution 687.

Can the Secretary of State provide any further information about whether a Scud missile was launched by the Iraqis towards Saudi Arabia, or was that a false alarm? The Secretary of State referred to last night's raid by the Americans and the damage to the al-Rashid hotel. Has he any further information in respect of the exploration carried out by the Ministry of Defence this morning into the damage and whether that was caused by an allied missile or an Iraqi missile? The House would be reassured if we could discover the position in that respect.

Does the Secretary of State appreciate that there is a real fear that the provocations of Saddam Hussein and the legitimate responses could get completely out of hand? Saddam Hussein's brinkmanship could lead to the resumption of a full scale war. There is a feeling that we are drifting towards another bout of major hostilities. If possible, that should be avoided. With that in mind, does the Secretary of State appreciate the necessity to retain as

wide a consensus as possible? This legitimate action must not be portrayed as a personality struggle between the American President and the Iraqi president.

In order to try to resolve that problem, would it not be sensible for the matter to be returned to the United Nations Security Council? There is no doubt in our minds that Saddam Hussein has breached most of the United Nations resolutions. On the other hand, we need a coherent and long-term strategy towards Iraq. The Government should demand a debate within the United Nations to that effect.

It is absolutely imperative that Saddam Hussein is not allowed to chip away at United Nations resolutions, and thus at the authority of the United Nations. However, it is equally important that the United Nations has a coherent long-term strategy towards Iraq that embodies as wide a consensus as possible.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) for his support from the Opposition Benches for the operation. He is correct to emphasise that the activity has the support of the United Nations. United Nations resolution 687, as a mandatory resolution, specifically calls upon the Iraqis to allow inspection of possible sites of weapons of mass destruction. Last night's action was justified, because the Iraqis deliberately tried to thwart the United Nations inspectors in carrying out their responsibilities.

We have seen the press reports about Scud missiles. However, as yet, I have seen no corroborative evidence to support the view that that incident took place. With regard to the incident involving the al-Rashid hotel, we share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety to learn the precise cause of the explosion that affected the hotel. At the present time, we do not have a detailed response that we can share with the House. Clearly, we will all be concerned to know where the precise responsibility for that incident lies.

I share the hon. Gentleman's desire to ensure, so far as possible, that these matters do not continue. However, the remedy for that particular problem very much lies with the Iraqi regime in Baghdad. The coalition and the United Nations as a whole have been very careful to take a very measured, prudent and sensitive response to these continuing prevarications and provocations. As a consequence, our response has always been measured and proportionate to the nature of the provocations for which the Iraqi Government are responsible.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that one must get away from any question of personalities. While we all have our views about President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, at the end of the day it is the issues that are at stake. The threat that the Iraqi Government pose to the security of the region and the international community must be the cause of the UN response that we have seen.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Although a very strong response is entirely the right answer to Saddam Hussein's strong prevarications, his renewed threats to Kuwait and his flouting of UN resolutions, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that something more is needed in the way of longer-term strategy? Will he urge his right hon. Friends to urge our Security Council allies to develop a sustained set of pressures, in response to these incidents —not only military but political, diplomatic and economic for the longer term, so that Saddam Hussein's political enemies, including the persecuted minorities—we call them minorities, but they are majorities—in Iraq, to whom he is delivering death and destruction all the time, might be given some longer-term hope that he will be weakened, that the initiative will no longer be in his hands but will pass into the hands of the international community, where it should be kept?

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary would very much agree with my right hon. Friend's attitude. Of course it is important to take into account all that can be achieved by political and diplomatic means. We resort to military action only when it is clear that there is no alternative available to the international community. The fact that there have been a number of military operations over the past week is a direct consequence of specific actions and decisions by the Iraqi Government, for which they must take full responsibility.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Will the Secretary of State confirm that it is still Her Majesty's Government's position that every such action falls to be assessed against the criteria of, first, minimum force, secondly, consistency with international law, and, thirdly, the general support of our coalition allies? Does he agree that it is now necessary to have a long-term political objective, that it is necessary that the United Kingdom and the United States should be regarded as instruments of the United Nations, and that this matter should again be discussed by the Security Council so that we may have not only legal justification but moral authority for what we are doing?

Mr. Rifkind: It is of course desirable to continue to have a proper long-term strategy, but that must never persuade us to forget either the need to make an immediate response to those attempts by the Iraqi regime to render inoperative the no-fly zones that are the ultimate protection for Shias and Kurds in Iraq or the determination of the Iraqi regime to seek to damage Kuwait's territorial integrity. That sometimes requires an immediate response, at the same time as we continue to develop and take forward our overall strategy.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): For the avoidance of any remaining doubt, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the military actions by the coalition forces during the past week have been strictly in accordance with the United Nations resolution and will, and that all those actions have been entirely lawful within the terms of the United Nations statements?

Mr. Rifkind: I can indeed confirm what my right hon. Friend requests, and I can do no better than to quote the United Nations Secretary-General, who, on 14 January, said:

"The raid yesterday, and the forces that carried out the raid, have received a mandate from the Security Council, according to Resolution 678, and the cause of the raid was the violation by Iraq of Resolution 687 concerning the cease fire. So, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, I can say that this action was taken and conforms to the resolutions of the Security Council and conforms to the Charter of the United Nations."

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What do Ministers say to Jusef al Hoei, the grandson of the Grand Ayatollah of the Shi'ites, who said on "The Sunday Programme", as indeed did Mr. Desai, the representative of the Kurds, and

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

Mr. Barzani, that it was pointless undertaking that bombing? Surely, to justify the bombing on the basis of the needs of the Shi'ites and the Kurds is cant.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is of course entitled to his view, but I believe that the whole House believes that it is important that the no-fly zones should be continued. Without their protection, the Iraqi regime would undoubtedly resort to the use of aircraft to impose further punishing injury, and indeed certain injury and death, on the populations in both the southern and northern no-fly zones. I do not believe that the alternative approach which the hon. Gentleman appears to suggest would do other than render inoperative efforts by the international community to help the suffering people in Iraq.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): If we look at the position from the view of the Arabs—we have, or rather had, a number of Arab friends—if it was our intention to build up Saddam Hussein's support among his people, fire up the case for the Muslim fundamentalists and spatchcock the middle east peace process, how could we have done it better? What are we to do with Israel, which also seems to be not putting into effect United Nations resolutions? Is it the case that it seems to be politically correct to zap nasty Arabs, but to ignore what is done by the state of Israel?

Mr. Rifkind: If my hon. Friend is anxious to avoid bolstering Saddam Hussein's image, I hope that he will accept that nothing would have bolstered that image more effectively than for him to show his ability to thwart the will of the United Nations, render inoperative the no-fly zones in southern and northern Iraq, be responsible for successful incursions into Kuwait territory, and prevent United Nations inspections of sites in Iraq that are suspected of being part of the nuclear weapons programme. That would have been the alternative.

I believe that my hon. Friend would agree that to allow that would have done infinite damage to our efforts to ensure the speedy demise of Saddam and his removal from the international scene.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): All of us —Opposition and Conservatives—regret the civilian casualties resulting from the bombings. Is it not a fact that Saddam Hussein is responsible for those casualties because he refuses to conform to United Nations Security Council resolutions? Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is nonsense for the Iraqi regime to talk of the necessity for a political solution, as it has in the past few hours, as long as it refuses to conform to United Nations resolutions passed on behalf of the international community?

Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman further agree that, until Iraq does so, all sanctions must be stringently maintained and military action taken whenever it is regarded as appropriate under United Nations resolutions? Saddam Hussein started the crisis, and he can end it by returning to civilised behaviour instead of continuing to behave as an international outlaw.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman is correct. Anyone with residual doubts about the unreasonable nature of the Iraqis' position has only to reflect on the demand made over the weekend that United Nations inspectors seeking to go to Baghdad to carry out inspections of possible weapons sites should be required to travel from Bahrain via Jordan to get to Baghdad. Those are the sort of proposals made by the Iraqis. The United Nations spokesmen properly rejected that suggestion as intolerable in relation to their responsibilities.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): While I recognise the operational constraints, may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to take this opportunity to assure the House that a full and effective consultation mechanism is open to Her Majesty's Government to ensure that the more than 30 countries which undertook to preserve an independent Kuwait two years ago are fully in the picture and support us all the way?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct to emphasise the importance properly attached to the widest range of agreement and consensus on such matters. I believe that the international community remains united in supporting the actions necessary to impress on Saddam Hussein and his colleagues the necessity of conforming to their obligations to the United Nations.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Secretary of State aware that we are signatories of the United Nations charter that pledges us to rid humanity of the scourge of war? President Bush is not licensed to kill or to speak on behalf of the international community. Is the Secretary of State also aware of a report in *The Times* today that the International Atomic Energy Agency inspected the site bombed 16 times last night and said that there was no military significance in it?

If it is the case that the two women receptionists at the al-Rashid hotel—whose deaths brought no sign of regret from the Secretary of State—had been killed in that raid, that would be in breach of international conventions on bombing civilian populations, and would, in effect, amount to a crime by those who conducted it.

Finally, is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that he is taking the armed forces of this country deeper and deeper into what could become a full-blown war, without any authority from the House of Commons? We have never been told the policy or invited to endorse it, and it is a policy that has diminishing support worldwide.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman referred to the United Nations and its charter. I think that he will acknowledge that the Secretary-General of the United Nations—a fairly authoritative spokesman on this subject —has said clearly and unequivocally that he believes that the action is justified under the terms of the United Nations charter.

Of course we regret any civilian casualties. I said in my statement that the Royal Air Force had taken action to try to minimise that risk, as did other coalition partners.

As for the International Atomic Energy Authority, the right hon. Gentleman should recall that it published a report in May 1992 which included the two plants on the site that was the subject of last night's attack in a list of facilities identified by the Iraqis themselves as manufacturing facilities for their enrichment programme—in other words, for producing components used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that this is the first time in the history of the United Nations that the Security

Council has sought to remove from a member of the United Nations its nuclear, chemical and strategic capability, and thus that it is incredibly important for the future of the United Nations that success is achieved?

Secondly, what thought is being given to a no-fly zone for Iraqi combat aircraft covering the whole of Iraq, rather than just two important parts of it? Finally, bearing in mind Turkey's importance in the protection of the Kurds in northern Iraq, what is the position of that country in current events?

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend says, the efforts by the United Nations to deal with the Iraqi nuclear programme are part of its overall policy of ensuring that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction are eliminated. That is clearly a consequence of the Iraqi aggression and occupation of Kuwait some two years ago.

The reason for imposing no-fly zones in southern and northern Iraq was the Iraqi use of combat aircraft to oppress those who live in the northern and southern parts of the country. That consideration does not obtain for the central part of the country, so the rationale for the no-fly zones does not apply to it.

We have close consultations with the Government of Turkey. It provides facilities at Incirlik for the imposition of the no-fly zone in the northern part of the country, and we greatly welcome Turkish co-operation.

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): The Minister will know that a constituent of mine, Paul Ride, and another Briton are being held in prison in Baghdad. Does he share my concern that the action taken against Iraq, especially the cruise missile attack which led to civilians being killed, will make it much more difficult to secure their release? What has been done to ensure that the men are safe? What hope can he offer their families about their release?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the plight of these people. We are seeking to keep in contact with them through the good offices of the Russian Government. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will wish to inform the hon. Gentleman about developments.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, if Saddam Hussein refuses permission to United Nations teams to travel around Iraq with a view to identifying and destroying his nuclear and chemical weapons capabilities, it is hardly surprising that other means are found to do that?

What contact has there been with the incoming American president? Will the robust line in support of the United Nations resolutions taken by President Bush be followed by his successor at the White House?

Mr. Rifkind: It is reasonable to assume that the present American Administration will have the closest possible contact and consultation with the President-elect. It is clear from the public statements by President-elect Clinton that he fully supports the actions that have been taken over the past week and intends to follow a similar policy when he assumes office.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does not the international community have two responsibilities, the first of which is to ensure that the ceasefire agreement and the Security Council resolutions are fully implemented? Critics will have to answer for what they would do in view of all the provocations if force is not used. Secondly, as we have no quarrel with the people of Iraq, we must try to ensure as far as possible the minimum civilian casualties and, hopefully, no civilian casualties at all. Apparently, there is yet no final evidence that the attack on the hotel was by the allies, but if it was, I deeply and genuinely regret what occurred. Does the Secretary of State agree that we should concentrate on weapons of mass destruction, which need to be destroyed?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct. He spoke about the hotel incident and was right to emphasise that, as yet, we do not know the precise cause of the incident. I understand that the hotel is about 15 miles from the factory which was the target of the operation. I assure the hon. Gentleman that all those who take part in these operations attach maximum importance to not attacking sites that are close to areas of concentrated civilian populations. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to that.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the resumed provocation by Saddam Hussein merely causes suffering to the ordinary people of Iraq and that, sadly, that is likely to continue while Saddam Hussein is in power? Since the end of the Gulf war, political opposition to Saddam Hussein has become even weaker. Will my right hon. and learned Friend give a possible scenario for an end to this conflict so that coalition troops may be safely withdrawn?

Mr. Rifkind: Plainly, we hope that the time will come when the people of Iraq are allowed to show their true feelings about the present Iraqi regime. In the meantime, it is crucial for the United Kingdom and for other countries in the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole to do what we can in a responsible, sensitive and moderate fashion to ensure the preservation of the interests that point towards stability in that region.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): While one fully supports the need for military action, in this case to enforce the terms of United Nations Security Council resolutions, does not the Secretary of State agree that there is an increased threat of Iraqi violation of Kuwait territorial integrity? Can he assure the House that steps have been taken to ensure that, if there is any such threat to Kuwait's territorial integrity, sufficient and adequate forces are in place to ensure that such an attempt is unsuccessful?

Mr. Rifkind: It has been made clear to the Iraqi Government that any violations of Kuwait's territorial integrity would be treated with the utmost seriousness. The United States Government recently announced the deployment of a battalion group to Kuwait and, of course, the coalition as a whole continues to attach great importance to the independence of that country and the preservation of its right to that status despite provocations by Iraq.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Order. I wish to hear a Standing Order No. 20 application from Mr. Tam Dalyell.

Mr. Dalyell: I believe that there is a genuine case, on grounds of urgency and importance, for this matter to be discussed under Standing Order No. 20.

In the very nature of things, there are many different views in the House of Commons which, bluntly, may differ from those of both Front Benches. In those circumstances, question and answer, doubtless conducted in good faith, is insufficient to deal with an immensely important problem. There can be no doubt of its importance. Military experts, such as Colonel Dewar of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, whom the Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs heard at lunchtime, say that this could be the beginning of a Vietnam.

If, in the opinion of serious experts, we could be embarked on a situation parallel to that of Vietnam, getting deeper and deeper into a situation that may not be too obvious at the beginning, surely there is a serious case, not for the posture of arguing for two minutes for a debate but for you using your discretion, Madam Speaker, to grant a debate for those many hon. Members who have views to put on this overwhelmingly urgent matter.

Madam Speaker: I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). As the House knows, I have to give my decision without giving a reason for it. I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 —*[Interruption.]* Order. Therefore, I cannot submit the application to the House—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am on my feet. Although I do not feel, at this stage, that it would be appropriate for me to grant the Standing Order No. 20 application, let me make it clear to the hon. Member for Linlithgow and to the House that I recognise the gravity of those developments—a recognition that I hope and I believe is shared by the entire House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that I have made my views on the matter known, so that there will be no further points of order.

Mr. Benn: I did not know that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was to seek the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20, and it was my intention to make a request based on a narrower but important point—that British forces are being committed to military action without a debate. That is not the more general question raised by my hon. Friend. In the past—30 or more years ago—I raised a similar point when a Minister failed to give an assurance that British troops would not be used without the consent of Parliament. The House should assert its authority now, to require a statement as to the circumstances under which the forces are to be used and the seeking of its authority for such a move before we adjourn today.

I hope that you recognise, Madam Speaker, that I am not challenging your ruling on the request made by my hon. Friend, but I ask you to consider that point carefully. If we lose control of the Government, and they do everything that the American Government want, we might as well pack up and go home.

Madam Speaker: I appreciate the point made by the right hon. Gentleman. As he knows, it is a much wider point than that on which the original Standing Order No. 20 application was made. As he also knows, he should have given me notice of such an application by 12 noon today. However, I have heard what he says. I carefully considered the words that I used following the normal statement that I make on these matters. I hope that the House will allow it to rest there for the time being.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Corbyn: It is a related point of order.

Madam Speaker: Let me see how closely it is related.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I listened carefully to your statement, as did many others. As you are aware, many hon. Members do not share the consensus between the two Front Benches on the issue. Should further hostilities be resumed tonight, and further applications under the Standing Order No. 20 procedure be made, and should the Government still be reluctant to have an open debate on their policy towards Iraq, would you be minded to ensure that the House had that debate, despite the wishes of the Government?

Madam Speaker: I am always ready, according to the rules and procedures, to look at Standing Order No. 20 applications when they are made.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does it relate to the previous point of order?

Mr. Cryer: It is separate.

Madam Speaker: Separate and different?

Mr. Cryer: Separate and different, Madam Speaker.

During questions to the Secretary of State for Defence following his statement, points were made about the effect of the attack on citizens who are involved in Iraq. The Secretary of State said that it was a matter for the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. As that Secretary of State is here, could you say, Madam Speaker, that, if he were to request the opportunity to make a statement later today, perhaps tonight, it would be received with approval? A serious consequence of the warmongering of George Bush is that the lives of British citizens could be at stake.

Madam Speaker: That is a somewhat hypothetical question but, as the House knows, when any Minister makes it known that he or she wishes to make a statement, that statement is allowed.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On the question of Standing Order No. 20 applications, the Speaker has to play an important role in making a decision, albeit rarely, on the requests that are made by Back-Bench Members. I specify Back-Bench Members, because on this occasion the application could come only from them. That is because the two Front Benches and the Liberal Democrats are all in cahoots.

Your role, Madam Speaker, is extremely important on this occasion, because we have an American-led war only because of the role of the two Front Benches. As we cannot expect the Government to make a decision unless George Bush allows them to have a debate, your role in responding to Standing Order No. 20 applications is more

important now than on any other occasion when such applications are made. You have to overcome the two Front Benches, and the fact that we are talking about the Americans running the show.

Madam Speaker: I take my role extremely seriously. I can assure the House that I am not in cahoots with anyone.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): May I help you, Madam Speaker, and the Government by reminding you that I have introduced the Declaration of War (Requirement for Parliamentary Approval) Bill? If the measure were brought forward for swift debate, we would have the opportunity to discuss various matters. Those who think, as I do, that we are seeing a personal vendetta being pursued by the United States President would be able to explain that view. We would also have the opportunity to vote against such action.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member is astute when it comes to public relations in relation to his proposed legislation.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I wish to ask a question on the length of statements and the time that is given to them. Are you in a position, Madam Speaker, to outline the criteria that you employ in determining just how long questions on a statement should run? In the light of the Standing Order No. 20 application and the observations that were added to the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), it seems that some statements should be allowed to run a little longer than others, because of the gravity of the subjects that they raise.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Are these points of order really necessary? I am attempting to deal with an extremely serious matter. I shall reply to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). I am not in a position to set out the criteria for determining the time that I allow for questions following a statement: that must be a matter for my judgment. I have to ensure that a fair proportion of Members who are anxious to put a question are able to do so. I must ensure also that there is a variety of opinion within those questions, and that hon. Members on both sides of the House are dealt with as fairly as possible.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I listened carefully to the Standing Order No. 20 application that was made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and to your measured response, Madam Speaker. Although the application followed a statement on Iraq, I did not hear the hon. Gentleman give a title to it; nor did I hear you announce the title when you gave your measured response. This is an important matter, because you gave an indication to the House of your own views. It is—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman has expressed concern about both Iraq and, on a separate occasion, the intervention in Bosnia. It is important that we know the heading of the hon. Gentleman's Standing Order No. 20 so that we can judge your measured response to it, Madam Speaker.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I ask right hon. and hon. Members to let me do this. I am capable of letting the House know that the title of the application was

"The changing military situation in Iraq".

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Having sat through the statement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on Thursday and again this afternoon, and having failed, sadly, to catch your eye on both occasions, Madam Speaker, and given the exchanges that have taken place over the past 15 minutes, it seems that many right hon. and hon. Members —especially the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—have been able to catch your eye this afternoon, as they did last week, and thereafter to raise the matter again. It seems that some Members are getting more than their fair share of debating time.

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member is seeking to criticise the method by which I call hon. Members, he had better table a substantive motion. I invite him and any other Member who is expressing such criticism to stop by my office. I shall then ensure that they are given a printout from my computer of the number of times that they have been called.

Mr. Conway: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. That is definitely not the case; you misunderstood my point. Those hon. Members who have been critical of the opportunity that they have had to express a view this afternoon have had several opportunities to do so during the last three sitting days. I make no criticism of your selection, Madam Speaker—you have a difficult job —but it appears that some hon. Members are ungrateful for the opportunities that they have been given.

Madam Speaker: How very kind of the hon. Gentleman. I am always happy to receive bouquets.

Point of Order

4.24 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you had an opportunity to rule on the very serious allegations made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) last Wednesday about the tabling of parliamentary questions? I note that there is a question on the Order Paper today from the hon. Member in relation to whom it was alleged that a civil servant had initiated his question. Have you ruled on that, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: No, I have not done so. The matter is still being investigated, but I assure the House that I shall give a ruling at the earliest possible moment.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Local Government Reform

That the Matter of Local Government Reform in Scotland, being a Matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 14 January]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

4.25 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You will recall that last Wednesday, under a ruling from the Chair, I was not successful in moving a motion to report progress. Of course, that is a past matter. I think that you will agree that unlike our system for applications under Standing Order No. 20, to which moving a progress motion or an amendment in Committee is at least comparable, the Chair is given no criteria on which to make a judgment. Therefore, hon. Members also do not have any distinct criteria to guide them.

Would I be correct in assuming that the major factor that the Chair takes into account when deciding whether to accept a motion to report progress—which is effectively the adjournment of the Committee—is whether information, an event or some other factor outside the proceedings of the Committee is of sufficient importance to require clarification before debate continues? I assume that that is the criterion. I do not want to hold up the Committee on a future date and if you, Mr. Morris, could endorse my suggestion, modify it or give some indication of the criteria, that might ensure that our proceedings move at maximum speed.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He knows that the Chair does not give reasons. However, I can tell him that I take everything into account in reaching a decision on any point of order that is raised.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 130 on page 35 of Cm. 1934)'.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 3, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 129(a) on page 34 of Cm. 1934)'.

No. 14, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Title XV on page 37 of Cm. 1934)'.

No. 132, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article G D (21) on page 16 of Cm. 1934).'.

No. 184, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3 (e) on page 9 of Cm. 1934'.

No. 189, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3 (1)'.

No. 190, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3 (m)'.

No. 243, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130i'.

No. 244, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130j'.

No. 245, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130k'.

No. 250, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130f'.

No. 251, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130g'.

No. 252, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130H'.

No. 357, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(b) as referred to in Article G on page 9 of Command Paper number 1934 '.

No. 358, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(c) as referred to in Article G on page 9 of Command Paper number 1934 '.

No. 360, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(g) as referred to in Article G on page 9 of Command Paper number 1934 '.

No. 361, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(h) as referred to in Article G on page 9 of Command Paper number 1934 '.

No. 384, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130l as referred to in Article G on page 38 of Command Paper number 1934 '.

No. 385, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130n as referred to in Article G on page 39 of Command Paper number 1934 '.

No. 386, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130o as referred to in Article G on page 39 of Command Paper number 1934 '.

No. 387, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130p as referred to in Article G on page 39 of Command Paper number 1934 '.

Mr. Fatchett: This is a large group of amendments, which essentially deals with European Community industrial policy, consumer protection policy, commercial policy and policy relating to research and development.

Amendment No. 1 is, in some respects, rather bizarre. Its purpose is to provide a peg for debate. If the amendment is put to the vote later, I shall ask my right hon. and hon. Friends not to support it. The Labour party at both national and European Community level favours industrial policy, but the amendment would delete all references to that in the treaty. Therefore, for that reason there is a clear contradiction in our position. As I said, the purpose of the amendment is to provide a peg for a discussion on European industrial policy, the Government's intentions and the way in which the Government define that policy.

It may seem to many outside the House watching our proceedings that that is a strange way of making progress, but it is the only means of allowing us to debate issues that are crucial to many people.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I heard my hon. Friend say that members of the Labour Front Bench—I emphasise the words "Front Bench"—support Common Market industrial policy. I hope that my hon. Friend will revise his opinion. In all the years since we joined the Common Market in 1973, we in the mining industry have been struggling to sell our coal. We have the cheapest deep-mined coal in Europe. It is twice as cheap as German and Spanish coal, yet the Common Market's tinpot industrial policy means that British miners have not been able to sell coal to the rest of the Community.

Conversely, the Common Market has been used as a laundering base for South African slave labour coal and Colombian coal. Twenty million tonnes of it were laundered in the Common Market and sold to Britain last year, with the result that the equivalent of 15 pits have been shut. If we do not change that policy, many more

miners—and all those who provide goods and services to the mining industry—will be thrown on the scrap heap. I hope that my hon. Friend will take a different view of the Common Market's industrial policy. It is supposed to be based on a level playing field, but instead of buying British coal, the other member states buy German and Spanish coal—anybody's coal bar our own. It is high time that members of the Labour Front Bench took a different view of the Common Market's industrial policy. In my view, it stinks, and it has added to Britain's unemployment figures.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend makes a number of cogent and well-argued points, with which I am not unsympathetic. I suggest that he returns to them when the Committee debates the next group of amendments, which deal with transport, telecommunications, and energy policy—when the intervention that he just made will be even more apposite.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Does my hon. Friend place under the heading of the Community's common industrial policy regulations concerning terms and conditions of employment? I ask that in relation to what is known by the acronym TUPE—regulations for the protection of employees on the transfer of undertakings. I am given to understand that the Government are in flagrant violation of the directive enacted by the Community 15 or 16 years ago. What is the point of the Committee debating such important issues when we have a Government who choose deliberately to ignore a Brussels-based directive that has the force of law throughout all 12 member states?

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I suspect that it drifts a little from amendment No. 1, but he will have an opportunity later in Committee directly to address employment issues. No doubt my hon. Friend agrees that there is no future for any industrial economy that is based on cheap labour and poor employment conditions.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. When my hon. Friend offered his assessment of the validity of my remarks, I thought for a second or two that you were nodding in assent. I hope that I will not be ruled out of order when I come to talk about terms and conditions of employment throughout the 12 member states.

The Chairman: Order. We shall have to wait and see what the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) does next, but I draw his attention to the marshalling of amendments on the paper. I hope that he will stay within the terms of the amendments with which we are dealing. Now that we have moved on to specific matters, we have a fairly tight debate ahead of us.

Mr. Fatchett: I was not trying to assume your responsibilities, Mr. Morris. I suspect that my task is difficult enough without my taking on additional onerous duties.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The House will regret the curmudgeonly attitude of many Opposition Members. Do not the cohesion funds, in particular, provide tremendously exciting opportunities for a socialist Europe? No wonder those who want the power of politicians to be expanded at the market's expense were so enormously encouraged by the Government's support for the extension of the cohesion funds at the Edinburgh summit.

There is no doubt that Labour Members are presented with a tremendous opportunity by the exciting and on-going vision of cohesion funds. They will give politicians the chance to beat the market, and to select not merely individual industries but countries and even individuals for the benefactions of taxpayers throughout the Community. This is indeed a tremendously exciting opportunity: all true socialists ought to grab it, and to thank the Prime Minister for giving it to them.

Mr. Fatchett: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's intervention—intriguing though it was—was necessarily directed at me. It may well be part of the current debate within the Conservative party, some of which I read in last week's *Hansard*.

Europe's key social and economic problem at present is rising unemployment. Unemployment corrodes social cohesion, lowers living standards, removes hope, creates social tension and establishes the conditions for right-wing political extremism. We have witnessed the development of all those conditions in Europe over the past 18 months to two years—which is not surprising, given the backcloth of rising unemployment.

Let us examine the standardised seasonally adjusted unemployment rates provided by the International Labour Organisation. Between June 1990 and October 1992, unemployment rose by 18 per cent. across the Community; that overall pattern however, fails to take account of the disparities between individual countries. The Danes, for example, have experienced a 20 per cent. increase, and the French a 13 per cent. increase. The Federal Republic of Germany—West Germany—experienced a 6 per cent. reduction, Ireland a 17 per cent. increase, Italy a 9 per cent. increase, the Netherlands a 20 per cent. reduction and Spain a 17 per cent. increase.

What stands out like a sore thumb is the United Kingdom figure. As I have said, according to the ILO the European Community average rose by 18 per cent. in the period concerned; in the same period, unemployment in this country rose by a staggering 81 per cent. This country's figure is four times as bad as the Community average.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) drew attention to the potential for further job losses in the coal industry, he clearly had in mind the poor performance of the British economy in regard to employment.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South) *rose*——

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall give way in a moment, but it may help both my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman if I give some more figures. National definitions of unemployment show exactly the same pattern. Despite the Government's attempts to adjust the unemployment figures during their period in office, Britain's economic performance in terms of job creation is shown to be very bad in comparison with the rest of Europe.

For the period from June 1990 to October 1992, the increase in unemployment is sharper. Unemployment was up by 37 per cent. in Belgium; by 31 per cent. in Denmark; by 28 per cent. in France; by 38 per cent. in Greece; by 27

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per cent. in Ireland; and by 61 per cent. in Luxembourg. In the Netherlands unemployment was down by 8 per cent; in Spain it was down by 1 per cent. The increase in unemployment throughout the European Community averaged 19 per cent. Yet again, however, the United Kingdom figure, under this Conservative Government, showed an increase in unemployment of 81 per cent. We are doing considerably worse than any other European Community country.

Mr. Cash: In making that extremely important point regarding the increase in unemployment in the United Kingdom, does the hon. Gentleman concede that the period that he has chosen almost exactly coincides with the period when we were members of the exchange rate mechanism? Does he not therefore conclude that that was the major contributory factor which led to higher interest rates than we could afford, together with the bankruptcies caused by the recession, with which his party concurred? Does he agree that by not repudiating the economic and monetary union provisions and the central banking provisions of the treaty, the recession and unemployment will grow even worse?

Mr. Fatchett: I suspected that the hon. Gentleman would make that point. Other members of the exchange rate mechanism experienced considerably lower increases in unemployment. The question, therefore, that he needs to ask relates to the basic strength and structure of the British economy.

The Italians left the exchange rate mechanism at about the same time as the United Kingdom. During the same period, Italy's unemployment increased by 9 per cent. according to the International Labour Office's figures, and by 13 per cent. according to the Italian Government's figures. That is a considerably lower figure than the United Kingdom figure. If the hon. Gentleman wants to do some research, he ought to remember that in any laboratory one controls for variables. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman has controlled for the variable, which is the strength and the weakness of the British economy.

Mr. Gapes: This country left the exchange rate mechanism in September 1992. Today Plessey-Siemens, a major employer in my constituency, announced 80 job losses, with 33 people to be made redundant by 26 February. Whether we are within or outside the exchange rate mechanism, that is yet another indication of the fact that under this Conservative Government massive job losses continue in manufacturing industry. That is the fault not of the exchange rate mechanism but of this Government's lack of an industrial policy, their failure to invest in training and their lack of a strategy to help manufacturing industry. Since the Berlin wall came down in 1989, there has been a massive reduction in defence industry jobs, including those in my constituency, with the result that in the last few years it has lost about half its manufacturing employment. We need an interventionist industrial strategy on a Europe wide basis.

I am pleased that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) is so committed to the policies that he outlined. Government intervention is needed if we are to deal with these problems. It cannot be left to the vagaries of the market. We need a national intervention policy and a Europe wide industrial strategy, as proposed by the Commission.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend asked me whether I had noticed that the Government left the exchange rate mechanism in September. I did. I sometimes wonder, though, whether Ministers in their subsequent statements remembered what they said prior to September of last year. My hon. Friend made a telling point about the need for an industrial strategy. Labour has been asking for such a strategy for a long time. Our poor performance in manufacturing trade compared with the rest of the world and the rundown of manufacturing jobs will not cease or improve until we have an industrial strategy.

Mr. Budgen: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that within the constitution of the European Community there are already the seeds of a very substantial industrial policy? That must be one of the reasons why some Opposition Members, who may have doubts about sovereignty, none the less believe that this is a practical mechanism for idealistic socialism of the most advanced sort.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman continues to offer the Committee some interesting definitions of socialism. May I suggest that he should wait for the Minister's reply, when we may find out how this Government define industrial policy at European Community level?

4.45 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): My hon. Friend is making an extremely good speech and has put his finger on some very good points. Is he aware that France and Italy joined the exchange rate mechanism before we did and that when this country was considering joining the ERM the Employment Select Committee asked the Department of Employment what research it had carried out into the effect of ERM membership on Italy and France? We were sent two pieces of academic research which showed that the effect on Italy of joining the ERM was to increase unemployment by 1 million and that the effect on France was to increase unemployment by roughly 500,000.

The chief economist of the Confederation of British Industry said at that time that if Britain joined the ERM and things went well for us within it, unemployment would be increased by 500,000 and that if things went badly unemployment would increase by 1 million. During the period that we were members of the ERM, unemployment rose by about 1·1 million. Are not there dangers for socialists in that type of policy? In France, the socialist Government pursued the franc fort policy, which has led to even more unemployment in France than in Conservative Britain. It looks as though the socialist party in France will be massacred at the next election because of the policy that it pursued.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend was a very experienced and able Chairman of the Employment Select Committee. Therefore, I have listened with interest to what he said. May I suggest to him, however, that there is a very strong socialist argument for fixed exchange rates? The key argument relates to the level of those fixed exchange rates and the ability to adjust. I suspect that the evidence submitted to the Employment Select Committee varied in

terms of its conclusions on the flexibility of the exchange rate mechanism and the level of the exchange rates within the ERM. It is those arguments which we should address, rather than arguments about a free market in currencies.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Has it not occurred to the hon. Gentleman that the slavish adherence of the Opposition Front Bench to the malign policy of the exchange rate mechanism may have contributed to job losses, deflation and unemployment? Is not the essence of the debate that competitiveness often reflects the exchange rate and that adherence, therefore, to what I would describe as philosophical dogma brings about the very objectives that I take it the Opposition Front Bench do not seek? The fact is, therefore, that somebody else's industrial competitive policy depends upon matters that are better argued and determined by markets than by ourselves in this Chamber.

Mr. Fatchett: I wish to make progress, but I shall try to respond to the hon. Gentleman's point. It is a novel notion of political accountability that the Opposition should be held responsible for the policies and consequences of the Government's actions. The hon. Gentleman will remember that in the early autumn of last year, my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition and my hon. Friend the Shadow Chancellor asked for a realignment of currencies within the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Shepherd: That was after we left the ERM.

Mr. Fatchett: No, before.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: No, I must make some progress.

Mr. Budgen: Could I make just one point on what the hon. Gentleman has just said?

Mr. Fatchett: No.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to make just one point?

Mr. Fatchett: I think that the hon. Gentleman would be the first to agree with me if I said that I have been kind to him in terms of the number of interventions that I have allowed so far.

Mr. Budgen: Yes, indeed, but I want to assist the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Fatchett: Because the hon. Gentleman has been so keen to educate his colleagues about the nature and the dangers of socialism, I am tempted to give way to him on this final occasion.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Gentleman assist the Committee, because I saw many of his colleagues raise an eyebrow at his earlier comments? Why is there a socialist argument for fixed exchange rates? In 1979, Mr. Callaghan said that Britain should not enter the exchange rate mechanism—the poor Mr. Callaghan who had done the honourable thing by resigning when there had to be a devaluation in 1967. Until recently, it was the Labour party which had learnt most from the agonies of fixed exchange rates, which are an economic mistake. Will the hon. Gentleman please explain how it is a specifically socialist thing to have fixed exchange rates?

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. If hon. Members wish to amalgamate the section on economic policy with that on trade deficits, the Chair will oblige, but to date that has not been the feeling of the Committee, and I respectfully suggest that the intervention of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) is not covered by the amendments. I should be grateful, therefore, if the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) would resume his speech.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) *rose*——

Mr. Leighton *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall give way shortly. It is interesting to see one or two of my hon. Friends with their hands up. That takes me back to my teaching experience, if nothing else. I shall make progress and then give way.

I was trying to show the extent to which unemployment has increased across the Community and how Britain has the worst record, with unemployment growing four times faster than the average. There is an increasing view that the world will divide into a number of economic trading blocs —Japan, the United States and the European Community. I am not sure that that view can be supported. Indeed, it is often simplistic about the flows of capital, but if the European Community is to compete, we need policies—

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: May I finish?

We need policies that provide for high-technology industries and for highly skilled, well-paid and secure employment. Statistics show that, as a trading bloc, the European Community has not performed particularly well against the United States and Japan in the past decade. In each year of the 1980s, the Japanese figures for GDP growth were better than those of the European Community. The United States and the European Community have performed roughly the same, but Japan has been growing faster than the European Community. In each year of the 1980s, unemployment in Japan grew slower than in the European Community, and each year somce 1981 unemployment in the United States has grown slower than in the European Community. The European Community has performed relatively poorly against other traing blocs and has experienced a sharp increase in unemployment, with the increase being sharpest in the United Kingdom.

Against the background of relatively poor industrial performance and the growing social problems that are caused by unemployment, we argue that the European Community needs an industrial policy. Interestingly, the Government signed the Maastricht treaty, but on a domestic level Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry have always resisted the development of an industrial strategy for the United Kingdom economy. Just before Christmas, Neil Johnson, director-general of the Engineering Employers Federation, stated clearly that the

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Government had no strategy for industry, no policy for manufacturing and that they were leaving the fate of British industry to the markets.

The CBI, the Engineering Employers Federation and a range of employers' and trade union organisations have been asking for a new partnership between Government and industry, yet at national level the Government resist such a policy. What is significantly different at European Community level that enables the Government to sign up for an industrial policy?

The Minister must explain that conversion because, although the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) is no longer present, some other Conservative Members will be interested to know how a Government who profess their belief in free markets for the United Kingdom can adopt a different position in relation to Europe.

Mr. Rowlands: Will my hon. Friend consider what would have happened to industrial manufacturing in Britain if the Government had got their way and remained in the ERM with 15 per cent. interest rates? That would have devastated our jobs, industrial investment and manufacturing future.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition asked in July for realignment of currencies and cuts in interest rates, which would have enabled us to avoid the cold shower of membership of the ERM at a particular rate. My hon. Friend is right, and more jobs would have been lost.

Mr. Leighton: I agree completely with the case that my hon. Friend is advancing and should like to express my gratitude for his answer to my earlier question. I think that he was saying that there is a case for managed exchange rates. Originally, the ERM was supposed to be a system of fixed but flexible exchange rates in which there could have been a realignment, as there should have been. Has he noticed that the ERM has reached a stage at which exchange rates are supposed to be fixed irrevocably, and that, as part of the procedure for achieving a single currency, the Maastricht treaty lays down irrevocably fixed exchange rates——

The Chairman: Order. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is straying. I call Mr. Fatchett.

Mr. Leighton: The point that my hon. Friend made——

The Chairman: Order. I have understood the point. The exchange rate mechanism is a separate debate. I have listened attentively——

Mr. Leighton *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman may wish to rephrase his intervention in a moment, but his previous intervention was out of order. I will call Mr. Fatchett, who may give way again.

Mr. Fatchett: I will make progress, because my hon. Friend will be able to return to those points later.

The Government have accepted the European Community's industrial policy. We would accept the principles and assumptions behind that policy. Some Conservative Members clearly do not do so, and the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West will be interested to hear the three assumptions that underpin a industrial policy.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: No. I will continue for a minute.

The three assumptions suggest that an industrial policy and an effective manufacturing sector cannot be achieved without intervention in the economy or the market.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: No.

First, any industrial policy makes it clear that the market alone cannot deliver against a set of social and economic objectives. The market cannot deliver an effective manufacturing sector. It cannot deliver, and has not delivered, in relation to the provision of skills. It has not delivered in terms of regional equality, which is why there are regional imbalances in the United Kingdom and across Europe. It has failed to provide investment—the seedcorn for research and development and for the development of new technologies and ideas.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The hon. Gentleman has talked a great deal about unemployment in relation to competitiveness. Does he agree that, when competitiveness was operating at its best in this country—during the 1980s—we created more jobs than all other European countries put together? Having just returned from the United States, does he not agree that, unless we as a Community put the right level of research and development into our industry, we shall never be competitive? Will he therefore deal with the amendment and talk about research and development and competitiveness, not about economic policy?

5 pm

Mr. Fatchett: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman seems to be picking up the point that I was making. He may later be drawn into conversation with one or two of his hon. Friends. My point, with which he now seems to agree and about which he needs to persuade his ministerial colleagues with reference to the United Kingdom, is that we cannot merely leave the market to deliver in certain respects.

I now deal with one or two of the issues to which I drew attention earlier. The first is regional imbalances. It is clear that Governments of all parties have recognised that there are social inequalities because of imbalances among regions. That is why Governments of all parties have had regional policies for the past 30 years and why there is a need for intervention in the market. If we leave the direction and location of industry to the marketplace alone, we shall, as in the past, see the south-east prospering while other parts of the country do not. That is why we have all accepted the need for an industrial policy to deal with regional disparities.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: No, I must continue. I have given way to the hon. Gentleman three times—I am sure there must be some biblical reference there. I must make some progress.

It is because of the market that Governments have recognised the need to intervene to provide education and training to deal with our skills deficit. Our criticism of the

Government is that they have not done enough and that, in terms of skill, there is a real danger that we shall lag behind other countries.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The hon. Gentleman is moving an amendment—there is a point to make.

Mr. Fatchett: I shall not give way to a sedentary intervention. If the hon. Gentleman allows me to make a little progress, I shall give way to him.

I was saying that Governments have intervened. I share the view, which has been expressed strongly by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition, that the United Kingdom economy will compete effectively only if we deal with our skills deficit and shortages. That means that we need more investment in education and training.

The same applies to research and development. Because of our failure through the market to provide long-term research and development and long-term investment for research and development, the Government have intervened, often with very limited resources, to ensure that British industry and higher education have the opportunity to develop new techniques, new research and development and new ideas. As a country which recognises the need for an industrial strategy, we must ensure that our research and development is able to compete with that of other countries.

Mr. Richard Shepherd rose——

Mr. Fatchett: Let me finish this point.

The first assumption behind any industrial policy is that the market alone cannot deliver, which is why there is a need for intervention. That issue clearly unites the Opposition and it is why we, like virtually every industrial organisation in the country, have been asking for an industrial policy and why we shall continue to bang on the door for such a policy.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) has been the most persistent. I shall then give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton).

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I understand the Labour party's position and, of course, through Maastricht, the Government support the hon. Gentleman's contentions. The Labour party could win an election and determine those priorities for itself. The difficulty under Maastricht is that they would then be subject to qualified majority voting. What if the balance of the argument goes against Britain as being an area in which investment should be made? We know that moneys from the cohesion funds will be directed to our competitors in the south and around the Mediterranean. Therefore, such judgments would no longer be within the call of a future or prospective Labour Government and are outside the call of the House. The hon. Gentleman may in fact, by his argument, be undermining British industrial competitiveness because of the distribution of resources elsewhere.

Mr. Fatchett: I fear that in many respects the hon. Gentleman fails to understand the way in which industrial capital has developed in recent decades. We now live in a global economy, and the notion that we can isolate one economy from the others is wholly out of date. The same applies to an industrial policy. We must ensure that, at certain levels, there is co-operation. The hon. Gentleman recognises that as part of industrial policy. The notion that we can develop an economy and an industrial policy which is circumscribed by one set of geopraphical boundaries is out of date.

Mr. Spearing: Like all our colleagues, I agree with what my hon. Friend says about market forces and their limitations in innovation and investment. However, I draw his attention to the numerous regulations which pour forth from the Community, relating to grants that the Community makes available to institutions of research and innovation. Is it not a fact that the Community itself, or its insitutions, decides the distribution of those grants for innovation in order that the industrial base of the Community as a whole and not necessarily one part of it can, in the Commission's view, be strengthened? Does that not mean that taxpayers' money from this country can be distributed anywhere that the Commission and the Council decide, and that the House will lose its ability to decide?

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point, but if he reads some of the figures from the Office of Science and Technology, he will see that, under the European Community research and development programmes—cross-programmes, such as Brite-Euran, Esprit and RACE—the United Kingdom is, although not always, one of the major beneficiaries.

Mr. Spearing: At the moment.

Mr. Fatchett: I can say only that I have a set of figures relating to history as it has so far been written and to events that have taken place; I cannot provide my hon. Friend with predictions about the future. If I could do so, I should probably win the football pools every Saturday afternoon and not be here. The current data show that under the programmes to which he referred, the United Kingdom seems to have done better than other countries.

Mr. Cash: A few moments ago, the hon. Member referred to co-operation, especially in science and technology. It is a very good idea, but article 130h states:

"The Community and the Member States shall co-ordinate their research and technological development . . . so as to ensure that national policies"

are consistent with Community policies. That does not mean co-operation; it means that we shall effectively have a Community research and technology policy which will be governed by a central policy, and that will kill scientific diversity and competition. Does he not agree that that would be extremely bad news, according to his own argument in favour of co-operation?

Mr. Fatchett: I always worry when criticism of Ministers' effectiveness in European Community negotiations comes from Conservative Back Benchers. It is perhaps a criticism that we should make. In response to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), even under article 130h the British Government, as the Government of a member state, will have the opportunity to influence the development of any research and development policies, and I should have thought——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: No, I shall give way later. In that context, I should have thought that the British Government, who

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do not have one of the best records in Europe of funding research and development and science, might gain as a result of article 130h, as might the British people and institutions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall make some progress and come to the——

The Chairman: Order. Hon. Members keep standing up in the middle of the hon. Gentleman's speech. He has made it clear that he will give way in a few minutes. Hon. Members must learn to contain themselves.

Mr. Fatchett: You are kind to me, Mr. Morris. I have looked at last week's *Hansard* and I suspect that I have given way more than anyone else during my speech. I am glad that I have stimulated so much controversy and thought that I have persuaded hon. Members to wish to intervene. I am sure that hon. Members will allow me to make a little progress.

I said some time ago that there were three principles underpinning industrial policy. The first is that the market alone cannot deliver and the second, which is crucial and which will herald a shift in EC policy, is that industry policy must be more than competition.

It was interesting to read the comments of the new EC Commissioner in an interview in last Friday's *Financial Times*. We always criticised the approach to competition policy taken by the previous Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, because he took what we saw as a tight and legalistic approach which did not recognise some of the industrial policy implications. I therefore welcome the statement made by Karel van Miert, the new EC Commissioner for competition policy. In last week's *Financial Times*, he was quoted as saying:

"competition is not the ultimate goal of the economy. The ultimate goal is for the economy to perform for the people, so that everyone gets his fair share and companies have a good environment to prosper, to invest and to be competitive."

Commissioner van Miert then says that he would take a much more flexible approach to competition. He draws attention to the Franco-Italian takeover of de Havilland, the Canadian aircraft manufacturer. What he says, which is central to Labour's view on industrial policy, is that there must be more than the market and that there must be more than competition. We welcome that development and the statements made by Mr. van Miert.

Mr. Budgen: Many of us who find it difficult to understand the changing views of Opposition and Government Front-Bench Members because of the warm consensus between them would like a summary of the hon. Gentleman's understanding of the difference between the two parties. Is he saying that at Maastricht, the Government became converted to a European industrial policy and that he now welcomes that conversion not only to Euro-enthusiasm, but to socialism, but that if the Labour party became the Government, it would pursue those policies with more vigour and with more liberality?

Mr. Fatchett: I guess that at some stage in the debate we may have the opportunity to find out the Government's position on industrial policy. I shall put a number of questions to the Minister. I suspect that he may be in the best position to answer all the interventions from the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The hon. Gentleman is recommending interventionist policies. Some European countries followed such a policy for some years. Why, therefore, has the EC's share of world trade declined from 25·5 per cent. to just 20 per cent. in a decade?

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman says that some Governments have followed interventionist policies; others have not. The Government who have clearly followed non-interventionst policies are the United Kingdom Government under Baroness Thatcher. If the hon. Gentleman had been here earlier, he would have noted that I quoted unemployment figures that showed that the British economy had performed less well than other economies had in terms of jobs. The hon. Gentleman needs to answer the question why a non-interventionist Government have had such an appalling record on unemployment.

Mr. Knapman: The point that I am trying to make is that our country's share of world trade has stayed—in fact fractionally increased to more than 8 per cent. The share of the EC as a whole has dropped from 25·5 to 20 per cent. What reason does the hon. Gentleman give for that?

Mr. Fatchett: I ask the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) to check his figures. His optimistic assumption about Britain's share of world trade is not accurate. The Minister may wish to look at a parliamentary answer he gave me on Thursday. If the hon. Member for Stroud looks at that answer, he will see the figures for Britain's balance of payments in manufactures against those of European Community countries and of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, and for Britain's share of world trade in manufactures. If he looks at those figures, he will see that his assumption is not wholly valid. I encourage him to do that piece of basic research.

I make three assumptions. The first is that the market alone is not sufficient and the second is that we need a policy that is more than competition. Thirdly, economic policy must have more than one objective. An industry policy via supply side measures supplements macro-economic policy. We believe that an effective and sensible policy for any country needs to be based on four economic criteria: growth, balance of payments, unemployment and inflation. Our criticism of the Government is that they have concentrated almost wholly on one criterion of economic success—inflation.

5.15 pm

The cost of that policy to British manufacturing industry, to industry generally and to British economic performance has been great. It is easy enough to squeeze inflation out of the system. The real economic skills and success is to get a balance between the four economic objectives: growth, the balance of payments, jobs and inflation. The Government have failed to do that.

We believe that an effective industry policy acts as a vital supplement to effective macro-economic policies. Such a policy helps supply-side factors and it creates the conditions in which British industry will be able to perform. That is why we seek an economic policy for Europe and for the United Kingdom which emphasises

growth and jobs. I commend to my right hon. and hon. Friends and to Conservative Members the comments made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the leader of the Labour party, in a speech last Friday.

My right hon. and learned Friend said:

"There is clearly a danger"—

he was talking about European recession—

"that this may occur if the fiscal deficit rules of the Maastricht Treaty are rigidly interpreted. An excessively strict application of the protocol which specifies a target of 3 per cent. for government deficits would compound the existing financial squeeze which has been caused by high interests rates in Germany.

If all member states of the EC tried to satisfy the 3 per cent. target by the end of 1996, for example, (the earliest possible date for the rule to apply) the combined effect on total EC output would be a reduction of over 2 per cent. This is obviously absurd and simply not feasible for a majority of member states of the Community."

My right hon. and learned Friend's point is crucial. We need an economic policy that relates to all four criteria: growth, balance of payments, unemployment and inflation. Those criteria must be given equal importance and equal emphasis in terms of policy development. That is why we have seen industrial policy as a supplement to achieving those objectives of growth and of job creation.

It is worth taking the House back to the comments made by the new EC competition Commissioner. His words could have been those of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East. The Commissioner said:

"The ultimate goal is for the economy to perform for the people, so that everyone gets his fair share and companies have a good environment to prosper, to invest and to be competitive."

That means more than one economic objective and not just squeezing inflation out of the system. It means having low inflation, growth, jobs and a balance of payments position that is manageable. That is the objective of an industrial policy that will supplement the supply side policy.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I have listened carefully, but I am afraid that I am not quite clear on this point. Is my hon. Friend suggesting that our erstwhile leader was disagreeing with the straitjacket being imposed by the 3 per cent. or that he was simply disagreeing with the percentage that was being imposed? The point is important. There were other aspects of that speech that I found a little difficult to understand and I mildly resented being called a barnacle.

Mr. Fatchett: I certainly did not call my hon. Friend that.

Mrs. Dunwoody: No, the reference was in the speech to which my hon. Friend has referred.

Mr. Fatchett: I am not sure whether that reference is in the speech. I will pass my script to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). She referred to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition as our erstwhile leader. I am not sure whether that was an accurate description—unless there has been a palace revolution to which no reference has been made.

In respect of a further recession, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East said:

"There is clearly a danger that this may occur if the fiscal deficit rules of the Maastricht Treaty are rigidly interpreted."

That has been Labour's position throughout. There is concern about the fiscal and deficit rules and an argument that they cannot and should not be interpreted rigidly.

Mrs. Dunwoody: With respect to my hon. Friend, I am still not clear what he is saying. Do we totally accept the straitjacket of the 3 per cent. while we disagree only with the size of the percentage?

Mr. Fatchett: I am not sure why my hon. Friend is in such difficulty. The point is that Labour looks for a range of economic goals which include inflation, growth and job creation. We believe that they are the key economic convergence criteria. We have said that consistently.

Against that backcloth, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East has made an important intervention. He has stated clearly that if there is a very strict interpretation of the fiscal deficit rules, there will be a further push into recession. If my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich reads more of the speech, she will discover that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East also refers to ways in which the rules can be interpreted more flexibly and more loosely.

Mr. Cash: It appears that the Leader of the Opposition now has serious doubts about the basis upon which the Opposition have entered into collusive understanding with the Government Front Bench in respect of the convergence and budget deficit arrangements prescribed under the Maastricht treaty. Does not the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) agree——

The Chairman: Order. Before the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) continues, I should say that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) was referring to industrial policy, but he strayed into convergence and other matters to do with the Leader of the Opposition. The group of amendments that we are discussing are related to industrial policy, research and development and in particular, areas related to article 130. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central was being very tight in his speech and I congratulate him on that. I hope that we can continue with that tightness.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Will you reconsider your ruling in that regard? The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) made it quite clear that, in his opinion, industrial policy leads to objectives about growth, inflation and the balance of payments, all of which are generally regarded as wider economic issues. If the hon. Gentleman is allowed to discuss those points, surely the rest of the House should be able to do so as well.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. As I understand it, you said that the points that have been raised had no bearing on the amendments. However, I suggest that they should be considered in the sense that competitiveness is affected and the amendment seeks to remove powers to ensure the competitiveness of industry. Therefore, matters that have a bearing on the competitiveness of industry are surely within the call of the Committee.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. Bearing in mind the fact that later groupings of amendments deal with European monetary union, cohesion policy and many of the issues

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

that are in dispute at the moment, when we reach those amendments, can we take into account the amount of time that we are spending on these amendments?

The Chairman: I am grateful to all hon. Members. So long as the hon. Member for Leeds, Central related his comments specifically to industrial policy, he was in order. Understandably, in his discussion with the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), he was tempted a little away from that. I hope that we can now return to that course.

Mr. Cash: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. You raised a point in respect to something that I was saying and not with respect to the comments of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett).

The Chairman: The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) was echoing and encouraging the hon. Member for Leeds, Central to go further down that road. It seemed to me to be entirely wrong of him to do that. Perhaps we can now get on.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I call Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As Chairman of this Committee, will you explain to me how it is possible to discuss industrial policy without referring to economic policy or the balance of payments. If we have an industrial policy that ends up with a £14 billion balance of payments deficit after this recession, that must affect industrial policy one way or the other. How can we eliminate the argument about growth? Since I have been a Member of this place, I have always believed that all those things hang together. I find it crazy for you to be ruling in this fashion.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is correct in so far as there can be allusion to all those points. However, there is a great difference between allusions to an exchange rate or other elements of policy when there are specific amendments on the Order Paper. It may have been some time since hon. Members have been in Committee. They should remember that, when we are discussing amendments, although hon. Members may allude to other elements that affect the amendments, the primary discussion must be about the amendment. That is the only point that I am making to the Committee. The Committee should bear that in mind.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. May I suggest that there is a good deal of truth in the suggestions of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? It seems to be the wish of the Committee to have, if possible, a slightly wider debate on the amendments. May I suggest that there was at the very least a grave misunderstanding about the decisions that were taken last week on the wider debate which, Mr. Morris, you may recall was concluded with the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) being somewhat disconcerted. There is a need for some flexibility on a wider debate. When we tried to have a wider debate last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) had been sitting here for three days and my hon. Friend the Member for——

The Chairman: Order. I probably know better than any hon. Member who was sitting in the Chamber during the previous four days and I probably know better than any hon. Member how long they had sat here.

Mr. Budgen: With great respect——

The Chairman: Order. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is showing great respect. We have had four days debating the titles, which were very broad areas of debate and purposely so. We are now moving to specific areas. I have made it clear that there can be allusions to exchange rate policy, devaluation and floating exchange rates and even to the coal mines that were referred to at the beginning of the debate. However, there are specific amendments on the Order Paper and the Committee has charged the Chair with having a debate on them. That is what I am trying to ensure happens. The fact that certain hon. Members have not sat on Committees perhaps for a fair amount of time and have forgotten how a Committee works means that it is my job to remind them of that.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I will take a point of order from Mr. Walker.

Mr. Budgen: If I might raise another point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I will accept one more point of order from the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West.

Mr. Budgen: Of course I accept that you will undoubtedly have made a note of the right hon. and hon. Members on the Conservative Benches who rose last week. On the other hand, you may not wish to tell the Committee or give publicity to that number. Those of us who felt aggrieved and made a note of the number of Members who tried to speak may have a different purpose. I accept that you know, but the country may not know the extent to which those who had general views which they wished to express were unhappily stifled.

The Chairman: I will not hark back to last week. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I must place on the record the fact that, prior to our proceedings today, the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West has contributed more than 15 minutes—which, for some hon. Members, is long enough for a speech—simply on points of order and interventions.

Mr. Budgen: What is wrong with that?

The Chairman: I am not saying that there is anything wrong with that. I am saying that the hon. Gentleman has had a fair voice, and I hope that the country has listened to him.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I apologise for arriving late. As you probably know, my constituency is suffering very substantially. I was wandering around in my welly boots trying to find some answers to our ghastly problems.

You will be aware, Mr. Morris, that we are not about to discuss the broad issues on which we have had four days

debate and in respect of which closures were accepted. We have had four days debate on the broad issues affecting the removal of one section and then the removal of others, which of course did not take place. I am the only Scottish Conservative Member whose views on Maastricht are different from those of members of the Government Front Bench, but I was not given an opportunity to express them even though they are widely held throughout Scotland. The closure motion by the Liberal Democrats on the first two days prevented a Scottish Conservative Member from being called. On the third and fourth days, I was not called.

In order to express my views and those that are held by many people in my constituency in Scotland, one will have to include in the range of amendments matters affecting finance, and so on.

5.30 pm

The Chairman: I am sorry, but I have to inform the hon. Gentleman, who had the floor for 10 minutes prior to the debate today, that he will not be in order to bring in major matters of finance. He may allude to them. I repeat that the amendments are about industrial, consumer, commercial and agricultural issues, and they primarily refer to article 130. I ask hon. Members not to continue to rise but to read article 130 and refresh their memories on that point.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: No "furthers". I call Mr. Marlow.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a totally different point of order, Mr. Morris. I hope that you do not mind my raising it. A few minutes ago you referred to the hon. Gentleman who had the floor. I have been here for about 14 years and you have been here much longer than that, and very welcome you have been in the House all that time. I do not think that I had ever heard the expression "the hon. Gentleman who has the floor" until about a year ago. We have heard "the hon. Gentleman who was speaking", "the hon. Gentleman who caught my eye", and "the hon. Gentleman who was on his feet".

"Having the floor" is an expression that is used in European Parliaments or other nation state Parliaments in Europe. This place was in being for about 700 years before the European Parliament was a twinkle in anybody's eye. I wonder whether it would be more appropriate to maintain our procedures and expressions rather than adopt those of institutions that are much younger than ours.

The Chairman: I have certainly used the phrase "the hon. Gentleman who has the floor" in Committee. It is a perfectly normal term and it has been used in many Committees. I see nothing wrong with the terminology.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I am not taking any more points of order on that matter. *[Interruption.]* Order. I choose the language that I wish to express in a situation. Hon. Members have to accept that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: I hope that they are totally new points of order. I have dealt with the point by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) about— *[Interruption.]* I have, with respect. Perhaps if he rises in his place we will see whether he can be called today. The hon. Members for Aldridge-Brownhills and for Stafford (Mr. Cash) have already spoken at some considerable length. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills, too, has had the floor before today for only four minutes—he is quite correct—but he has been making up for it this afternoon. Nevertheless, I call Mr. Shepherd, but it must be a new point of order.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: With respect, Mr. Morris, I have sat in the Chamber much longer than you have during the debate. My point of order relates to article 130, the very first words of which—forgive me for not having my glasses on—says:

"The Community and the Member States shall ensure that the conditions necessary for the competitiveness of the Community's industry exist."

Your ruling a little earlier about what one may choose to refer to seems to indicate a very limiting context. What is competitiveness unless it is formed by all elements, such as exchange rates, cohesion and diversion of investment? All those matters affect competitiveness. How can one discuss competitiveness without discussing the nature of those arrangements?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is right. There is a major element to do with competition, but a whole host of matters affect competition. If the hon. Gentleman would, with respect—I do not mean this facetiously—re-read article 130, he will see that there are large elements about

"speeding up the adjustment of industry to structural changes;

encouraging an environment favourable to initiative"

and co-operation, and so on. Those are the main elements of article 130 and competition policy is a part of it as well, but the point that I am making to the Committee is that, in terms of cohesion, we have some specific amendments. I am thinking of 20 amendments on cohesion policy. It is appropriate to develop the whole of that argument. Today it is more appropriate to develop industrial policy and to make allusions to cohesion; otherwise we will just have a general debate from now until we reach Third Reading, and that would not be in the interests of what hon. Members want. I am here to serve the Committee and to try to keep the Committee in order.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I call Mr. Cash with a final point of order, I hope.

Mr. Cash: Would it be possible for the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) to resume the debate? This waste of time has arisen because I merely mentioned the word "convergence". You have raised with me, Mr. Morris, the question whether that was in order. As a result of what you have said, it has now been conceded that it was. If the hon. Gentleman could now proceed, we could pick up where we left off.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is approaching this matter in a very relaxed manner. Is it a new point of order?

Mr. Budgen: It is a new point of order.

The Chairman: The emphasis is on the word "new".

Mr. Budgen: It is new.

The Chairman: It is a new point of order. Thank you.

Mr. Budgen: If I could conclude by putting on the record that these points of order flow inevitably from the sense of outrage in the Committee that further——

The Chairman: Order. That is not a new point of order; it is not a point for the Chair. If the hon. Gentleman feels a sense of outrage, I regret that.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Is it a new point of order and not the one that the hon. Gentleman raised earlier?

Mr. Walker: It is a new point of order.

The Chairman: All right.

Mr. Walker: I seek your guidance, Mr. Morris. This is a United Kingdom Parliament, and the future of this Parliament vitally depends on the Union that took place in 1707. I have raised this matter a number of times and I have had some difficulty in following the changes that have been made to the 1707 Act of Union. It will not surprise you that I have spent a lifetime in politics on that topic. I do not wish to bore the House tonight, but my concern is the future of this unitary Parliament and it has little to do with expressing personal views or obtaining extra time. I believe that this Parliament is now at greater risk than at any time since 1707. *[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. That comment could have been made on Second Reading. Nevertheless, I call Mr. Fatchett.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: On a totally new point of order, Mr. Morris. *[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. I will call the hon. Gentleman, but I ask the Committee to recognise that the hon. Gentleman who was speaking wishes to develop his speech and to continue it. We have now spent 15 minutes on several points of order whch were not in order and one or two that were in order. I hope that this is a new point of order and that it is a specific point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Shepherd: You mentioned, Mr. Morris, that I had spoken for four minutes and you mentioned that another hon. Member had spoken for a length of time. In fact, I have not yet made a speech in Committee, as you will be well aware. I have not had an opportunity to express views or opinions other than to try to elicit information. Is it the practice, or is the Chair giving a ruling, that the length of time in an unguillotined Committee stage, and one that is subject to the acceptance of the closure only by yourself, will be a material factor in whether hon. Members are called, and in the length or shape of the debate and the freedom of speech in the Committee?

The Chairman: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is no.

Mr. Fatchett: It is difficult to maintain the flow of a speech after a break of a quarter of an hour. If Conservative Members wish to raise another batch of points of order, perhaps they could inform me in advance, and I can go and have a cup of tea.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney) *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall take one more intervention, before finishing my speech.

Mr. Shore: My question relates directly to industrial policy. I share my hon. Friend's view of the inadequacy of market determination in the future of our industries. However, I am not clear about the role that European industrial policy is to play, as distinct from the research and development, education and training policies, which are also linked. Will my hon. Friend say something about that? What is article 130 about in terms of the amendment? What will it allow the Community to do that it did not previously have the power to do?

Mr. Fatchett: I think that my right hon. Friend must have had the opportunity to look at my notes during the substantial break for points of order. The next few points that I was about to make are as follows. First, does the Minister accept the principles that I proposed in terms of industrial policy? Do the Government share those principles? If so, why is there a distance between those principles and the application of industrial policy in the United Kingdom?

Secondly—to pick up the point of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore)—how do the Government define industrial policy under article 130? How do they define European Community industrial policy? Is that policy more than research and development, more than providing help to small and medium-sized businesses and more than the development of skills at national and company level? If it is, will the Minister describe what he and the Government mean by industrial policy and how much money the Government would allocate to those policies?

Mr. Leighton: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I must continue, as I know that it will frustrate all those Conservative Members who are keen to intervene in the debate if I take too long and they do not have an opportunity to speak.

Will the Minister describe exactly what the Government mean by industrial policy? What will be determined at European Community level and what at the United Kingdom level? Where does the principle of subsidiarity apply to industrial policy?

The Opposition favour an active industrial policy and active intervention in the market. We strongly believe that the market alone cannot deliver an efficient economy, high levels of employment and good social provision, and that the Government must perform that role. It has become clear during the current policy debate that those with free market views are now on the defensive. In the 1990s the free market has failed to deliver in the way in which those who support the free market claim that it should.

The role of Government intervention is once again back on the agenda. We support Government intervention in the marketplace, which is why we support an industrial policy. We have argued for that and will continue to do so. We support article 130 because we support the principle of an industrial policy. What do the Government mean by an industrial policy? Why have they changed their position on an industrial policy from a national one to a European Community one?

I think that we shall have an interesting debate and I look forward to the divisions that will emerge among Conservative Members of the Committee. The Opposition are keen to have a Europe that emphasises growth, jobs and the provision of social facilities. That is why we seek this debate on industrial policy.

5.45 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Amendment No. 1 embraces many of the other amendments in the group. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett)—as I am sure the Committee is—for stating that he will not press the amendment to a Division. I agree that the amendment provides the House with an opportunity to debate the industrial, consumer, commercial and research and development policies of the Community.

The issues under discussion are, by and large, covered in the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act. Therefore, incorporation of the issues in the Maastricht treaty does not signify a particularly dramatic departure from existing Community practice. Whereas new chapters were included in the treaty for the first time on industrial and consumer issues, action was already possible under the treaty of Rome. Consumer protection legislation has been an important element of the single market programme.

Issues under discussion all fall within title II of the Maastricht treaty and amend the treaty of Rome. All the provisions are capable of action at Community level and are ultimately justiciable before the European Court of Justice. The principle of subsidiarity will apply in relation to those issues and others covered by the treaty. Her Majesty's Government will ensure that action respects that principle.

The amendments largely echo the arguments relating to the debate on the development of the Community held in the House in the mid-1980s and before. Amendments Nos. 358 and 361, in the name of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) remove the establishment of the internal market as one of the Community's objectives. I cannot believe that hon. Members would seriously wish to undermine the achievement of the creation of the single market less than a month after the United Kingdom presidency has brought the project to a successful conclusion.

Amendment No. 1 takes issue with the functioning of research and development policy as it has devolved under the Single European Act. I accept, of course, that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central moved the amendment to stimulate a debate. The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science, my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who is present in the Chamber, can confirm that the United Kingdom has benefited from Community research and development policy and there is no case for reversing that achievement of the Single European Act.

A further characteristic of some of the issues under discussion is the influence that the United Kingdom can exert on the negotiating processes through the unanimity provisions negotiated at Maastricht. That does not apply to all sectors, but action under the industry title can be taken only with the agreement of all member states. The retention of unanimity when agreeing the research and development framework programmes allows the United Kingdom to play a decisive role in shaping future research and development policy.

One element that I believe will emerge from the detailed debate is the extent to which the Maastricht treaty—as it affects the specific issues under debate today—marks a substantial improvement in the position of the United Kingdom Government after the Single European Act.

Mr. Marlow: I totally agree with my right hon. Friend, and I believe that the single market is important. However, I question the extent to which we have achieved it. Let us consider two important industries in this country: steel and coal. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made an apposite point when he asked whether there was a single market in the coal industry. The same could be said of the steel industry. Our coal and steel industries are more effective and efficient than others in the Community, but the others are larded with direct and indirect Government subsidies and other support, to the disadvantage of our industries. So there does not appear to be a single market in coal or steel.

Will my right hon. Friend point out to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) what regional policy means—which is, that we shall have to put more of our money into the Community budget to be spent in other parts of the Community?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Of course I agree that the establishment of a single market in which anti-competitive practices are wholly eliminated would be a perfect state of grace, but I doubt whether the Community will ever attain it. The United Kingdom Government made it perfectly clear when we announced on 31 December that the single market was "complete" that the struggle to maintain competitiveness and to seek to eliminate uncompetitive practices must continue unabated—as the Communists would have said, "La lutta continua".

My hon. Friend referred to regional policy, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) in a characteristically moderate intervention. I say "moderate" because he asserted that the Community was a machine for idealistic socialism. In that, he was rather more moderate than our hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) who believes it to be a machine for communism. So I commend my hon. Friend's restraint.

Opposition Members believe the treaty to be an unbridled machine for the pursuit of capitalism and market economics. My belief is that the treaty of Rome does not fulfil for Europe Professor Fukuyama's prediction that history is over. It merely provides a framework within which European socialists—or whatever they call themselves these days—and those of us who are part of the centre-right family of European political parties will pursue the sort of market-oriented policies in which we have always believed.

It is worth remembering that the agreed seven-year financial perspective running through to 1999 will by then have involved an increase in the total public expenditure of the United Kingdom of 0·1 per cent. That is certainly a large figure—it is £200 million—but it is a very much smaller figure than the one that we agreed to at the time of the Single European Act.

One should also bear in mind the fact that the cohesion countries would say that their chemical, insurance, brewing and service industries are increasingly being taken over by large transnational companies based in the United Kingdom, Holland and Germany, producing enormous benefits for those latter countries. So even the large sums of money which will be spent on cohesion and on improving the trans-European network—roads, communications, and so on—will rebound to the benefit of British companies and industries which are making

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

inroads into important sectors of industry in southern Europe, to the benefit of workers and investors in our country.

Mr. Budgen: Is it a fair summary to say that, at both Maastricht and Edinburgh, the Government made substantial concessions for the cohesion fund, and that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central was thus perfectly right to say that the Government had made a substantial concession? They had agreed to the principle of socialist intervention, so the only difference between the Front-Bench spokesmen—who so often agree on these subjects—is that the Government agree in principle to this socialist intervention but do not wish to spend quite so much money as the Opposition do.

Mr. Garel-Jones: That is not a correct appraisal. There is certainly no collusion between Opposition and Government Front-Bench spokesmen: there is consensus about policy, which is quite different. The only collusion of which I am aware is that between my hon. Friend and some of his colleagues and certain Opposition Members. That collusion is perfectly legitimate. They are a tiny minority in the House and if they are to have any impact on our debates it is perfectly understandable that there should be cross-party collusion on this matter.

I hate to disappoint my hon. Friend by saying that, although there is no collusion on our part, there is an element of consensus about our membership of the Community. To make a point at the expense of the Opposition: if our party has stood for anything over the past 20 or 30 years it has stood, first, for our independent nuclear deterrent; secondly, for our belief in social market economics—I see my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West frowning, so I will leave out the word "social" for his benefit; and thirdly, for our membership of the European Economic Community.

By consistently standing on those issues, our party has won three large victories. By opposing them for the past 20 or 30 years, the Opposition have produced a generation of politicians looking at us now—people who by and large have been deprived of office—*[Interruption.]* I seem to hear my hon. Friend asking for a referendum. The last time I spoke to him he was not in favour of one, but my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) was prominent in arranging a protest in favour of a referendum last Sunday——

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How does a referendum relate to industrial policy?

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): We are indeed straying rather wide of the amendment.

Mr. Budgen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I support my hon. Friend the Minister in referring to a referendum, and suggest that you——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I have just ruled that out of order.

Mr. Garel-Jones: As you would expect, Mr. Lofthouse, I respect your ruling. When we come to certain other amendments which have been selected, I shall torture my hon. Friend about referendums later.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow) *rose*——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am told by those who advise me that in my two speeches before the Committee thus far I have given way 50 times, as my hon. Friends would expect me to, but I also intend to do my best to get what I need to say on the record and to make some progress, so that other right hon. and hon. Members will not be disappointed when they try to speak. I shall give way to my hon. Friends after making a little more progress.

The emphasis of the new industry chapter on the creation of a favourable environment for industry is directly in line with United Kingdom policy. The industry chapter will not open up European industry to policies which are interventionist or dirigiste. The unanimous voting provisions of the chapter are welcome to the Government. Under the Single European Act, the Community could already adopt measures affecting industry through the internal market by qualified majority voting, by the research and development provisions and, of course, through article 235. Only measures supported by all member states will be acceptable under article 130. The United Kingdom attaches particular importance to the explicit statement that article 130 does not provide a basis for Community measures that would distort competition. Free and fair competition is essential to the functioning of the single market.

Mr. Gill: My right hon. Friend spoke about trans-European networks. My constituents who go to other member states see enormous amounts of European Community money being spent on roads and other infrastructure. That happens in countries whose populations are sparser than in Shropshire, but in some parts of that county it is impossible in some places to get roads that are wide enough for two vehicles. How can I explain to my constituents that their money can be spent in southern Europe and even in Madeira, whose population is smaller than that of Shropshire, when they have to put up with an antiquated and totally inadequate road system?

6 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall try to help my hon. Friend in two ways. I would tell his constituents, as I could tell everybody in Britain, that the United Kingdom is lucky to have about a third of the major transnational companies in the Community. Those companies, which provide employment and wealth for my hon. Friend's constituents and for mine, are making large and successful investments in the industries in which Britain is especially good. Insurance is a good example. That is thanks not least to the removal of anti-competitive practices in other European markets. Such investments and services provide substantial benefits for our constituents.

A substantial British transnational company has just made a huge investment in southern Spain. If such a company seeks to move consumer products not just in Spain but around the Community, it is in the company's interests that the road and rail network be as efficient and as well invested in as possible. Of the three substantial contributors to the European Community—the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic and ourselves—the Federal Republic contributes about 30 per cent. of the cohesion fund, the French Republic contributes about 20 per cent. and, because of our abatement, we contribute

about 5 per cent. I think that those percentages are right, but I am quoting off the top of my head. Even by 1997, the total increase in Community spending to which we agreed will represent only 0·1 per cent. of total public expenditure in Britain. My hon. Friend's constituents and mine are getting a jolly good bargain.

Mr. Rowlands: I am following the thrust of the Minister's argument, but I want to make sure that I understand it properly. Is he saying that all the provisions of article 130 on industry and research and technology do not in any way enhance the competence or the responsibilities of the Commission and the Community in those fields?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am saying more than that, and I shall deal with the issue in more detail later. In some specific areas—education and health are good examples, and I shall deal with them in detail later—the position of the United Kingdom is substantially improved compared with that which pertained under the Single European Act to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is so attached.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall make a little more progress and then give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Shore: Will the Minister further clarify that point?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall not give way to the right hon. Gentleman, who has trailed his question. I shall clarify the matter later and give way to the right hon. Gentleman when I have done so.

I should like to deal with the common commercial policy and refer to article 3 and the extension of Community competence. The common commercial policy has been at the heart of the European Community's activities since its inception in 1957. It is a basic provision of the treaty of Rome, and its importance has been reaffirmed in all subsequent amendments to the treaty, including those advanced by the treaty on European union.

The new title updates the existing provision and in addition—this is one of the areas in which there has been substantial improvement—removes the obligation under article 116 of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act, on member states to co-ordinate their positions where there is no established EC competence in the area. We shall continue to act together, because in most cases it is in our best interests to do so. As before, there is no provision for European Parliament involvement. The new titles should reinforce transparency and predictability in the Community's trading patterns with the rest of the world.

Article 3 is billed in shock-horror terms by some hon. Members as containing new competences. It lists the Community's activities. The list is longer in the Maastricht treaty than in the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act. That is because the list has been extended to include references to the new competence chapters included in the Maastricht treaty for the first time. Nine new policy areas are listed in article 3, but that does not mean that there are nine new areas of competence. In all these areas, competence has already been exercised under the provisions of the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall give way later to my hon. Friend with relish. I think that my hon. Friend remains a staunch defender of the Single European Act. I shall seek to establish that the matters that I am about to enunciate are an improvement on that Act and why the position that he supported with such enthusiasm in 1985-86 can be supported now. I shall explain how the Maastricht treaty codifies and clarifies competence in these areas, extends it to a small degree and contains it to a large degree. Article 126 deals with education——

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend give way? *[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The Minister will be aware that education is the subject of another debate.

Mr. Garel-Jones: With respect, Mr. Lofthouse, we are dealing with article 3 and the competences that it lists. Although I stand to be corrected by you, Mr. Lofthouse, one of those competences——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The Minister should address article 130.

Mr. Budgen: Perhaps I may be allowed to defend my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). My hon. Friend voted for the Single European Act, and some of us have teased him about that, but he did not do it with any enthusiasm. Like many Conservative Members, he did it out of mistaken loyalty to the Government; it was a good illustration of how the House often does not represent the true views either of the Tory party or of the nation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I realise that my hon. Friend frequently regards support for the Government as mistaken.

Mr. Budgen: Sometimes it is.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I agree that that is sometimes the view, but some of us have not consistently taken it. I have dealt with the common commercial policy.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend made a robust defence of the cohesion fund, and said that to a certain extent it is in Britain's interests. He said that the fund is to be spent on infrastructure projects to help trade within the Community. Will he confirm that the fund will be spent on nothing other than infrastructure projects to help trade within the Community. Will he confirm that the fund will be spent on nothing other than infrastructure projects? Will it be spent only on transport?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Of course I cannot confirm that. I am simply giving it as an illustration. I was invited by my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) to illustrate why it was that the cohesion fund could be seen as beneficial to his constituents. I gave him an example. No doubt, when we come to debate the cohesion fund in detail, I shall be able to provide my hon. Friend with many other examples.

Mr. Shore: Article 130 is at the heart of the debate. Will the Minister make it clear whether anything in it deals precisely with industrial policy? By that, I do not mean research and development, education and trade. Does anything in it add anything to, or take anything from, what was previously available under the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The answer is virtually no. The only additions were inserted at the request of the United Kingdom. They include, for example, the last sentence of article 130, which reads:

"This Title shall not provide a basis for the introduction by the Community of any measure which could lead to a distortion of competition."

I see my advisers nodding. That sentence was new and was inserted at the express intervention of the United Kingdom and will give comfort to those Opposition Members who seek, quite contrary to what my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West is doing, to demonstrate that the whole of the treaty is a capitalist plot.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I have been following the Minister's arguments, in which he has denied that there is any potential for an increase in competence over industrial affairs—the point addressed in the amendments. Will he accept that, as the European Community grows and as we see changes in the patterns of companies and transnational activities, there may need to be increased competence to ensure that the European Community is able to deal with companies which may be so large that a single member state could not deal with them?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Of course I agree with that. One of the points that I made when I appeared before the Select Committee the other day was that one of the advantages of the Commission is that it is not a member state. Like all others, our member state would protect and support its industries up to a point. Some industrial practices and environmental policies will require a strong Commission which is not a member state and does not have the competing vested interest that any member state will have.

In view of your strictures, Mr. Lofthouse, I shall not extend myself on my next point. No doubt I shall have opportunities to do so later. The education competence in article 126 states clearly that the content of teaching and the organisation of the education system are for member states. Community competence is limited to co-operation among member states—teacher and student exchanges, for example. I believe that most hon. Members will support those new competences. As a further barrier to creeping competence, all harmonising measures are specifically excluded, and those words are repeated again and again in the so-called new competences.

In addition, if that were not enough of an improvement on the Single European Act, under which such matters were dealt with by a simple majority, it is now levered up to qualified majority voting. In many other instances, we shall discover as we go through the will the improvements that have been made. In some sectors this will involve the extension of competence, but in many it will tighten and define competence. As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) rightly pointed out, there are no substantial changes over the Single European Act other than, through our successful intervention, the introduction of the sentence that I read out.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The Minister is being generous in giving way. I should like to put on the record the fact that some hon. Members—their number is not confined to Liberal Democrats—do not regard qualified majority voting as a bad thing and also consider that bringing in a unanimity rule, which is another word for veto, is often a barrier to progress.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes, I understand that. I do not regard qualified majority voting as necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, one of the reasons why I and so many of my hon. Friends supported the Single European Act was that it introduced into the Community the greatest measure of qualified majority voting that has ever been introduced in one single dollop.

Mr. Budgen: Yes.

6.15 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am glad that my hon. Friend agrees with that. We did that for the very reason that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) set out—because we appreciated that, in our drive towards a single market, the vested interests of single member states might prove such that we would never make any progress.

My noble Friend Lady Thatcher, then the Prime Minister, calculated that the liberal instincts of the British Government would put us in the position where it would be extremely rare that we would be out-voted. I think that I am right to say that we have been out-voted on only four occasions throughout the whole process of negotiations on the single market. My noble Friend was right in calculating that, in our drive to obtain the single market, it would be in our interests to go for qualified majority voting was right. Some member states have been out-voted more often than us in one day.

Mr. Budgen: Lady Thatcher gave her support to the Single European Act because she made two false assumptions. The first was that she would be the Prime Minister and leader of the Tory party for a long time. Secondly, she believed that the Tory party would always be in power and would always control things in Europe. As my right hon. Friend knew at the time, she was wrong in both assumptions.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Lady Thatcher must speak for herself as to why she commended the Single European Act. I was amused the other day, as my hon. Friend no doubt was, to see my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) pray in aid Lady Thatcher when he rose to defend my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), who had got into a bit of trouble. I was amused——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We do not seem to be making progress, and it might be an idea if we did.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. As a privilege, could we just hear the end of the story?

The First Deputy Chairman: The answer to that is no.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Is there not a general request for an opportunity to debate the wider issues? There is a great and continuing sense of outrage that many of us have stifled in previous days. My right hon. Friend meets the needs of the Committee in referring to wider issues.

The First Deputy Chairman: That is not a point of order for me. My duties are to chair the Committee and to see

the Bill progress in a reasonable way. For the life of me, I cannot see what the opinions of Lady Thatcher have to do with the debate.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I accept your strictures, and will seek not to be drawn down those paths, Mr. Lofthouse.

We were talking about the Single European Act and the way in which amendments Nos. 1, 3 and 14 allude to areas of the treaty where, to the extent that a comparison can be made to the Single European Act, the changes are minor and strengthen and reinforce the competitiveness either of the Community or of the United Kingdom's position.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. I wish to conclude my remarks, so that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, and others, may speak. I do not want to disappoint my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), so I shall just say that I found it amusing that my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey, while trying to defend my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South, should pray in aid my noble Friend Lady Thatcher, as it was he who, it might appropriately be said, cast the second stone against her.

Mr. Leighton: I do not want to become involved in arguments about Baroness Thatcher. Instead, I shall take up the arguments that were advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on unemployment. In a previous debate, there was much mention of article 2 of the Maastricht treaty which sets out all sorts of things in motherhood and apple-pie wording. It does not state, for example, "We propose to put the economies of western Europe into recession and to have mass unemployment." There were similar words in the original Rome treaty. Nevertheless, within the Community, about 17 million are unemployed. It seems that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We should question why 17 million are unemployed. When we have chronic mass unemployment—it is often long-term—it is meaningless to use words such as those that appear in article 2.

The operation of the exchange rate mechanism meant that the weaker countries had to link their currencies to the deutschmark, which meant that it was deflationary. It has resulted in considerable unemployment in countries such as Italy and France. It is a great embarrassment to me that a socialist Government in France, in carrying out these policies, have even higher unemployment than we have in Conservative Britain. The socialist party in France will pay a very high price for having pursued such policies at the next election.

The aim behind the treaty is price stability, and any fool can achieve price stability and low inflation if he is willing to put the economy into recession and have large scale unemployment. An interesting situation has arisen in Ireland. The Labour party there is going into office and Dick Spring will become deputy prime minister. Inflation is low in Ireland—about 2·3 per cent.—but unemployment is 17 per cent. I wonder what Dick Spring will do. It would seem that he will be unable to reduce unemployment unless he cuts the very high interest rates that apply in Ireland, but those high rates are operating to keep up the punt in the ERM. It seems that it will be possible for the Irish Government to reduce unemployment only if they reduce interest rates, and that will mean leaving the ERM and, probably, devaluing the punt.

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: Whenever I speak, the hon. Lady becomes excited and wishes to intervene. I think that I had better get the intervention over with now.

Mrs. Currie: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it would be possible for all the countries that are within the ERM to cut their interest rates together? The ERM does not require high interest rates as such. If all the countries that are members of the ERM had their heads screwed on, they would all get their interest rates down.

Mr. Leighton: That is an interesting idea. Quite often we do not talk about reality. Instead of talking about the real ERM, we discuss someone's vision of an ERM that he or she would like. I suggest that the hon. Lady moves around the Community and tries to convince the various member states that she has the right idea.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I know that my hon. Friend will not want to misrepresent Mr. Dick Spring. When he becomes Tanaiste he will undoubtedly have a strong commitment to dealing with unemployment first and foremost. I am sure that we wish to support him in every way. We understand the problems that he will undoubtedly meet in dealing with the economic situation in Ireland.

Mr. Leighton: I accept that completely. I hope that I did not give any other impression. I was trying to outline the problem that Dick Spring will have to solve. I am certain that he will want to do so and will have a shot at it, but he will have to cut interest rates, which means coming out of the ERM and, I would think, devaluing the punt in the process.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central contrasted what is happening in western Europe with that which is happening in Japan and the progress that the Japanese are making. He mentioned also the United States. Those countries have not had fixed exchange rates. They have not had the nonsensical ERM.

The truth that we must face is that western Europe is the unemployment blackspot of the world. We were blown out of the ERM and we must try now to remedy the damage. If we had economic and monetary union, we would be locked into the system.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Is the hon. Member going to reach industrial policy and article 130?

Mr. Leighton: I want to talk about the effect of industrial policy on unemployment. The single market is an area of fierce competition and it seems that we shall see a rash of mergers. Indeed, it is inevitable that companies will merge. After all, that is the object of the exercise. Eventually, each industry is likely to be dominated by two or three major firms. In this process, many firms will go to the wall. In an area of fierce competition, there will be winners and losers. What protection will there be for employees?

There has been a merger in the industry in which I worked before I came to the House of Commons, and that is the printing industry. On 17 September 1992, it was announced that the boards of Elsevier and Reed International had decided to merge their businesses to

[Mr. Leighton]

create one of the world's largest publishing and information groups, with a combined market capitalisation of about £5·2 billion. The combined Anglo-Dutch group will employ over 25,000 people—11,000 in the United Kindom, 4,500 in the Netherlands and 7,500 in North America. Reed is an international publishing and information group, covering professional publishing, business-to-business publishing, travel information, exhibitions and consumer publishing.

In the document that was issued to Reed International shareholders, there was a direct reference to the fact that, in the case of Elsevier, the merger was dependent on consultations and discussions with the relevant Dutch trade unions and the works council before the two parties entered into a formal agreement. That was in stark contrast to the British experience. The British work force of Reed International found out about the merger from radio and newspapers.

On 29 September, Tony Dubbins, the general secretary of the Graphical, Paper and Media Union—the printing union of which I am a member—wrote to Mr. Peter Davis, the chairman and chief executive of Reed International, seeking an early meeting at which there would be open-ended discussions on the implications that the merger would have for GPMU members in Reed International's employment.

Mr. Davis replied on 5 October to the effect that Reed International did not centralise its industrial relations, that any discussions would have to take place with the individual managements of each of its subsidiary companies in the United Kingdom, and that he had no idea what the reaction of individual managing directors would be to the GPMU's request. That statement must be viewed against the aggressive anti-trade union stance of Reed International over the past 18 months in its regional newspapers in particular and in its subsidiary, IPC magazines, where it has terminated recognition of the GPMU and withdrawn negotiating rights in respect of the terms and conditions of employment of the union's members.

On 22 October, Tony Dubbins and Chris Harding, the GPMU national officer, met senior works council representatives from Elsevier and Rene Van Tilborg, the general secretary of Druk En Papier, the Dutch Graphical Union in Amsterdam. It transpired that the works council representatives there had had a number of meetings with Pierre Vinken, who will be chairman of Reed/Elsevier until his retirement in 1995, and Peter Davis, chief executive and deputy chairman, who will become chairman upon Pierre Vinken's retirement.

At those meetings, Mr. Davis, in particular, stressed that there was no intention to change the current arrangements in Elsevier in Holland, but confirmed that Reed International would be loth to introduce those arrangements into the United Kingdom. Nor is the company prepared to recognise and deal with trade unions in the United Kingdom in any manner other than that which it currently adopts. Therefore, it is clear that unions will not be recognised. The point that I wish to make to the Minister is that it appears that the proposed merger is well within the criteria for reference to the competitions directorate. How will the Commission deal with that and similar cases? What criteria will the directorate use? What rights will the work force in that company have?

6.30 pm

On 18 November, Reed International gave formal notification within its publishing sites that it was withdrawing recognition from both the GPMU and the NUJ. That announcement was made within 48 hours of the Reed International shareholders meeting that endorsed the merger with Elsevier. That means that some 762 GPMU members and 584 NUJ members currently employed in Reed International companies will have their individual right as employees to be represented by the union of their choice arbitrarily withdrawn by Reed International.

That merger is one of the first to take place under the single market, but the employees in this country will be worse off and their conditions will deteriorate. I hope that we will be told this afternoon what protection and what rights employees will have in the inevitable mergers that will occur. I should like to be told what the social dimension will do for them. We have heard about the economic dimension—it was to be accompanied by the social dimension. What rights will that give to employees, or will its effect be nugatory? Is the Reed International-Elsevier merger and the way that it has been done to be the pattern for the future? Do the Government approve of what has happened? Are they willing to take any action?

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), who made an excellent speech, said that there were four aims of economic policy. That is absolutely right, but unfortunately only one—low inflation—is included in the treaty and within the objectives of the bank. Therefore, what my hon. Friend and the Labour party have always wanted is not there. My hon. Friend also gave us the good news that our right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has denounced the convergence criteria, or at least that aspect under which Government borrowing must be limited to 3 per cent. in any one year. He said that applying that criterion in a recession would push countries even further into recession and create further unemployment.

I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central can give me an explanation, but I assume that, as three of the four aims of economic policy are not there, and as our right hon. and learned Friend has denounced the 3 per cent. limit in the treaty, that means that we shall vote against the Bill on Third Reading.

Mrs. Currie: I am glad to have the opportunity to speak in this debate on article 130 on industry and on article 130f on research and development. The articles offer us some very fine words. That has been forgotten in much of the waffle that we have heard so far in the debate. It is honourable and remarkable that we should be in a position to put into United Kingdom law the statement —and I shall quote fairly selectively:

"The Community and the Member States shall ensure that the conditions necessary for the competitiveness of the Community's industry exist."

Among the elements that are regarded as important, actions should be aimed at

"speeding up the adjustment of industry to structural changes; encouraging an environment favourable to initiative . . . fostering better exploitation of the industrial potential of policies of innocation, research and technological development."

To me, that statement is wonderful, and I am glad that we have the opportunity to put it into our law. Some of my hon. Friends should also take that view and not try to get it removed from the Bill.

I had one of the best experiences of my life this morning when I visited the new Toyota factory that has just opened in my constituency. It is a truly amazing place, and it is extraordinary that that factory is already up and running. The company has a work force of some 1,200 in the United Kingdom, and by Easter that will rise to more than 1,500. By the mid-1990s, it will have 3,000 employees in my constituency and in Shotton in north Wales.

The vast majority of the 20,000 people who have applied to work for the company live within a 15-mile radius of the factory. The implication for employment in the area is immediately obvious. I am sure that the factory is already having an impact. At the end of the year, the unemployment rate in my constituency was 6·7 per cent. —one of the lowest in the country—having fallen during the autumn. We hope that that trend will continue.

The company is also having an impact on other businesses throughout Europe. From the beginning, it said that it hoped to purchase 60 per cent. of the input for the cars, by value, from European companies. It tells me that it has already managed to achieve that. It intends that, within a couple of years, the figure should rise to 80 per cent. Half its component suppliers are from the United Kingdom—for example, GKN and Triplex—or companies that are based in the United Kingdom, such as Pirelli. The other half comes from companies mainly in the European Community, especially in Germany and Belgium. Only a small number of the businesses from which it buys components are Japanese, and several of those are already planning to move to the United Kingdom.

If we consider the components, the services and the consumables, it is clear that the factory is already having a huge impact on the midlands and the north-west. I believe that, before the year is out, direct and indirect employment in the United Kingdom associated with Toyota will reach 10,000 jobs.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I fail to understand my hon. Friend's argument that she would not have that Japanese company in her constituency were it not for political union under Maastricht. Everybody accepts that there should be free and closer trade in Europe, and surely it is that which the Japanese companies are interested in. I presume that they are not very interested in the enormous new social and industrial costs that will occur under the treaty of union signed in Maastricht—surely that is the one thing that will deter those companies. Therefore, although I well understand why those companies have come to this country in the past, the question is whether they will still come or will expand under the Maastricht treaty.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend is well ahead of me: I had only just finished describing what I saw in the factory this morning. I have not yet begun to deal with the question of why Toyota is in this country. If my hon. Friend will bear with me a little longer, I shall come to that matter and also to what will happen if this country is hesitant about its membership of the European Community, as I know my hon. Friend wants.

Most of the production of the Toyota factory is for export. Indeed, its output will help to turn around the British balance of payments and move us from deficit to surplus on cars, if not on manufactures in general. On those grounds alone, if for no other, Toyota's arrival is most welcome and timely. I want to put on record my tribute to everyone associated with Toyota, in particular its directors, managing director and chairman for the skill and professionalism with which they have built the plant and brought that remarkable project to fruition. Most of all, I thank them for the tact, courtesy and consideration that they have shown to my constituents, especially their immediate neighbours in Burnaston, which include myself and my family.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I note that the hon. Lady has expressed many thanks to various people. One person whom she did not thank was the former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, who was instrumental in bringing that factory to the hon. Lady's constituency because of its marginal nature.

Mrs. Currie: I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman means when he says that it is of a "marginal nature". The factory is very far from marginal in our part of the world. It owns more than 600 acres and currently employs 1,200. It is likely to employ far more in future. That is hardly marginal. If the hon. Gentleman wants me to make a speech of thanks to everyone, I shall do so—but I have a feeling that you, Mr. Lofthouse, would shake your head and rule me out of order.

I want to make a number of points about how today's debate might affect Toyota and its view of some of the matters that we are debating. Toyota is in this country partly because the European Community is one of the largest and most important industrial markets in the world. With 340 million people, it is already much bigger than the United States of America and Japan put together. With the level of growth seen during the period of increasing co-operation between those economies, that is likely to be even more so. Europe's economy has grown because of the development of the single market.

Toyota is also here because of fears of exclusion from the European Community. In my constituency today, I saw cars being made by British people from scratch, to be sold all over the world—but aimed particularly at the European market. Those cars are not transplants or implants but British cars. They are as British as the Peugeot cars made in Coventry, the Honda cars made in Swindon, and the Ford cars made in Halewood or anywhere else—when hon. Members back and support those companies in their constituencies.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend have a new Toyota?

Mrs. Currie: I have an old one, and I am awaiting the delivery of a new one. I have been told that they are only available in three colours at the moment——

Mr. Cash: Now I realise why my hon. Friend had lunch there.

Mrs. Currie: I did not have lunch there. I was on the train to London. The three colours are red, white and blue. I have chosen a blue one.

I put it to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench that the day may come when they will have to defend businesses such as Toyota, Honda

[Mrs. Currie]

and Nissan. If we mean what we say about the European Community being an open and free market, we may find ourselves having to challenge other countries and Governments through the European Court of Justice and whatever other systems are available—insisting that the cars that I saw being made today are British cars and are not to be excluded or treated differently from the cars of any other British manufacturer.

I saw the sheet steel from British Steel being delivered, the equipment that is used to stamp out the bodies, and new engines arriving from north Wales. It is noticeable that, while everyone is aware that the main Toyota plant is in my constituency, hardly any right hon. or hon. Members has the foggiest idea in whose constituency is Toyota's engine plant. That is because it is in the north Wales constituency of a Labour Member, who would much rather no one knew about the success story on his patch.

Mrs. Dunwoody: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Is it not customary to give notice to an hon. Member if one intends to make a personal attack on them? I hope that you will bring that convention to the attention of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie).

The First Deputy Chairman: I am sure that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is aware of that convention.

Mrs. Currie: If the hon. Gentleman were present, I would not have to give him notice—he would be on his feet backing and supporting the Toyota company in his constituency. Nevertheless, I note your point, Mr. Lofthouse.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Did the hon. Lady give him notice?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It would be helpful if the Committee could make progress.

Mrs. Currie: I mentioned that Toyota is in Britain because Europe is one of the most important markets in the world, and because of its fear of being excluded from other European markets—an aspect that the Government may have to take on board at some future point.

Toyota is also here because our country offers natural economic advantages. Its work force is largely strike-free. In south Derbyshire it is almost entirely strike-free. On a ballot, it decided not to strike in the miners' dispute nine years ago. The United Kingdom also has low manufacturing costs—and we want to keep them that way. That is why our version of the treaty is not the same as that which other countries have. That is why we have no involvement in the social chapter. I believe that is right, and should continue to be the case. I am not hostile per se to legislation that affects the work force. In fact, I believe that Toyota's working practices are better than many for which one could legislate. My opposition to the social charter is that, if we restrict employment, that will be inimical to jobs.

Toyota is here because Britain has a Conservative Government who are favourable to business—a point made for me by Opposition Members. In 1989, 28 sites were proposed for the Toyota plant. One of the stranger questions put to me by Toyota's advisers was how come that of all those sites only one was in a constituency served by a Conservative Member for Parliament. My answer was that my constituents have their heads screwed on.

Toyota is here because we have a competitive exchange rate, and I hope that our competitive actions will keep it that way.

6.45 pm

Mr. Gill (Ludlow): Is my hon. Friend saying that she would resist Britain re-entering the exchange rate mechanism?

Mrs. Currie: No, but competitive exchange rates only work if one country is competitively changing its rates. If everyone starts messing around with their exchange rates, they will get into a total mess. I would much rather my constituents, and those employed in my constituency by the many international businesses located there, are competitive not because of the exchange rate but because they offer first-class working practices, in which quality, safety and the consumer are put at the head of the game—rather than be for ever looking over their shoulders at the value of sterling.

The policy implication of article 130 is that it must mean what it says about Community action not distorting competition. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench will make other countries hold as firmly to that as we intend to do. There should be no subsidies for competitive businesses. There should be no subsidies for Renault or Fiat.

Last year, I queried a subsidy agreed by the European Commission, for Ferrari of all companies. If people can afford to fork out £40,000 or £50,000 for a Ferrari, they should do so without being subsidised. I was told that Ferrari was given that subsidy because it was producing in a particular part of Italy having assisted area status.

I do not believe that subsidies of that kind should be paid. If an area requires a subsidy, it should be channelled in other ways. Such subsidies merit the most careful scrutiny. The Council, the Commissioner, and everyone else concerned should have a predisposition to say no to subsidies to car companies in other countries.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): My hon. Friend may like to know that Ferrari's grand prix cars are now made in Britain.

Mrs. Currie: The company still should not receive a subsidy. The subsidy that I queried, which was equivalent to about £4 million, was paid to Ferrari in Italy.

Mr. Fatchett: Does the hon. Lady favour subsidies being paid to the shipbuilding industry, and would she agree with the President of the Board of Trade if he advocated subsidies for the British coal mining industry?

Mrs. Currie: As to the latter point, the Whips Office already knows my view—*[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members want an answer, they must shut up and listen while I give one.

All industrial subsidies ultimately distort competition and trade, and do not create employment—they weaken it. A subsidised business is encouraged not to look hard at how best to serve its existing customers and to win customers from its competitors. Instead, the managing director and the senior management are concerned only about beating a path to Whitehall—and that is where they spend all their time. As a result, the business becomes even

less competitive than it was in the first place, which destroys employment. Coming from Liverpool, as I do, I can tell the hon. Gentleman in all honesty and sincerity that I believe that it also destroys entire environments, cities and regions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I will not give way; I want to make progress.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I am sorry to take up the House's time in such an important debate, but I understand that, when an hon. Member makes remarks about another hon. Member, it is traditional for the latter to receive some indication that that will happen. The hon. Lady may now wish to repeat the references that she made in my absence, or, alternatively, to withdraw them.

The Chairman: That point has already been dealt with.

Mrs. Currie: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to behave in a way that prevents the House from knowing that Toyota is in his constituency, that is for him to decide.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. The hon. Lady was asked to withdraw her remarks, but she has not done so. All she has done is repeat her original slur in the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones)—which she made without giving him notice. She should be asked again to withdraw it.

The Chairman: The hon. Lady has said nothing that was out of order. This is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Barry Jones: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I do not wish to challenge your ruling, but I wish to ask the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) whether she wishes to repeat what she said when I was not present.

The Chairman: I do not think that that is necessary. It is fairly obvious that the hon. Gentleman knows what was said then. I dealt with it at the time, and addressed the hon. Lady accordingly. Let us now make some progress.

Mr. Jones: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse.

The Chairman: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Jones: I seek your guidance, Mr. Lofthouse.

The Chairman: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Jones: No, Sir. However, I shall be very brief; I am sorry to take up the time of the House in such an important debate.

I do not know the details of what was said by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South, but I have been informed that she made a critical reference. I thought it reasonable, therefore, to ask her to have the courage to repeat that reference now that I am in the Chamber.

The Chairman: I repeat that I dealt with the point at the time.

Mrs. Currie: Thank you, Mr. Lofthouse. It is open to any hon. Member to read *Hansard* tomorrow.

Toyota is here in the United Kingdom because we are part of Europe: that is the last and main reason for Toyota's being based in our country. That means that we should be at the heart of Europe. It will never be easy for the United Kingdom to be at the heart of Europe, because we are geographically on the fringe and because we have been historically outside, tending to look down on continentals. That is all the more reason for sadness over the fact that we may be the last to ratify the Maastricht treaty: wanting to be at the heart of Europe means actions, not words.

If we are not at the heart of Europe, industry and employment will be most affected and most damaged. Businesses such as Toyota, which was raised earlier, will eventually revise all their plans for manufacture in this country if we pretend, or hint in any way, that we do not want to be at the heart of Europe. Under phase 1, output is planned to rise to 100,000 cars a year, probably by the end of next year; phase 2 will increase output to 200,000 cars a year by about 1995. That can be done by means of expansion within the existing buildings.

It is the phase after that which is at risk, and I am sure that the pattern will be repeated in many other businesses throughout the country. I am talking about the increase in output to 400,000, which we hope will happen by 1999 and which would mean the company's expanding to occupy more of the 600 acres that it owns—as well as, probably, an investment of the same order as the £700 million that it has already invested in this country.

That is the investment that matters most to the United Kingdom, because it takes production past the critical mass to roughly the same as the output achieved by Rover at Longbridge. At that point, it is worth while for far more suppliers to come to the United Kingdom—to come close to the factory, and thereby to increase employment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In order to achieve that critical production level, the firm will need a large market. Everyone agrees that a free trading market should exist with European countries. I do not think, however, that Toyota wants a mass of impositions involving additional costs as a result of political union. That is what we are really discussing. My hon. Friend is not making that distinction, but she should.

Mrs. Currie: I am not sure what all those fantastic costs might be. The most expensive thing that the company had to do was install a pile of machinery. It did so according to its own choice. It has two pieces of pressing equipment which had cost £10 million apiece. That is what such companies mean by expense.

As for the free market, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. He and I sit on the same side of the House, and we share many ideas about the development of the free market and its importance. In view of that, I find it strange that my hon. Friend should object so strongly to proposals in the Maastricht treaty that will strengthen the competence of the European Court of Justice and the efforts of Ministers to make the free market stick, and to insist that restrictions and subsidies are removed.

Mr. Needham: I agree with what my hon. Friend has said about Toyota and the Japanese. The Minister of International Trade and Industry was in London last week. What he consistently wanted to know was whether Britain would sign up, whether we would stand by our position on the social chapter and whether we would be seen as driving forward the European debate and being able to defend and support Japanese car companies as British car companies within Europe.

Mrs. Currie: The Minister is absolutely right: he has put it far better than I have. Our British view on industrial policy is widely shared, particularly by Japanese companies. The trouble is that, if we are not at the heart of Europe, if European countries move at different paces and we are not at the centre, if we are in any way hesitant and if we fail to use Community institutions to enforce the provisions—I am entirely serious about this—Ministers will, at some stage, be obliged to take another country's Government to court over the question of subsidies to competing car companies, some of which they own. As I have said, certain key companies are state-owned and subsidised by taxpayers.

If we do not take that approach—if we are not vigorous in our defence of new businesses operating in our country—when the next phase decisions are on the table in Tokyo or wherever, it will be in Spain, Germany, Hungary or some other country with a clearer vision than ours that such companies will open the next European Toyota, Nissan or Honda factory. Ultimately, we shall be the losers.

I believe that article 130 is a modest improvement on previous legislation, but it will serve us only if the Government put their heart and soul into ensuring that the Community is a free market—that it is open to competition, free of subsidies and free of interference in business. If that happens, our industry will be efficient and strong, and fit to compete throughout the world.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I am sure that you will be relieved to hear, Dame Janet, that I intend to concentrate on a single amendment, on which I hope to speak very briefly.

Amendment No. 184 deals with the inclusion in the Bill of the common policy on agriculture and fisheries. The amendment would delete all reference to agriculture and fisheries.

I am sure that other hon. Members share my concern about some of the changes that have taken place in the common agriculture and common fisheries policies. No doubt other hon. Members believe that some of the proposed changes will prove mistaken, retrograde and—probably for that reason—transitory. Few hon. Members —at least, those representing fishing and agricultural areas —would wish to tear up the existing European Community common policies and make a completely fresh start. The amendment puts nothing in the place of the existing policies.

The common agricultural policy as it stands—the common agricultural policy is a moving target, as we all know—had, we thought, several core objectives. They were identified and analysed by Mr. MacSharry while he remained the Commissioner. During the negotiations in the Council of Ministers, they were analysed all over again. The intention seems to be to increase the simplification of the CAP, to eradicate surpluses, to reduce costs, to remove all artificial price mechanisms, to increase environmental benefits and, perhaps most important of all, to reverse the widening gap between farmgate and retail prices. The Agriculture Ministers set themselves those objectives. The Commissioner also set himself those objectives. We have yet to see whether the proposals that were made following that process meet the objectives.

7 pm

Mr. Cash: When it comes to British farmers, upon whom the hon. Gentleman no doubt wishes to concentrate, does he not agree that they have paid a price for the policy that he advocates so strongly, in that net farm incomes fell between 1975 and 1985, to the extent that they were halved? According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, between 1988 and 1992 dairy farmers' incomes fell, in real terms, by 45 per cent., those of cereal farmers by 75 per cent. and those of livestock farmers by 90 per cent. Given that this is such a comprehensive policy, does the hon. Gentleman not think that there is a case for absolutely radical reform, let alone all the fraud that the system represents?

Mr. Tyler: If the hon. Gentleman had been patient and allowed me to warm to my theme, he would have found that I sympathise in some respects with his point of view. There is a dramatic difference, however, between radical reform and tearing the whole thing up, with nothing to put in its place. Those hon. Members who represent agricultural or fishing constituencies would need their heads examining if they went to their constituents and said, "We should vote for the complete abolition of this policy." If they said otherwise, it would mean that they had huge majorities.

It is important to identify the objectives of the reforms and to measure whether the proposals meet those objectives. That does not mean, however, that we want to go back to square one, or that we want the CAP to develop in the 11 other member states, with us outside. One only has to contemplate what the position would be if we were unable to deal with GATT on a Communitywide basis. Chaos would ensue. The fact that there has been radical change and reform in the Community, within the CAP context, demonstrates that the CAP is a moving target and that one can negotiate and move forward. It would be absurd if we, as an offshore island, were to be deprived of the opportunity to take part in collective, corporate negotiation.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I am one of those Members who seek the abolition of the CAP. It is a total nonsense. I would argue firmly and, I hope, fairly sensibly for the repatriation of agriculture to this country, which I believe will happen sooner or later. Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that anybody who understands anything at all about Europe says that the CAP is a total nonsense and that in the same breath they say that it is a linchpin of the Community? What sort of an organisation is that?

Mr. Tyler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. I do not regard the CAP as the linchpin of the Community. Much wider issues are at stake. However, it is critical for the future of our producers and fishermen that we should be able to negotiate in the world, within the GATT context, as a member of the European Community. Without that network, we should literally be at sea—an offshore island without any negotiating rights.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I have been trying hard to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. It would help the Committee if he could refer to any other time in our history when we were subjected to an agricultural policy that was decided outside this country, a policy that owed none of its allegiance to our climate, to our market needs, to the

abilities of our people or to the needs of our countryside. If the hon. Gentleman could tell me when, at any other point in our history, we have been put in that position I should be prepared to accept what he says about the need to protect our existing agriculture.

Mr. Tyler: I am very grateful to the hon. Lady for making a typical Little Englander contribution to our debate. It is absurd to suggest that any institution of which we are a member somehow imposes on us alien and totally hostile proposals. Her argument would mean that our membership of the United Nations somehow allows the United Nations to impose sanctions upon us—sanctions against a foreign power.

I am glad to see that the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is sitting on the Treasury Bench. I hope that that is an indication of the importance that Ministers attach to the significance of the common agricultural policy. I warn the Minister, however—I think that he will accept the point—that we are not setting in aspic, to use a phrase that was used during our earlier debate, the CAP as it now is. We are seeking to maintain a framework within which our farmers and producers—and our fishermen in the parellel policy for fisheries—are able to negotiate from a position of strength.

It is often said by the farming community and by the general public that one of the objectives of our participation in such an international framework should be to seek a level playing field. One of the most serious criticisms of the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Commission is that we made virtually no progress towards a single market, in terms of the way in which farmers are controlled and helped. One of the explicit advantages of the Maastricht treaty proposals is that, at long last, some sort of mechanism has been provided and is ready for us to use to ensure that member states, which abide by the rules but not all of which have the same effective inspection and professionalism, are able to put the decisions of the Council of Ministers or the Commission into effect with equal rigour.

One of the advantages of the Maastricht treaty is that at long last we can ensure that all the high-flown proposals that emerge from Brussels are imposed on a much more level playing field throughout the whole Community.

Mr. Marlow: This is a very important point. Many people in this country are uneasy about the common agricultural policy and the common market because of the level playing field. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us when milk quotas will be applied effectively and accurately in Italy? Will it be this month, this year, in five years', 15 years' or 20 years' time? We know that the Government of Italy cannot run affairs in Italy. At least half of it is run by the mafia. How convinced is the hon. Gentleman that European institutions will be able to operate these policies in Italy?

Mr. Tyler: If the hon. Gentleman had a little patience and if he were to vote for the Bill, there might be a better chance of that happening. His present position is entirely antagonistic to the effective policing of the European Communitys' decision-making process. I see that some Ministers are nodding in agreement. A critical part of the treaty is that we should make certain that future decision-making is carried right through to every level of Government.

There are a number of features of the reforms that we are applying in a way that does not make good sense. That is up to the British Government. For example, their reliance on set-aside as the core of the proposals is nonsense, but I do not see the Governments of other member states falling for this with the same enthusiasm as our Minister. To blame the common agricultural policy for something that, by definition, is a subject for national decision-making—derogation or development within the United Kingdom—is particularly absurd.

Similarly, there is a complexity about many of the regulations imposed in this country that is not to be found in other member states. By definition, that must be open to our Government to modify. The classic example—I see a number of hon. Members in their places who have raised the issue—is the food and hygiene regulations for slaughterhouses. I understand, and I hope that I am reasonably correct, that the Commission proposed about four paragraphs, but by the time the Ministry's multiplication system had worked, there were about 94.

I am glad to say that the Minister is now retreating. That is good news for those concerned about animal welfare as well as for the farming industry. It shows that what is at fault is not the Community or common agricultural policy but the way in which the regulations are being applied in this country.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): The hon. Gentleman and I have made common cause on this issue, and rightly so. Does he agree that, if meat from abattoirs is not for export but for domestic use, it should be a national responsibility, as the Germans have suggested, rather than a European responsibility? Is not that a good example of where subsidiarity should work and where we should insist that it does?

Mr. Tyler: I am grateful to the hon. Member, who makes a fair point. The corollary is that meat for export should meet the same conditions for rearing, animal welfare and so on. It is a national scandal that young calves are bought in Britain and exported by French buyers to the continent only to return as veal. Often supermarkets do not identify where rearing took place and may pretend that the animal originally came from this country. These are examples of how Maastricht could make improvements, and we should welcome that.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Maastricht treaty makes no attempt to do anything about agriculture, which in itself is a major omission from the negotiations and one of the reasons why I take such exception to it? Does he agree that the intensification of production will lead to more land being set aside? Recent calculations suggest that the amount set aside will increase by 20 per cent.

Mr. Tyler: It would not be proper to go into detail on set-aside. However, the Government's insistence on making set-aside the core of their proposals, which is not shared by other member states, is a fault of the system, but the common agricultural policy cannot be blamed for that.

What is far more significant is that, if the amendment were made, it would tear up not only set-aside but the whole support system without proposing anything in its place. No doubt the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has such a large majority that he does not worry about the farming vote in his constituency, but if he has any concern

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for the future wealth and health of agriculture in his constituency, he cannot expect the common agricultural policy to be dismantled overnight, as the amendment would ensure.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does the hon. Gentleman accept and understand that if, by some miracle, we were to abolish the CAP tomorrow, Parliament has the ability and means quickly to rectify matters and make changes? One of the reasons why we are unhappy about the European Community is that it cannot act as quickly as Parliament to change mistakes. That is where the strength of this Parliament lies. The hon. Gentleman is not right: we could quickly make changes.

Mr. Tyler: If the hon. Member is suggesting that a mistake such as the poll tax can be made in the House quickly only to be reversed and replaced with another mistake—the council tax—I accept his point. Mistakes are made more quickly in this House than anywhere else that I have known.

That is not an argument for tearing up the common agricultural policy, and it is even more fallacious when it is applied to the common fisheries policy, about which the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and I are very concerned. If we opted out of the common fisheries policy, we could easily allow other member states to adopt the conservation measures that they prefer, and gain access to our natural waters. We cannot deny them access if we opt out of the common fisheries policy and say, "We will have none of it"; we should be left floating out to sea.

I have been diverted by a number of interventions. I wish to be brief and stick to the amendment.

7.15 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tyler: No.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tyler: No. I have given way a number of times.

I ask hon. Members who represent agricultural and fisheries constituencies to ask themselves a simple question. If they were meeting those interests tomorrow, would they be prepared to say, "Every element of the common fisheries policy is now a dead letter and we should get out"? If they believe that, they are effectively not only pulling out of the only framework that those interests understand——

Mr. Lord: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tyler: No, I have given way a number of times.

One could do that only if one were prepared to sacrifice the fragile confidence of farmers and fishermen, which has been knocked far more by a succession of Government policies than by anything from Brussels. My colleagues and I are not prepared to do so, and for that reason will vote firmly against amendment No. 184.

Mr. Marlow: We have had an interesting debate so far. I very much enjoyed the speech of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State; I am sorry that I had to leave for a short period. We heard an interesting comment from him, which will be emblazoned throughout the rest of the debate in the House and in the country—his belief that there was consensus on policy between the Front Benches. The House should beware when there is consensus on policy between the Front Benches. If he looks at the *Official Report* he will see those precise words; I listened carefully.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Naturally, the *Official Report* will reflect what I said, but I believe that I said that, after 30 years of pro-European campaigning by the Conservative party, it had finally reached the minds of Opposition Members that there should be consensus on our membership of the Community. That is what I intended to say. If the record does not show that, I shall have to seek to qualify my remarks later.

Mr. Marlow: I am happy that my right hon. Friend said that, but I believe that it is perceived throughout the country, whatever he may say or whatever alterations he may wish to make to the record later, that there is a cosy consensus between the Front Benches on this treaty.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda) *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. May I be clear to whom the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is giving way?

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend has been so gracious in giving way to me that I give way to him first.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is being mischievous. The point that I was seeking to make is that there is no collusion between Ministers and Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. The only collusion is between my hon. Friend and some Opposition Members.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend may say that, and may have used the word "consensus". As the debate proceeds, we shall see to what extent there is collusion between the Front Benches. It has been impressed on the country that the Government Front Bench and those of the Liberal and Labour parties are at one on the Maastricht treaty and we who oppose some elements of it have great difficulty in the face of that consensus, if not collusion.

Mr. Rogers: For once, the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is right and, as usual, the Minister is wrong. This afternoon, the Minister said that there was consensus between the Front Benches but added later that there was collusion between groups in the various parties. The hon. Gentleman is right—unusually.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful for any support, especially from the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), for whom I have great respect.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) spoke about the benefits of regional policy. My understanding of regional policy in the Community is that one takes money from Community countries and shifts it in the directions in which one feels it should go. What worries me is that the great panjandrums in the European Community think that the countries to which it should go are those which they feel, if they were to massage and give

money to them, would be inclined to support the ambitions of people at the centre of Europe for a more centralised federal Europe. Mr. Rogers *indicated assent.*

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member for Rhondda nods his head, so perhaps he shares that view. He may be in favour of regional policy, but fearful that it might be used as an effective slush fund to bring about what he and I would perhaps not wish to see happen.

We saw the amazing spectacle of the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) blessing, praising and indentifying with the common agricultural policy. I am not very assiduous, but I do not think that I have heard any other politician, especially not one speaking for a majority party—or a minor party in his case—setting out the benefits of the common agricultural policy. It is something with which we must live and which we must endure, but to talk of the benefits of the CAP——

Mr. Tyler *rose——*

Mr. Marlow: I shall give way in a moment. First, I must declare that I have agricultural interests of my own.

Mr. Tyler: I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman has agricultural interests. If, tomorrow morning, the common agricultural policy did not exist, I suggest that he would be in considerable difficulties—much greater financial difficulties than he, as a normal working farmer, presumably already is.

Mr. Lord: Will my hon. Friend give way to his hon. Friend?

Mr. Marlow: I shall give way in a moment, but let me attempt to deal with that point. If there were no CAP, it would not mean that the United Kingdom would be bereft of an agricultural policy—we could have our own agricultural policy. Most people in Britain would realise that it would serve us a damned sight better than that which we now have strung around our neck.

Mr. Lord: My hon. Friend will be aware that we ran our affairs satisfactorily before we had the common agricultural policy. We had systems of guaranteed payments and deficiency payments, which got food cheaply to the consumer but ensured that the farmers got a reasonable return. It is nonsense to say that we have no alternative—we could have what we used to have. Is there not something nonsensical in the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) asking whether we can find nothing good in the common agricultural policy and whether we would not be embarrassed if it disappeared altogether? I suspect that he is saying that, if there is a rotten apple in which one can find a tiny bit that is worth keeping, one should keep the whole apple—which is absolute nonsense.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. He says that we had an agricultural policy before the CAP was imposed on us, and that policy brought a great deal of benefit. We bought and sold food at world market prices, which meant that the poorer people in this country and those for whom we rightly provide through our welfare schemes bought food at lower prices than they can now, because they bought it at world market prices. The scheme benefited them, and us as taxpayers—in such circumstances, the transfer payments which we would make to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security would be lower, so taxes would be lower. As taxes would be lower, our industry would be more competitive and our entrepreneurs would be more aggressive.

In addition, we were also able to take advantage of the cheap food available on the world market. We paid our farmers what was right to encourage them to produce as much food as they could economically do so. When food was not available from our own farmers, we were able to buy it on the world market at cheap prices. If we were not in the CAP, think how massively we could benefit from the beef, butter and grain mountains—they would be available to us at low subsidised prices. Instead of sending the benefices to the Soviet Union—or to Russia, as it now is—we could benefit.

Mr. Tyler: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that by leaving the common agricultural policy, we could benefit from the beef and other mountains? How? If we were not in the CAP, we could not benefit.

Mr. Marlow: If we were not in the CAP—the hon. Gentleman must bear in mind where we started from. We did not invent or want the CAP; we decided that we were going to join the European Community. The CAP had been stitched together for other countries in Europe and was totally inappropriate for the United Kingdom. However, once we had joined, as a massive part of our membership contribution to the Community, we had to pick up and live with it.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall has great respect for the other European countries, so he must surely realise that if we left the CAP, the Community would continue to have an agricultural policy and would continue to get it wrong—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman makes a sedentary intervention. Is he saying that it would sell its surpluses to Russia but not to the United Kingdom? If that is what he is suggesting, I shall be happy to give way.

Mr. Tyler: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the people of this country, and especially the farmers in his constituency, would welcome the dumping of cheap food on the market in this country?

Mr. Marlow: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is unaware of what happened under deficiency payments. Under that system—I hope that I will not be had up for tedious repetition—a price level was set for agricultural commodities which, by and large, ensured that our farmers got a fair and adequate return. That encouraged farmers to produce as much as they could if it was economically beneficial to the nation. The system worked well. I think that under that system the vast majority of farmers felt that they had a fair deal, and they prospered—they certainly prospered to a much greater extent than they prosper now.

Mr. Cash *rose——*

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry) *rose——*

Mr. Marlow: I see that the Minister is minded to intervene. I am not saying that we can wholly return to a system of deferred payments.

Mr. Curry: I fear that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the hon. Member for North Cornwall are both wrong. It is true that, if we were not members of the system, we could no doubt benefit from the

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surpluses but the problem would be the effect on prices in the United Kingdom. What deficiency payments and Exchequer costs would my hon. Friend be willing to accept, given a price level set by the presence of dumped surpluses from the Community on our market?

Mr. Marlow: The Minister makes his point, but I am sure that he will bear in mind the fact that in the past four years our net contribution has hovered between £2 billion and £2·5 billion a year. We could do an awful lot to ensure that the consumer gets cheaper food and that our agriculture gets an adequate return for its work with even a small portion of that sum. Our being in the CAP also imposes on us the Community budget, which takes vast sums of money from this country to be used for the benefit of our competitors in Europe.

Mr. Curry: The difference between the two situations is that British self-sufficiency is much greater now than when we joined the CAP and the Community. Therefore, the amount of produce that it would be necessary to support by deficiency payments is significantly larger than it was and the Exchequer cost would be very much greater. In the allocation of expenditure between Departments, one would have to judge the priority that agriculture would command.

Mr. Marlow: The Minister is right—our self-sufficiency is greater now than when we joined the Community, but it was increasing and would have done so without the Community. If it were not for the Community, our self-sufficiency would be at a much higher level.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware that there are dairies—where people take milk from the farm and make it into cheese and butter—that cannot make as much cheese and butter as they could in the past because of milk quotas. We could produce more milk and we could become more self-sufficient in dairy products, but because of the common agricultural policy, even though our farmers in most areas are among the most efficient in Europe—and in some areas, are the most efficient in Europe—we are unable to take advantage off the additional potential for self-sufficiency.

7.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Minister talked about the additional costs. That depends on the price that the consumer pays. If we are able to have prices at a lower level or at world market levels, the consumer may consume more. We shall have greater consumption. We may have to have more subsidy. My hon. Friend the Minister says that the Treasury would be jealous about the subsidy and would try to take it from the farmers and put it elsewhere. I wonder. Farmers have taken their chance with the Treasury in the past, and they did a damned sight better with the Treasury than they did with Mr. Delors and his cronies.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that the average size of a British farm is about 65 hectares, which is more than twice the size of the average farm in countries such as Denmark? In Portugal, the average is 4·3 hectares and in Italy it is 5·6 hectares. The very efficient British farmer is at a considerable disadvantage under the existing system, because we have a high level of productivity in relation to the hectares used.

My hon. Friend's argument in relation to what is effectively a probing amendment is having a profound impact on the debate, as is being shown by the interventions to which he is being subjected. The plain fact is that my hon. Friend is hitting a raw nerve. The system is not in the interests of the British farmer and must be reformed.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is right. I shall come later to some of the points that he makes.

Mr. Curry: I am sorry to intervene again, but the remark that the United Kingdom farm was disadvantaged by the system is one with which I take issue. Payments are made per acre in production, so the farmers with the most acres collect the biggest payments. If my hon. Friend is looking for the areas in the European Community in which the level of subsidies is highest, he must look to East Anglia, to the area around Paris and the area around Beaune. The subsidies are not at their highest in the small farms, many of which are too small for many of the mechanisms. That is one of the problems about which small countries' Ministers tend to complain.

In the recent reform, the one thing that we defended at the demand of all hon. Members was that there should be no discrimination according to size and that there should continue to be an absolutely straight expendiential relationship between size and benefit.

Mr. Marlow: My case is that the CAP is not, as the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) said, the best possible agricultural policy for the United Kingdom. We had a previous policy which was a system of deficiency payments. I am not saying that we can go wholly back to the policy that we had before. However, we could devise for the United Kingdom a far better policy than the CAP.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend will be aware that the average family pays £18 a week as a result of the CAP reforms. If every family is to pay £18 a week, would it not be cheaper to aggregate the contributions of all the families of the country and to hand that vast amount to each farmer? They could all run around in Rolls-Royces.

Mr. Marlow: I would not suggest that, and I do not think that the farming community would like it. However, it is true that the CAP costs us money, both through subsidies and through prices higher than we should otherwise have to pay.

The Minister said that it is the bigger farmer who gets the most subsidies. That is true. The problem with the CAP is that it is a bastard policy. It is not an agricultural policy alone; it is half a social policy, and in much of Europe it is more a social policy than an agricultural policy.

In the United Kingdom, we want within our agricultural policy an environmental policy to ensure that we look after the land, that we look after the hillsides and that we keep people in the villages in the more remote areas and in the less-favoured areas. That is right. That is our special way in which to look at our agricultural policy. Unlike the Italians or the Portuguese, or even those in parts of Germany, we are not concerned to have a social policy within our agricultural policy. Our responsibilities and our interests in agricultural policy are different from those in Europe. If we could extricate ourselves from the mess that comes from Brussels, the United Kingdom would be better served.

I shall now deal with some of the more specific areas of the CAP. I do not want to fall out with my hon. Friend the Minister because I want favours from him. However, I must point out that the one thing about which people are irritated is the ridiculous system whereby, if farmers put in a return to the Ministry, they do not fill in the figures in acres. Everyone in the House knows what an acre looks like. It is a chain, a cricket pitch by a furlong. We can all visualise an acre. Everyone in the farming community knows what a United Kingdom or an English acre is. It is what a ploughman can plough in one day with a horse and plough.

As a result of some bureaucratic reason on high—I do not blame my hon. Friend the Minister for this—we seem to have ditched the acre, to have surrendered it and to have kicked it into touch. Farmers now put in their agricultural returns with the figures not in acres, but in something called "hectares". That area is 100 m by 100 m.

Like every other hon. Member—this is not really a diversion, so I hope that you will bear with me, Dame Janet—I enjoy watching rugby internationals on television. We no longer have the 25-yard drop-out, but a 22-metre drop-out. That is ridiculous. Do we really have to impose that change on the most traditional, patriotic, sensible and loyal part of the British people—the agricultural community? Let me get down on my knees before my hon. Friend the Minister. Now that we are in the time of subsidiarity, please may we have our acre back? It will not cause his Ministry any problems.

Mr. Harris: The hon. Gentleman says that he enjoys watching rugby. Does that explain his absence from the so-called "gigantic demonstration" which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) promised the House would take place yesterday? The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was obviously not at that demonstration in Trafalgar square, and nor were many others of his supporters.

Mr. Marlow: If I followed that line, Dame Janet, you would very properly call me out of order. The fact that there is a good case for a referendum has nothing to do with meetings in Trafalgar square.

Mr. Curry: In my constituency, when it comes to putting in applications for subsidy, the farmers' ability to translate from acres to hectares is instantaneous.

Mr. Marlow: That may be the case. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that the farmers in his constituency would be happier filling in the applications with the figures in acres rather than in hectares. It is not necessary to put the figures down in hectares. We are now, God be praised, in the days of subsidiarity. May we please have our acres back? Everyone would be pleased and it would not cause any problems for my hon. Friend's Department. If Brussels needs to have its figures and its bits of paper in hectares, I am sure that there could be a statistician in the Department who, in the twinkling of an eye, could give Brussels precisely what it wanted. There is no problem.

There are other problems with the CAP. I was talking about self-sufficiency. We believe in the market, although I realise that with agricultural commodities, with their dependence on the weather, all sorts of difficulties arise. We have to keep agricultural production going year on year.

The solution to over-production which our mentors in Europe provide for us is a system of quotas and set-aside. I have a great deal of philosophical difficulty with that. I am not saying that I could come up with a better package starting from the European end, but if we had a British agricultural policy, I am sure that we could come up with a better package.

What do quotas mean? They mean rationing. If a farmer has some cereals in this year, he can have some in next year, although not so many. If he keeps cows that produce milk, he can have cows next year, although not so many. If he has some sheep, he can keep some sheep next year. If he has some cattle, he can keep some cattle next year. By golly, it is just like the dock labour scheme—the rule seems to be, "If you have got it and you own it, you can keep it; if you do it, you can continue to do it." If someone from outside wants to compete and has new ideas, suggestions and more efficient ways of using a country's agricultural resources, that person is excluded. People say, "Not on your nelly." That person does not have a chance, and that is one of the problems with the CAP.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is making a very evocative speech and has painted a nice rosy picture of the countryside with horses pulling ploughs, the sun setting, and so on. Will he now talk practically about the difficulties and problems of the CAP, not just for farmers, but for consumers?

Mr. Marlow: I thought that I was doing just that.

Mr. Rogers: What about consumers?

Mr. Marlow: Our overwhelming interest is for consumers. As I have said, consumers should get their food as cheaply as possible. That applies particularly to the less wealthy and less prosperous members of the Community. I believe that the CAP does everything but secure competitively priced food in the marketplace for the people of this country.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I were discussing self-sufficiency. Thanks to the effectiveness and productivity of our farmers and the agricultural community that supports them, self-sufficiency has increased in this country in respect of cereal growth. We used to import cereals in many areas, and we still import the hard wheat to make bread. However, we are now cereal exporters.

The Community has now decided that it must do something about cereal surpluses. It has therefore introduced set-aside. There may be no alternative to that, but we must consider the effect of agricultural set-aside. If one has a farm above a certain size involved in cereal production, one must lay fallow a portion of that land.

We have an effective and efficient agricultural structure in this country. We have large farms and, in particular in East Anglia, we have large cereal farms. The average size of our cereal farms is greater than anywhere else in Europe.

Mr. Rogers: That is big business.

Mr. Marlow: Indeed. We are all concerned about British business and UK Ltd. We are all interested in ensuring that money comes to the United Kingdom and does not go elsewhere. I am sure that the hon. Member for Rhondda would agree with that.

[Mr. Marlow]

Since Portugal, Spain and some other countries in southern Europe have joined the Community, with what they consider to be the benefits of the CAP, they have massively increased their cereal production. That is one of the reasons why we have surpluses.

The effect of set-aside is that the United Kingdom, which, with Denmark and Holland, is one of the most efficient cereal producers in Europe, is required to take more cereal land out of production than any other country in Europe. The Greeks and Portuguese, who have recently increased production to take advantage of what, for them, has become a bonanza, must take only a relatively small proportion of land out of agricultural production.

This country, as UK Ltd. and in terms of being able to produce and to obtain subsidies, is being discriminated against to a greater extent than any other European country. However, we are the most effective and most efficient. That does not make sense in market terms or any other terms.

Sir Richard Body: The discrimination goes way beyond that. The position is much worse. We classify our land according to five grades. No one would doubt that cereals and other arable crops should be grown on grade 1 and grade 2 land. I am glad to say that my constituency consists entirely of grade 1 and grade 2 land. However, our farmers are being penalised because we must have the same degree of set-aside as poor-quality grade 3 land—the typically poor land in Northamptonshire—even worse grade 4 land in Cornwall, and even grade 5 land which has been growing cereals. That must be done at vast expense to the CAP.

Surely one of the arguments for repatriating agricultural policy is that we would be able to tailor a set-aside policy—if we had to have such a thing—according to our own needs, instead of according to the men in Brussels, who have no idea how our land is parcelled out and at great disadvantage to my constituents.

Mr. Marlow: As usual, my hon. Friend is absolutely spot on and quite right. He is correct because, as I said earlier, the CAP is not just an agricultural policy—it is an agricultural and social policy. The social needs of the rural areas in the United Kingdom are very different from the social needs of the rural areas elsewhere in the Community.

Because it is a social policy, it is applied in a blanket way. The best and more efficient land is taken out of production when it should be in production while the less good land, on which other things could be done, particularly in southern England, is being allowed to produce in much greater quantities.

7.45 pm

Mr. Cash: In line with what my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) said, does my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) accept that the method of parcelling out land is also directly related to land registry? According to the Court of Auditors reports that we debate once a year, it is clear that many other members states simply do not know who owns the land. Therefore, the massive fraud identified by the Court of Auditors militates dramatically against the interests of the British farmer. That is another scandal which must be sorted out.

Mr. Marlow: The CAP is very unevenly applied in terms of ensuring that the right person does not get the wrong subsidy. I believe that it is effectively applied within the United Kingdom, but there are parts of Europe, which I must not mention for fear of offending my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which are less rigorous in the application of Community rules than the United Kingdom.

Those parts of the Community have not been particularly rigorous about such matters by custom and practice. If they are not rigorous, they get more money from Brussels. It is therefore in the national interest to be sloppy about the application of Brussels regulations. I do not wish to be derogatory when I say that the southern European attitude is different from the northern European attitude. The southern Europeans see the benefits of letting things go and of laissez-faire.

I understand that there is a great thing about olive trees. It has been explained to me that in Italy, in respect of olive trees, one must submit an application for subsidy through a local co-operative, which manages the application and forwards the papers. Although I am sure that I have got it wrong, I have also been told that in Italy there are no regional co-operatives. There is a kind of communist co-operative, a kind of Church co-operative and a kind of geographical co-operative.

Therefore, in every area in Italy, there are three co-operatives all ready, willing and able to handle an application for subsidy. One co-operative will not ask whether another is handling an application, because the producer will cease to do business with it. There was a time, therefore, when applications for subsidies in respect of olive trees in Italy outnumbered the number of olive trees that there could possibly have been in Italy. Even if Italy had been covered by olive trees from one end to the other, there would still have been more applications for subsidy than olive trees.

Mr. Leighton: Is not one of the main motivations of the CAP the way in which the ruling parties on the continent bribe their peasant farmers to vote for them? I do not mind that, but I object to the British paying the price.

Mr. Marlow: As the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) is aware, there is Salic law in Germany. If a landowner dies and he has 17 children, they each receive a 17th of the property. There tend to be smallholdings in Germany. People like to have smallholdings, which are not particularly efficient. They therefore have another job as well. They like to get some money to their smallholdings. As markets drop, they must get a lot of ecus for their land.

Although Germany claims to be effective and efficient, it is actually a secret admirer of the CAP because it allows Germany to provide through the back door subventions to the rural communities in Germany which the German taxpayers would not accept through the front door. That is their way of doing it. That is how they want it done.

I apologise for boring my hon. Friend the Minister of State about the CAP. However, I want to refer to sheep.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does not my hon. Friend agree that one of the great tragedies of the CAP is that it has required

some of the best minds in the British Government to devote so much of their time to activities which bring them little or no reward?

Mr. Marlow: I would not say that. My hon. Friend and our right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food struggled valiantly in the jungle and the morass of the common agricultural policy to do what is right and best for Britain, but they are one among 12. As I have said before, we normally play by Queensberry, whereas the rest play by Italian rules, and that makes life rather difficult.

Mr. Gill: My hon. Friend is making a most interesting and wide-ranging speech about agriculture, which he clearly recognises as a practical industry. It is regrettable that, in that highly practical industry—my hon. Friend might agree—the least consideration is now given to the practical aspects of agriculture and its products. For political reasons, each decision is inevitably a compromise, and almost invariably is too late for the practical farmer.

I am interested in my hon. Friend's views on that subject. If we go down that road and make decisions too late to be of any practical use, decisions which at the best of times are only a compromise, and decisions which are purely political, the long-term future for farmers must be pretty bleak.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is right to an extent. There are grave difficulties for people running the common agricultural policy at the moment because of circumstances, and they have to introduce policies. I hope that they will introduce policies in time for farmers to know what to do, what to sow, what to buy and what their programmes will be next year and the year after that. That is very difficult at the moment. I do not know what they can do to improve it, but improve it they certainly should. It is very difficult.

As we have different agriculture, a different society, a different rural mix and all the rest, if we had our own agricultural policy in our own country, that would not mean that we could not have a common market with Europe and that we cannot have one big level playing field —it would take some time to get there, but one big commercial and industrial playing field in Europe. We do not have to be part of a common agricultural policy to do that. If we had our own agricultural policy, I believe firmly that we could provide a much more flexible system so that our farmers were aware in time of what was the best programme in the interests of the United Kingdom so that they could follow that programme.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I am getting confused.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marlow: I am getting even more confused. Our problems at the moment are, first, that farmers do not know what to do in time and, secondly, that there is an increasing tendency among farmers not to plant crops but to plant subsidies. If we had our own agricultural policy we would have a far more genuine and sensible approach.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Before another hon. Member intervenes, I remind hon. Members that interventions should be short. They have been becoming progressively longer as the evening has passed.

Mr. Knapman: My intervention will be short, as is my custom. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) believe that one of the dangers might be that, in essence, civil servants in Brussels have views on slaughterhouses, for instance, and when the matter comes back to this country we have another group of civil servants, also with views on slaughterhouses, who build one lot of regulations on top of another? If the treaty is passed, will it affect the number of civil servants in this country?

Mr. Marlow: As night follows day, if we introduce legislation, particularly European legislation, there is a geometric progression in the number of civil servants. My hon. Friend reinforces a point that I have been making. Complex regulations are sometimes made in Brussels and we, because of our very honourable traditions, enforce them to the letter by the Queensberry rules, whereas others do not. My hon. Friend has referred to slaughterhouses. They are causing great grief to many people. Fallen stock or dead cattle—casualties—have to be moved. That is causing problems in agriculture at the moment.

Also, if an animal is fit but has to go, and it has to go fairly quickly, one does not want to have to put it on a lorry and trundle it 10 or 15 miles across the country to the nearest slaughterhouse. One needs somewhere small and close. All our traditional little butchers that have had their own slaughterhouses have produced an excellent service for the public for generations. I am not aware of any great hue and cry about people getting food poisoning in the village of Braunston where Berry's has been producing meat for many years. However, apparently we are going to be obliged by the great high-ups in Brussels to jettison our traditions, our culture and our butchery trade so that we can all have it nicely sealed in hermetic packages that come from Sainsbury's. I prefer the old system and I am sure that my hon. Friend does, too.

Mr. Lord: My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) posed a question about how difficult it is to fix prices promptly when there are so many people to think about. Is it not a basic problem of the common agricultural policy that, when dealing with 12 nations with different climates, cultures and political outlooks, it is bound to take a lot of horse trading, if my hon. Friend will forgive the agricultural allusion, to get it right? We have been asked what are the advantages of our old system. In the old days, when such matters were the responsibility of our own Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, on one particular day of the year all agriculture prices were fixed and everybody knew precisely when that was going to happen and where they stood.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is quite right. There are disparate agriculture economies in the European Community. We are trying to force them all into the same mould. That has not worked—it is not working. Also, some countries within the Community have a far higher proportion of people who live on the land, work on the land, work with people who work on the land or who have families who work on the land. Therefore, those countries have a disproportionate influence on agricultural policy

[Mr. Marlow]

which is then handed down to us. Our agricultural policy —the European agricultural policy—is less apt and appropriate for the United Kingdom than it is for many other countries within the European Community.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) asked a question about slaughtering. One thing that tears people's hearts is that, if we are to move towards the European system of having a slaughterhouse every 50 miles or so, animals will have to travel much greater distances before they are slaughtered. I should have thought that animal welfare groups would have had a say in those matters.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I am going to try to help my hon. Friend. In fact, I hope that I can help him to avoid falling straight into a major trap. He has been arguing that we should repatriate agricultural policy while having a free market with the rest of the Community in agricultural products. Does he appreciate that the result would be that the continentals would subsidise their farmers to a much greater extent precisely because of the greater political pressures on the farming community that have already been referred to, and our farmers would be undercut because they would not have the benefit of the same subsidy? As a result, our farmers would be wiped out and consumers in this country would be totally dependent on continental producers.

Mr. Marlow: I have heard of scaremongering and bogus scare stories, but I draw my hon. Friend back to the point that I made some time ago. We are making a massive subvention each year to the European Community, basically through the common agricultural policy and the European budget. By some judicious arrangement, if we did not have to make such massive subventions to the Community, we could make sure that our farmers were all right, that they were producing more, that they were producing as efficiently as they are at the moment, that we were more self-sufficient than we are at the moment, that our consumers and our poor would be able to have lower food prices which would enable us to keep taxes lower —my hon. Friend has connections in the City—and business would boom with the most prosperous economy in Europe because our taxes would be so low because we had to pay relatively smaller amounts.

I said that I would say a few words about sheep. We have a European policy with regard to sheep. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has struggled manfully in this matter, as in all others. Last year, one had to apply for subsidy, and so on. If one had a ewe that died, one had to inform the local office of the Ministry that the ewe had died, within 10 days of one's having discovered that the ewe had died. I think that there are 20·5 million ewes in this country. My hon. Friend the Minister of State will tell me what proportion of ewes die in childbirth, so to speak—it must be 2 per cent. or 3 per cent., which is about 500,000 ewes dying each year.

Have half a million letters been turning up at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food? If they have, what has been happening in France and Italy? Within 10 days of the discovery of the loss of an animal, have the returns been sent in? Last year, it was easy, but this year we have directives from Mr. Delors and his friends—it is not the fault of my hon. Friend the Minister of State.

8 pm

This year, one has to provide, in advance of a 100-day season, the number of ewes, including ewe lambs, that are about to give birth. If, during that period, one loses an animal, within 10 days of discovering the loss, one must let the Ministry know. If one gets rid of an animal, within seven days of doing so one has to replace it. Let us suppose that it rains heavily and spoils the pasture so that one has to get rid of some animals. One must replace them within a week. If the pasture cannot sustain them, why should one obtain more animals just because Mr. Delors says so?

If the farmer is dealing with lambing or some other task on the farm, he may not be able to replace losses within seven days. He will not be able to go to his neighbour to replace a sheep as the neighbour will have to keep up his quota. The farmer may well not be able to get to market to buy the sheep to keep up to quota. What will he do? Will he say, "I am sorry—I have lost some sheep"? In addition, his bank manager may be sniffing over the farmer's shoulder and wanting cash. The only way the farmer can raise some cash is by selling a few ewes. If he does so, he will be in trouble with Mr. Delors, and for every ewe sold he will lose three or four times as much subsidy.

We all play cricket in the United Kingdom, so our farmers will all admit that the pasture was wrong, the bank manager was getting on to them, and they had to sell 40 out of their 200 ewes. The farmer will say, "I am an honest man—it was an fair cop and I will write to the Ministry to say that I have got rid of 40 ewes." He will lose the subsidy on the other ewes. Will that happen in Italy and the rest of Europe? Or will the regulation merely discriminate against people in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Gill: My hon. Friend is out of order in ascribing all that to Mr. Delors. The Council of Ministers has approved such matters.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is being a little harsh. I know that it is the Council of Ministers that takes such action. My hon. Friend also knows of the long nights spent in discussion, when we lose 20 and win one. In order to ensure that we win one concession, we have to lose 20. I ask my hon. Friend to put himself in the Minister's position to see how difficult it would be to achieve a better deal. The cards are stacked against us. Our boys have struggled manfully on behalf of the Government.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on another matter——

Mr. Marlow: I am sure that I am wrong on many issues.

Sir Russell Johnston: That is also true. I am tired of hearing the hon. Gentleman say, "The rest of Europe is dishonest and we are the only honest people around." That is simply not true.

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. Gentleman was not present when I intervened in the speech of his hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) talks to farmers in his district about milk quotas. I asked the hon. Member for North Cornwall when milk quotas would be applied in Italy. We have had them here for years—we are under the same regime, in the same common market—but the Italians have not had them. Will they be imposed in Italy this month, next month, this year, in five years or in 10 years? The right hon.

Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber said that we should not say that there was an uneven level of application of Community regulations. Can he tell me when milk quotas are to be applied in Italy? I shall gladly give way. I give him the chance, but he is not taking it.

Mr. Lord: Is there not a basic difference? I think that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is talking about fraud and cheating, whereas my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is talking about ridiculous machinery. There is, in fact, common ground. My hon. Friend referred to Italian milk quotas. I was a parliamentary private secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when milk quotas were introduced—it seems a long time ago.

In this country, we flick a switch and, because we have a milk marketing board, all our farmers are called into line the next morning. They fill in their forms and do what they are told. In Italy, it is not known where the dairy farmers are, so there was no question of the milk quotas being enforced in the same way as we were able to do here. There is an uneven playing field, which discriminates horribly against this country. That is not the result of fraud, but because we are much more competent and organised, and have been penalised for it.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has been characteristically generous. He likes to see the best side of people. I am not critical of southern Europeans for having a different attitude to such matters—that is to do with their culture and way of life. I am worried that the difference discriminates against us. As my hon. Friend said, in matters of regulation and record, the southern Europeans, for reasons of their own, have different standards and attitudes from those of the United Kingdom. I am concerned about Britain. I want us to get a fair deal, and I do not think that we do.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that, before we entered the common agriculture policy, the structures and civil service which existed in this country —such as the marketing boards—gave us a framework within which it was possible to change policy quickly? That is why it is easier for those in other parts of Europe to cheat if they want to.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend but, with respect, I think that we have exhausted that subject.

I shall make one comment on sheep and then move to other issues, unless someone is bursting to talk about other matters. There are many important subjects that I want to mention, but I am not mad keen to do so if other hon. Members want to speak on them.

I understand that, as a result of a decision by our bureaucratic masters, we will have to identify all animals, including sheep, for the purposes of avoiding fraud. In this context I do not mention Italy, but Greece and Portugal. How are we to mark the sheep? As I said to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, I get many things wrong, but I understand that we must ear-tag sheep, which worries me.

I doubt whether the people who make the regulations have ever put on a pair of Wellington boots, let alone gone on to a farm. My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) knows considerably more about the subject than I do, but I have spent nights with sheep—I shall rephrase that: I have helped sheep to lamb, I have experience of catching sheep and dealing with sheep, and I know a certain amount about sheep.

It is a savage thing to do but—because I want to identify sheep and how well they are lambing—I put ear tags on sheep. Sheep are funny animals, which burrow around in hedges and get caught on barbed wire. If we ear-tag sheep, I bet a pound to 20 shillings that, within three years, the tags will have been ripped out. I do not know of an identification system that will work properly. Again, I get on my knees to my hon. Friend the Minister of State to ask him not to introduce a system that will not work just to please our bureaucratic masters in Brussels.

I congratulate the Government on a difficult task that has been almost adequately performed. The amendments are probing amendments which relate to many of the issues in article 3, which is part of the meat—the sirloin —of the treaty. They constitute the 10 commandments from Brussels and have involved long negotiations in Brussels.

If we look back to the dark days of the Maastricht meeting about 15 months ago, we see that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister performed magnificently. He had a difficult task. He did not want the Maastricht treaty. He did not initiate or give birth to it. It was foisted on him; he was ambushed. In those circumstances, the treaty could have been much worse.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). He has shown charm and a considerable knowledge of Europe. I disagree with him on many of these policies, but in the circumstances he has done a good job. The trouble is that, despite heroic efforts, we still have this treaty and certain of the amendments to it.

The world has changed since December 1991, and when judging the treaty we ought to look at the motive behind it. Whose fingerprints are on it? We need look no further than the three wise men, or perhaps wicked uncles: Kohl, Mitterrand and Delors—two Frenchmen and a Hun. They are old men in a hurry, anxious to impose their own chapter on the history books of Europe before it is too late. They have said many times that Europe is changing and that the window of opportunity is closing fast, so they want to spirit the treaty through before the window is closed forever.

They display the ambitions of a generation of the past to fix Europe for ever in its own time warp. It is almost like a mad perversion of Sleeping Beauty—not to kiss the European princess and wake her to the glories of the Maastricht castle but to rape her while she slumbers before she is sensible to the realities of her degradation——

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I hesitate to interrupt my hon. Friend's reverie, but perhaps he will reflect on the fact that we are not moving into some wonderful new Europe, as he seems to think, because we have come to the end of the cold war. The cold reality, as witness Yugoslavia, is that we have reverted to the old Europe—full of national hatreds, competing nationalisms, ethnic unrest and factional groups. Had Yugoslavia been in the Community for the past 30 years, it is very unlikely that the sort of conflict taking place now would have happened. I am worried that people like my hon. Friend who talk of Huns and Frenchmen carving up Europe want to invoke again the old nationalisms and to cause again the old problems which the EC is designed to prevent.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not go down that road; it is not strictly relevant to the amendments.

Mr. Marlow: Some of my best friends are Huns, Dame Janet. The treaty will impose on the Community the very problems that Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union have experienced. I am in favour of European co-operation and greater European unity. The trouble is that the contents of the treaty have been devised on high by a group of bureaucrats who believe that they know what is best for us. If we want Europe to come together and co-operate so as to generate a moderen and prosperous Europe, that must be done in a natural and developing process. It cannot be imposed. In the Soviet Union, communism was imposed; what happened in Yugoslavia with the ending of the Austro-Hungarian empire after the first world war, was also imposed. That is why it did not endure, and why I seek, to amend the treaty so that the same sort of nonsense and damage is not imposed on Europe. But I am every bit as keen on progress as the Minister of State is.

Sir Richard Body: Does my hon. Friend agree that a major argument against the common agricultural policy is that it has driven a wedge between us and France—two countries which should be at peace and working together in comity, which they are not doing now?

Mr. Marlow: Yes. The agricultural needs of France are different from those of the United Kingdom. The French will realise as time goes on that we must return to a balance of power in Europe. Germany has problems which I hope, from its point of view and from ours, it will overcome. There is no guarantee that it will—it might start to spiral downwards—but if it gets through its financial problems and unification problems and refugee problems and regains its self-confidence, it will become incredibly powerful in the European Community, so there is a natural alliance between ourselves and the French in maintaining the balance of power. Increasingly, some French statesmen, not politicians, understand that.

8.15 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I am not sure whether our hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) is trying to say that there would not have been a war in Yugoslavia if it had been a beneficiary of the common agricultural policy, but his historical analogy is in any case a poor one. From 1815 to 1914, the United Kingdom was not engaged in continental warfare, so long periods of our history——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going down precisely the road that I suggested that he should not take.

Mr. Shepherd: I was trying to emphasise that, during those hundred years, we did not have the benefit of the common agricultural policy, so there was no basis for tension. I was trying to suggest that the CAP perhaps gives rise to tension rather than the contrary.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is right. The CAP does give rise to tensions in Europe, because the needs of our agricultural economy are very different from other parts of Europe. By repatriating agricultural policy we would cater for our own needs better, as would the countries in Europe, so there would be fewer grounds for conflict.

The world has changed a great deal since December 1991. The European bicycle is still pedalling, but intermittently, and it is swerving from side to side. It is in grave danger of being squashed by a juggernaut. First the Danes said no, then only 33 per cent. of the French said, oui. As they become aware of the contents of the treaty and the amendments proposed to it, the people of Britain are becoming more reluctant to embrace it.

Mr. Curry: If we did not have the CAP, does my hon. Friend think that Britain would have any more success at getting her consignments of lamb into France? Does he appreciate the extent to which upland constituencies depend on exports and the extent to which United Kingdom sheep producers depend on this market place? Would it be easier to get our consignments into France if we were not partners in the common agricultural policy and thus had no right to send our lamb to France?

Mr. Marlow: I regret that intervention. I respect my hon. Friend as someone who is much more intelligent than I am. He should realise that, if we were not in the CAP or could derogate from it and had our own structure of agriculture—British agriculture is still not self-sufficient—it would be markedly different. If farmers were not raising sheep, they might be doing something else. The prices might be lower. Red meat consumption has fallen in this country, but if prices were lower it might increase. The problem is not as straightforward as the Minister suggests.

Mr. Lord: It is not just we who might seek to repatriate agricultural policy. Perhaps other nations will think of doing the same. Every nation should look after its own agriculture as it thinks best and have trading arrangements which suit it.

To answer the Minister's point about lamb, surely the answer is that people will buy our lamb if it is the right lamb at the right price. It will be in their interests to do so. Otherwise, they will be biting off their noses to spite their faces.

Mr. Marlow: I have been boring the House for far too long—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry to see the Minister of State agreeing with that remark. While he was away—I know that he had good reason to be—I was polite about him. My hon. Friend has a strength which is a weakness in me. He is fair to all the other countries and peoples in Europe. I am not—I am purely concerned with the interests and policies of the United Kingdom, which would be better effected if we had a level playing field and proper co-operation with our European partners. We shall not achieve those ends through the treaty. That is why I support the amendments.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The amendments, of which I have tabled six or seven, propose that certain sections of the treaty be omitted so that they can be discussed. I wish that I was dealing with economic issues but we have had one debate on those and shall return to the topic in other debates. The main problem with the treaty is that monetarism is the cancer at its core.

I should like to deal with three broad areas, the first of which is commercial policy towards the single market. The second area is research and development and the third is primarily concerned with the common fisheries policy and its legal basis. It is important to raise those issues because in many ways the treaty is all things to all people. It is deliberately designed and written in that way.

As we saw earlier in the debate, the simple position of my party is that the treaty means what we wish it said, to the Government the treaty means what the Prime Minister wants it to mean, and the European position tends to be that the treaty means what it says. The European approach will prevail because the damaging evidence and the results of the treaty are clearly spelled out in it. The debate has been a process of wish fulfilment, with people arguing that the treaty does not quite mean what it says or that it will all be different when it is implemented. Therefore, it is important to ask what will be implemented.

I have tabled amendments Nos. 357, 358, 360 and 361 on commercial policy, the internal market, competition and the approximation of laws. What do the sections of the treaty that I propose to remove add to the provisions of the Single European Act? We are all attached to the principle of fair competition, but all hon. Members are deluged with complaints from constituents and firms that the level playing field does not operate. Even now in 1993 with the single market nominally with us there are still inhibitions on competition and areas in which British firms cannot compete on an equal basis. There are many barriers to the operation of the single market and they must be removed.

What difference will the Maastricht treaty make to the barriers to fair competition for our firms and industries that operate in the EC? Some of the barriers are social, some are institutional and some are legal, and they will not be effectively removed by the provisions of the treaty that my amendments would remove. I want Ministers to justify the treaty's proposals and tell us how they will help British firms facing inequal competition.

There is a series of inequalities. For example, there is the inequality of the ability to take over and develop representation or to take over firms to obtain a distribution network in Europe. Britain has the most open takeover market in Europe. It is possible for any firm to come here and launch a contested takeover bid for a British firm and then dismantle it. That has happened many times and firms have been reduced to shells. The manufacturing capacity was removed and production on the continent was substituted. The firms were used as a distribution network for imported manufactured goods from outside, usually from Europe.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does my hon. Friend agree that that happens not just in manufacturing? Nationalised companies in France use taxpayers' money to buy large numbers of assets that have been sold by the British Government and which belonged to the British people. Large companies such as Compagnie Generale des Eaux control many British assets through quite legitimate acquisitions of rights.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: As usual, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. Wherever the investment money comes from, those firms have a freedom which our firms do not have. There are all kinds of inhibitions—legal but mainly institutional, and especially the close nexus between firms and the banks which provide the finance and have an interest in the firms—to the ability to make contested takeovers in Germany. In that sense a British firm is on its own. It is nominally controlled by its shareholders who are nominally all-powerful. In practice they sell to the highest bidder, but there is investment by the banks and lander in German firms.

Competition is rendered unfair because of effective subsidies through lower prices charged by nationalised industries in Europe, especially Electricité Generale de France, which provides an effectively subsidised lower energy price which reduces costs for French firms. There are also problems with subsidies to Italian firms. All those subsidies take time to define and explore and it takes time to make representations to the Commission.

The other hidden obstacle to genuine competition is that, as far as I can see, there is no strengthening of any ability to strike down the barriers and no sign of an ability by British firms faced with such barriers to have them dealt with promptly before those firms are ruined by the barriers. Those who are inhibiting competition and distorting the playing field survive and prosper to take over an increasing share of our market and repel the exports that we need to make to Europe.

What do the provisions which my amendments seek to remove mean for the effective establishment of a genuine, open, single market with effective and free competition? The Minister must deal with that question in length. We have had many assurances that in voting for the Single European Act five or six years ago Conservative Members entered into all kinds of commitments. To what did they commit themselves in terms of accomplishing the single market that they support?

The second group of amendments are Nos. 384, 385, 386 and 387, which deal with research technology and development. The whole tenor of Government policy for the past 13 or 14 years has been to weaken and undermine the manufacturing base upon which the economy rests. Research technology and the kind of development that the Commission wants to be able to foster through the treaty's provisions do not spring fully armed from the head of the Commission. They are generated, supported and financed by a powerful, effective, competitive industrial base. That is exactly what has been undermined in this country.

Instead of building up British industrial and manufacturing capacity, the process over the past 13 years of diminished competitiveness, over-valuation and deflation has been deeply damaging, especially from 1979 to 1982 but also from 1989 onwards and particularly after we joined the exchange rate mechanism in 1990. The result is that over a quarter of our manufacturing capacity has closed and our manufacturing base has shrunk too far to be viable to support a healthy competitive manufacturing economy and our standard of living and institutions.

That weakness will be disastrously difficult to remedy. It gives the lie to all the Government's hopes that we are in a 1973 situation—one little dollop of devaluation and we can produce a new economic miracle. When that happened in 1973, our manufacturing base was stronger and more competitive and it could be revived by devaluation. It has now been undermined too far for that policy to be effective.

8.30 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Given what my hon. Friend said about the decline and the destruction of a large part of our manufacturing industry, would it not be necessary to do an awful lot more than have a level playing field? My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and I were involved in the earlier

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devaluation, when we had a manufacturing base, but the problem now is that if we do not have the power to act, it will not be possible to——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. We cannot hear the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) because he is turning and talking to his colleague.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) may have noted what the hon. Lady has said.

Mr. Mitchell: My right hon. Friend is right. To revive, expand, widen or deepen our industrial base will be a more difficult challenge and it will not be achieved either by getting an effective level playing field in Europe or by just redressing the terms of manufacturing trade through competitive devaluation, which is what we have had. That devaluation must go further and deeper and there must be measures to manage the economy and encourage investment in manufacturing. The whole job will be much more difficult.

My point was simply that the weakening of the industrial base has meant that substitution of a large part of domestically controlled manufacturing capacity by Japanese investment, which will not generate the same investment in research and development. To call it "screwdriver investment" is to put it too harshly and strongly, but all that it will bring us is the assembly of cars and other goods from materials manufactured in Japan. More importantly, the high value-added element in the research and development equation will be kept in Japan because the Japanese, unlike us, know where their real interests lie.

All that means that we have been weakening research and development and technology at the same time as the European Community has been trying to build up a competence in that sector. I do not quibble with that—it is bound to follow that course, particularly because Europe too has been burdened with over-valuation. The emphasis in research and development and technology is now all on competitiveness and on increasing the competitiveness of Europe as a whole through investing in that sector. That becomes a substitute for the competitiveness which should be there through the exchange rate, but which we lost through the exchange rate policies that dominated in Europe.

There was an over-valuation of European currencies as a block throughout the 1980s. That over-valuation, which has made the Community the unemployment and low growth black spot of the west, has also made it an area of diminished investment and the Commission has had to come forward with its own programmes and policies.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman remember that the percentage of sales in the United Kingdom that goes into research and development is only 2 per cent., whereas in Germany runs at 6 per cent.? That tells a story, and shows what we must rectify. Is the hon. Gentleman also aware that research and development for the benefit of the so-called Euro-champions—for example, Phillips-Siemens and the APT-Spanish telecommunications venture—have been singular failures? Pouring in money in an attempt to restrain the invasion by the Japanese of mega-bids, as they call them, is not working. Indeed, it is chucking money away.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is right. He used the argument that I was about to advance. He has stolen my thunder and hon. Members will say that I am being boring when I make the same point, but it remains valid. Research and development and technology, have been weakened, in Britain and in the Community, compared to the Japanese competitor particularly. The Commission has attempted to substitute its own research and development programme. We shall have to pay for that—because, under the present system of financing the Community, we shall be major contributors—without getting the benefit of it. Because it is a bureaucratically handled system of investment and technology, it will often—not necessarily always—be wasted. The problem is that it will go to the kind of prestige project that a bureaucracy is likely to invest in rather than to the kind of project that the market would drive investment to if we had a healthy competitive manufacturing base.

We are preparing the way for an extension of that policy by the provisions of the treaty and in particular those that my amendments would remove. I have tabled the amendments to find out what Ministers expect to see as a result of those provisions in the treaty. I am worried about what will be the nature of development. We have seen it already in high definition television. As the Community has concentrated on the D-MAC system, it has invested in a technology that is manifestly outdated rather than moving ahead to the latest technologies. That will benefit companies in Europe that the Community wishes to protect—in Holland and France—but it is of no benefit to Britain, although we shall have to help pay for it. The Government have rightly opposed that. The treaty will lay us open to a whole series of such bureaucratic investments, which will have to be fought each time. That will be a wasteful process.

I notice in the Commission's document, "Research after Maastricht: an assessment, a strategy", it says, almost rhapsodically:

> "The 'research' part of the Treaty has been amended, and while the changes are not earth-shattering in absolute terms, as with music very small differences of emphasis may alter the overall effect."

That is beautiful stuff but it must be taken in conjunction with another sentence, which reads:

> "The impact of the Delors II package, which contains an entirely new part devoted to competitiveness, can be seen in terms of its research application."

What are we embarking on by the research and technology provisions in the treaty, which my amendments would strike out? What will Ministers accept and go along with? Is not the policy dangerous in that we shall contribute to the paying of it, but will not get the benefit of it? What provisions do Ministers envisage under the Delors proposals to finance them at our expense? The document on the assessment of research after Maastricht gives the new purposes of research.

I shall not bother the Committee with them all, but page 35 sets out four new objectives for research. They also include the following provision:

> "The framework programme shall be implemented through specific programmes".

On page 33, on the financial perspective on research and development, it also says:

"An examination of the figures appearing in the R and DT item in the financial perspectives shows a significant progression. R and DT expenditure increases from ECU 2·4 billion in 1992 to ECU 4·2 billion in 1997. The annual increase is about 11·5 per cent. The increase from 1992 to 1997 is about 71·6 per cent. In 1997 R and DT expenditure will reach approximately 5 per cent. of the total Community budget." What is our position on that? Do we accept that? Do we accept that the provisions in the treaty will have the implications that the Commission is setting out in its document? That question must be answered so that we can know exactly on what we are embarking in terms of the Maastricht treaty.

The next part of my argument is based on the common fisheries policy. I am glad to see the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the Government Front Bench. I hope that he will respond to my remarks. I shall not deal with the common agricultural policy, which I dislike intensely. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) assessed it correctly. There is a need to repatriate the CAP. I hope that the Committee will divide on amendment No. 184, to which I am speaking and which, if agreed, would repatriate the policy.

It is a disastrous part of the EEC. It is still taking nearly two thirds of the Community's budget after all these years of reforming, changing and modifying it. There have been so many "triumphs" in the negotiating chamber, but the CAP still absorbs the overwhelming part of the budget. It is still unmodified, and it costs more every year. There is still massive fraud, and the policy continues to suit the United Kingdom as little as it ever did. It costs every family of four in this country between £17 and £18 a week. It imposes a burden on our industrial costs and competitiveness. We are being asked to support inefficient agriculture in other parts of Europe.

I am baffled by the position of the Liberal party. The Liberal spokesman represents the party of free trade. We recall that Cobden and Bright led the movement to abolish the corn laws, yet Liberal Members are now the foremost defenders of the new corn laws.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The hon. Gentleman has referred to the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler). My hon. Friend said that the alternative policy, as the wrecking amendments before us signify, would be to take Britain out of the common fisheries policy and out of the CAP. They would be removed from the part of the treaty that we are discussing. I shall be interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's response to the question that my hon. Friend put to the Committee: does he think that Britain would have more influence in trying to see, for example, the furtherance of the GATT and global free trade on its own or as an integrated member state of the European Community?

Mr. Mitchell: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is falling into the same trap as his Liberal confreres. It is obvious that they are producing a sort of brain rot that is affecting his position on these matters. As for the GATT negotiations, it has been extremely difficult to stop the Commission negotiating from a French point of view and instead to negotiate from the point of view of consumers in the United Kingdom.

If we came out of the CAP, we could buy food on the cheapest market and reduce our costs. The basis of our agriculture has been distorted. We would be better repatriating the CAP. Great play has been made about the cost of returning to the old deficiency payments, but those would be domestic costs. Those costs would not go across the exchanges. We have a massive balance of payments deficit and we are having to contribute to a policy that does not suit us. The system of payments within the Community distorts the United Kingdom's position. We are not contributing in terms of our ability to contribute: we are contributing instead in terms of the overall situation of agriculture and imports of food into the country. We are a net contributor, and the second highest contributor.

Sir Russell Johnston: We hear so much talk about cheap food, but there is none unless we choose to take cheap food by exploiting the third world.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman's shape suggests that he has found access to cheap food or that he is extremely well paid. What he has just said is nonsense. Food outside the EEC is much cheaper than food within it. If we resumed our old pattern and repatriated our policy on agriculture, we could do what comes naturally to us, which is to buy food on the cheapest markets and send out our manufactured goods in return for that relationship.

8.45 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Kennedy: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mitchell: I have obviously touched a nerve. I give way to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy).

Mr. Kennedy: I do not know why the hon. Gentleman is expressing surprise. He has touched a nerve by attacking my party. Surely it is reasonable to respond. The hon. Gentleman talks about going back to the old patterns, but what sort of argument is he trying to re-run? I remember the literature that the Labour Government distributed. It was supposed to be neutral material. In 1975, we had the "yes" literature and the "no" literature. The Government advice was to vote yes.

We were told in the literature that various Prime Ministers of Commonwealth countries—for example, Australia and New Zealand—were urging us to vote to stay in the European Community. I am taking up the hon. Gentleman's reference to exporting patterns. It was said that we should opt to stay in the Community and then to renegotiate terms. The Labour Government are on record as recommending that course to the British people. Why is it that, nearly 20 years later, the hon. Gentleman cannot come to terms with reality and with the decision that was then made?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is seeking to divert me from the path of rectitude. I was praising the past of his party, not attacking it. He is attacking the past of his party. Indeed, he is betraying every principle for which it ever stood in the context of these matters. It is incomprehensible that he should be doing so.

To answer the hon. Gentleman's question, are we to be forced to escalate payments to agriculture by accepting the CAP in a form which French farmers determine for the Community by means of political power or intransigent obstinacy, inappropriate though that might be for the United Kingdom? Why cannot we repatriate the CAP in

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bits? Why cannot extra payments be made domestically if a Government want to make extra payments to their farmers to support them at the level of the French peasantry, or to those German part-time farmers who work in the car industry but who have a few cows? Why cannot there be that form of repatriation? It does not have to be done in one fell swoop. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that, if we took that course, we would be more competitive economically. The cost of living would be lower if we repatriated the entire policy.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the consequences of the CAP has been the destruction of agriculture in many third-world countries? The CAP is directed towards producing food products within western Europe that could be produced elsewhere at less cost and at much greater social benefit. Examples are the fate of the banana industry on the Windward Islands, of the cane sugar industry and of the maize industry in many countries throughout the world. The policy of the EEC has been detrimental to third-world economies. The last Lomé convention to be signed gave the lowest ever real rate of increase in food prices to the ACP countries, and produced the greatest interference in those economies. Is that not an example of Euro-arrogance, to the detriment of the peoples of the third world?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is right. At this stage, however, I shall leave the CAP. I never intended to deal with it. I mentioned it only in passing. It is because the Liberals are so guilty about their position on the CAP that I have been diverted. My hon. Friend has made a powerful and effective point.

I move on to the common fisheries policy, which would be struck out, as it were, by the acceptance of amendment No. 184, but in a different way and on a different basis. If we accept amendment No. 184, which advocates the striking out in article 3e of the reference to a common policy for agriculture and fisheries, there will still be a common agricultural policy. That policy is set out in the treaty of Rome, a treaty that we will not be amending. The important distinction is that there will not be a common fisheries policy, because there is no legitimate, legal provision in the treaty of Rome for such a policy.

I hope that the Minister will respond to my argument. If we accept the amendment and strike out the common fisheries policy as it is referred to in article 3e, we leave ourselves without such a policy except that which is agreed between Governments.

It does not have any basis in a treaty in the way that the CAP does, because that is written into the treaty of Rome, whereas that is an argument for accepting the amendment and striking out the CFP.

I want to develop my argument about why, if we accept the amendment, effectively we will be eliminating the CFP. It is a difficult argument. I hope that the Minister will bear with me because he will have to reply to it. I want to refer to a book by a Mr. R. R. Churchill called "EEC Fisheries Law". On page 23, he says about the treaty of Rome:

"At first glance, it is not obvious that there is any provision in the EEC Treaty that could form the legal basis for a common fisheries policy or for fisheries legislation, since no article of the Treaty is overtly concerned with fisheries."

In other words, any assumption that the CFP has been provided for in the treaty of Rome is wrong. It has been provided for only by a series of distortions and dodges and doubtful interpretations. Therefore, if we agree to the amendment and strike out the CFP, it will no longer exist in a treaty.

The book then says, however, that evidence for a common fisheries policy is to be found in the provisions dealing with agriculture:

"After providing in Article 3(d) that the activities of the Community shall include 'the adoption of a common policy in the sphere of agriculture,' the Treaty goes on"

to argue that agriculture actually includes fisheries.

As I read the treaty—I want the Minister to deal with this point—article 38 does not deal with agriculture in that way. It states:

"the common market shall extend to agriculture and trade in agricultural products."

Those are two matters with a distinction between them. The book states that in the treaty

"Agricultural products are defined as 'products of the soil, of stockfarming and of fisheries".

The extension to fisheries applies only to agricultural products, not to agriculture. Therefore, the common policy for agriculture does not extend to a common policy for fisheries. That is an important distinction because although we can regulate the trade in fish products, we cannot regulate the catching and the conservation of fish and other such aspects.

My argument is supported by the fact that article 40(1) of the treaty of Rome specifies that a common policy should have been adopted by the end of the transitional period—that is, 31 December 1969. No policy was developed——

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend means 1979.

Mr. Mitchell: No, I mean 1969. I am talking about the treaty of Rome.

No common policy was developed for fisheries by that time; it was developed only subsequently, in the early 1970s. It was clearly developed then as a means of gaining access to the waters of those fishing nations with rich fishing grounds applying for entry—Britain, Norway and Denmark.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): My hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding is that, during the negotiations in 1972 on Britain's accession to the treaty, there were not specific negotiations on fisheries. That bears out what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. His point emphasises the basic difference between our approach and that of the Norwegians. Fisheries were not important to our Government, who were desperate to get into the EEC because they had no policy for the independent development of our country. They were prepared to accept any humiliation and any inadequate deal for the fishing industry in their desperate desire to get into the EEC. That was not the attitude of the Norwegian Government, who obtained stronger defences for their fishing industry. However, even those subsequently proved to be inadequate because the Norwegian electorate rejected them.

However, I am not sure that my hon. Friend is right in what he says, because, on page 29 of his book, Churchill argues that article 102 of the treaty of accession mentions fisheries and provides:

"From the sixth year after Accession at the latest, the Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission, shall

determine conditions for fishing with a view to ensuring protection of the fishing grounds and conservation of the biological resources of the sea."

However, Mr. Churchill argues that that cannot be a legal basis for a common fisheries policy. He says:

"Article 102 cannot be considered as a legal basis for fisheries legislation . . . because the intention in adding Article 102 to the Act of Accession was that a specific time limit should be laid down, rather than a new power conferred on the Community".

It is important that we consider the argument, and that the Minister deals with it when he replies. There is no legal basis in either this treaty or in the treaty of Rome for a common fisheries policy that has been bedeviling the fishing industry for so many years.

Mr. Cash: One point slightly troubles me, and that is the Factortame case. Whether or not we like it, the European Court has adjudicated on that case on the assumption that there is a fisheries policy, including quotas, when in fact it appears that there is no such policy. Was the Churchill book published after Factortame?

Mr. Mitchell: The book was published before Factortame. The judgment is a further force behind my argument. The court made a decision, based on a principle that is in the treaty of Rome, that companies within the Community should be able to establish themselves wherever they wanted—that there should be the right of free circulation of business within the Community. The judgment was not reached on the basis of any common fisheries policy that gives nation states a measure of control or influence over the catches in their waters or that allocates catches on the basis of contributions to the common fisheries pool. The court effectively said that the principle included in the treaty of Rome was more important than the principle which I am arguing is not in that treaty. That was the basis of the judgment.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because some hon. Members have assumed that those of us who follow these matters know all about the treaty. In fact, this is the first time in 20 years that I have realised that there is no sound basis for the common fisheries policy, with its attendant problems for fishing vessels and policing the seas. The House and the country are much obliged to my hon. Friend for making that clear.

Does not my hon. Friend's point clearly show that the moral throughout these debates is that there are always surprises in any EC treaty? If the basis of the CFP is rocky, does not that show that in many of the treaties we have passed, especially the Single European Act, there are constant surprises? We do not know to what we bind ourselves.

Mr. Mitchell: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that compliment. To have added to his stock of knowledge on Europe is, perhaps, the most significant contribution that I have ever made to the proceedings of the House. I am genuinely flattered, because it is difficult to add to what my hon. Friend knows about Europe. We have mistakenly acknowledged that the treaty of Rome provides for a common fisheries policy, but it does not. If the amendment is passed, we will be able to decide what action we want to take about a fisheries policy to suit our purposes.

9 pm

The fisheries policy does not have a legal basis in the treaty. It is sometimes argued that fish do not carry flags and do not have any national allegiance. The argument does not have a biological basis. It is nonsense to say that other nations will fish out those fish that migrate across the North sea just out of spite. The normal process of migration would continue. That inhibition has not prevented Norway from enforcing and administering a most efficient fisheries policy, which has done far better by that country's industry than the common fisheries policy has done by ours.

Only this nation state is concerned to conserve and to build its fish stocks so that they can be passed on to the next generation. All the other nations have a predatory interest in our fish stocks because they want to keep their industries, which are too large, in existence. That is why they wanted access to our waters in the first place. That is why they framed that pastiche of a deal in the form of a common fisheries policy just before the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) initiated negotiations. Those nations knew what was coming and wanted access to our stocks.

There is no legal or biological basis for the common fisheries policy. For a nation whose waters contain more than two thirds of the stocks and more than 70 per cent. —probably three quarters—of the stocks by value of those fish most needed for human consumption, we secured a pathetically bad deal in being allocated one third or less of the catches made in waters to which we make such a large contribution. That happened after losing access to Icelandic waters as well.

It would be in our interest to repatriate our fisheries and agricultural policies. We could administer and enforce them. The waters are ours, and we have the Fisheries Limits Act 1976 as a basis. We would only have to relist the countries exempted from that legislation. It is spectacularly in our interests to do that.

The Minister has created a situation in which our fishermen will be stopped from putting to sea to catch our fish in our waters, while at the same time not imposing any effective control on continental competitors whose landings are not administered, checked and policed in the same way, but who are allowed to fish on uncontrolled in our waters. The British fishing industry will not accept that for a minute.

Mr. Cash: As to south-west area 7, does the hon. Gentleman recall that Britain is allowed to take only 10 per cent. of quotas and stocks, whereas our so-called partners in the Community take 90 per cent? That is a curious partnership. In 1993, the quota in the south-west will be nearly halved. Is that not a disgraceful state of affairs? How in heaven's name did we reach that position?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is right. In this context, "partners" means bitter competitors. The fisherman is by nature a predator. While our fishermen are shackled and kept in port by Government policies, their fellow predators are not held back, checked and controlled in the same way. The odds must be redressed in favour of our industry. Aneurin Bevan said that our island was built on coal and surrounded by fish. It is inconceivable that it should find itself in the present situation. We are closing

[Mr. Mitchell]

our coal mines and allowing other nations to catch our fish. That is a result of a misguided emphasis on developing a common fisheries policy.

Mr. Spearing: To complete the Bevan trio, is my hon. Friend aware that there is considerable doubt and argument about sovereignty over the oil beneath the sea? Perhaps that ought to be considered in a future debate, Mr. Morris—but it is quite as murky as the non-fisheries policy.

Mr. Mitchell: I will not extend myself like an oil slick across the surface of this debate and address the oil industry, otherwise people will say, "Well, well—he has gone too far." Nevertheless, my hon. Friend is absolutely correct.

I have asked a series of questions arising from the Government's perception of what will happen following the introduction of the single market, which is supposed to introduce a genuinely level playing field for our businesses exporting to and competing within Europe. I have asked about research and technology, and the consequences to our contribution and our benefits if this inflated programme goes ahead.

Mr. Lord: Is not repatriation a double-edged sword? Would it not help both our farming and our fishing industries? The whole tenor of the hon. Gentleman's argument—with which I greatly sympathise—has been almost one of helplessness, on behalf of the fishermen in his constituency. His ability to represent them in the House, as Members of Parliament for his seat have done for centuries, has been taken from him.

My principal interest is in farming rather than fishing, but the hon. Gentleman's problems are even greater than mine. I wait with interest to hear the Minister's justification for what the Community has done to the fishermen, and his explanation of the benefits that they are to receive.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. Great Grimsby is still England's premier fishing port, and ours is still a major fishing industry. It is very frustrating to have to go back to fishermen who are already bitterly disappointed—fishermen who have had an extremely raw deal, whose take-home money and catches are substantially down and who are now stopped from going to sea at certain times—and tell them. "I am sorry, but I can do nothing about it; it is the common market. We accepted what the common market said. The Minister did a deal. I know that the result of that deal will be enforced more vigorously on you than on your competitors, but we are not our own masters."

We shall all find ourselves in that position in regard to a range of policies—particularly the central policy that governs the way in which our economy is run to achieve growth or full employment—if we accept the deflationary monetarist cancer that lies at the core of the Maastricht treaty. We shall all be in a position in which I have been for years: a position that I would not want to inflict on anyone, because it is a national tragedy and a personal humiliation.

I have presented three serious arguments about three matters of prime concern to me. I hope that they will be dealt with seriously—especially the argument about fishing—because the House and the country are becoming fed up with continually being told, "Never mind the text; feel the glory of the union. Never mind what the treaty says; think how it will be when wishes are horses." We must consider the reality—what the treaty really says. I hope that the Government will justify that.

Mr. Bill Walker: The concluding remarks of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who represents a fishing constituency, could well have been my concluding remarks about the Scottish constituency and interest that I represent. There is no doubt that, when Scotland joined the Union and created this unitary Parliament, that Parliament had powers to make decisions about all the matters that affected our constituents. The more powers that we give away—however good our intentions—the more we will weaken this Parliament. We must reach a point at which the people of Scotland will ask, "What is the advantage to us of a unitary Parliament, given the powers involved?"

I want to consider those powers under the amendments that we are discussing. If I had drafted them myself, they could not have been more relevant to my constituency. I do not think that it will be long before the people of Scotland point out that they could do better on their own, whether they are inside or outside Europe. I suggest that at that point the days of this Parliament will be numbered.

The group of amendments that we are considering deal with industrial issues. I represent a 2,000 square mile Scottish constituency which is under water today. Last week it was under a lot of snow, with blocked roads causing many problems. That snow has largely melted, so my constituency is now under water. Horrendous transport problems therefore face my farmers and constituents. Yesterday I had to drive about 60 miles in order to reach my stables, only seven miles away, so that my daughter could feed the horses. Earlier in the day I could not have reached the stables. No roads were open. Eventually, however, one road became just passable with the right kind of vehicle.

The wealth of my constituency was built on whisky, textiles, food production and food processing. I invite those who believe that the whisky and textile industries and food production and food processing have had a good deal over the past 20 years to come to my constituency and talk to the industrialists there.

The whisky and textile industries believe that they have not had a fair deal. The food production and processing industries, in particular the canning factory and the chicken processing factory in my constituency, believe that there is no level playing field for the rules. French factories are desperately trying to penetrate United Kingdom markets. The maintenance of common European standards on hygiene and other matters costs money. Those standards are not common, however. We have to shoulder costs that they do not have to bear.

The tourist industry creates much employment in my constituency. Anybody who is involved in that industry knows that if we do not satisfy the customers they do not come back. One of the greatest attractions in the winter months in my constituency is the skiing in Glen Shee. We have snow on the mountains this year, but the roads are not open. There have been two landslips on the road up from Blairgowrie to Glen Shee. Anybody who has studied the problem realises that we need snow in quantity this

winter in Glen Shee if the skiing is to remain viable. With the roads closed, the skiing industry faces financial disaster.

It is important to understand how great a magnet skiing has become in drawing consumers to the area. Without the skiing, Blairgowrie, where I live, would have died many years ago. Why do I say that? I return to our membership of the European Community and the impact of our membership on the canning industry. It was the largest employer in Blairgowrie. The industry employed more than 400 people. Blairgowrie also had spinning mills. At one time it had 19. When I stood as a candidate, Blairgowrie had four working spinning mills. Just before I became the Member of Parliament—it was fortunate for me that it happened no later—the canning factory and the spinning mills closed down, and more than 600 people, in a very small community, lost their jobs. Only the magnet of the skiing industry has offset the huge problems that the closure of those industries caused.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: I am listening, as ever, with care and attention to the hon. Gentleman's detailed comments about his constituency. I accept that he approaches the debate from an anti-Maastricht view, or at least from a somewhat sceptical view about the European Community as a whole. I cannot speak with authority or knowledge about Glen Shee, but does he recognise that other major skiing developments, such as Aonach Mor in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), were possible only because of European regional development fund support? He is highlighting the importance of the ski industry, but the point could be made equally about other sectors. He should recognise that the ERDF has made the difference in the development of the skiing industry.

9.15 pm

Mr. Walker: That was the best intervention that I could have asked for. A long time ago, a line was drawn across Scotland, north of which, it was said, is the Highland region. Of course, you, Mr. Morris, should never come to my constituency, which has some of the highest mountains in Scotland, because, according to whoever drew that lovely line on the map, we are not Highland. Therefore, my constituency does not enjoy the benefits of Ross, Cromarty and Skye—the largesse that comes from Europe. My taxpayers' money—they pay £1·68 into Europe and get £1 back—is laundered to the hon. Gentleman's constituency. That applies to industry and farming.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) can sit there and smile, because vast sums of money will go to his constituency, but the problems that my farmers are facing today will not be offset by the fact that farmers who have sheep north of that marvellous line on the map will get much more from the European agricultural budget. It is not realistic to suggest that it is easier to farm in the hon. Member's constituency than in Rannoch Moor, Glen Shee and Glen Lyon in my constituency, which are equally remote and where the problems are the same.

Mr. Lord: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is dangerous to suggest that we are somehow benefiting from money from Europe? Europe has no money, just as the Government have no money. The money belongs to the people and must be removed from them by taxation. Frequently, it is not returned to them efficiently by our national Government, but usually, when it comes back via Europe, it has been handled much less efficiently.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. He said what I want to say. I describe it as laundered money, because it seems nonsense to pretend that taxpayers' money is largesse; it is not.

I am not opposed to assisting those who need it, but I am opposed to the Spanish Prime Minister coming to the capital of Scotland and asking that Scottish taxpayers should pay higher taxes so that Spaniards can subsidise their industry. British Airways competes with the heavily subsidised Spanish airline, Iberia.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I have listened to the hon. Member fulminating about the fact that people north of the Tayside border can take advantage of European grants that are not available to his constituents. Does he accept that the line about which he is so upset was drawn not by the Spanish Prime Minister but by Ministers in this House? Those incentives could be available to farmers, industrialists and tourist operators in Tayside, as they are in the highlands and other parts of the European Community—and would be available if it had anything to do with the European Commission or European Parliament. They would be available if it were up to the European Commission or the European Parliament—it is the idiots in the Government who have deprived his constituency of the development area status which could be available.

Mr. Walker: That is fascinating, but the idiots in this Government did not draw the line. It was the idiots, if they were idiots—although I should not so describe right hon. and hon. Members—in a Government formed by the Opposition—*[Interruption.]*—when the line was first drawn. I do my homework carefully—the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye should know that.

I remind the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that if we were not in the European Community it would be much easier for me, as a Scottish Member of Parliament, to argue my case, because I would be able to use much more leverage than I can now. I shall outline the basis of my case later, but it is important that the House knows about other commercial interests in my constituency. I am not talking about abstract theories but dealing with serious issues affecting my constituents.

One of the major commercial interests in my constituency is the General Accident insurance corporation. Although its headquarters are located in a neighbouring constituency, it will not surprise the House to learn that many of my constituents work there because Scone, which is a suburb of Perth, is in my constituency. Another matter of interest in my constituency is whisky—people often think of that in the city of Perth.

When Britain was a member of the exchange rate mechanism, General Accident was operating in a marketplace in which its costs were in pounds sterling but the bulk of its income was in dollars. One does not have to be a genius to realise that the change when we left the ERM on white Wednesday and got out of the straitjacket worked greatly to the advantage of a massive employer whose costs and expenses were largely in pounds sterling and whose income was substantially in dollars.

Before we joined the European Community, it is true that Scottish farmers were considered to be relatively

[Mr. Walker]

comfortable—I would not say well off, although some were. In fact, lairds such as the hon. Member for East Lothian were probably very well off. I do not speak only on behalf of lairds, because many of my constituents are tenant farmers. While I do not know as much as the hon. Member for East Lothian about being a laird, because he is one and I am not, at least many of my friends are lairds. Some have phoned me this evening about the problems that they face.

The main problem is what has happened to farmers' incomes since we joined the European Community. Anyone who talks to hill farmers, especially those in north Tayside who do not get the additional benefit of being in the highlands and islands, will find that their income has dropped savagely during our membership. There is no doubt that one of the best things we could do—certainly for the hill farmers—would be to repatriate the common agricultural policy and to return the issue of agricultural support to our Parliament.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned hill farmers. Does he acknowledge that the European Community has quite generously increased the hill livestock compensatory allowance for the current year but that, once again, it is the Government whom he continues to support who have clawed back all of that increase so that the hill farmers about whose plight he is whingeing do not get the benefits or access to the extra support which the European Community wants to offer? Once again, the Government whom he supports are damaging the interests of his constituents.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is again trying to play with figures. He should address the matter objectively. The average British family pays £17 or £18 a week more for food than they would otherwise require to do. That is a cost to Britain. In addition, for every pound that comes back to the United Kingdom——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is being tempted by an intervention. I should be grateful if he would address his remarks to the question why the amendments—there are a fair number—should make deletions in the Bill to limit the effects of the treaty. That is the crunch issue from which the hon. Gentleman has strayed just a little.

Mr. Walker: Unless I am a complete idiot, Mr. Morris —I hope that I am not—my understanding is that, if amendment No. 184 were accepted, it would remove the common agricultural policy completely from the jurisdiction of the European Community. Have I got that right, Mr. Morris?

The Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Walker: In that case, my argument is that the CAP's no longer being there would have an effect on the sums available via taxation in this House to be spent on the farmers in my constituency. That is the point I am trying to make.

The hon. Member for East Lothian demonstrated the great Euro-trick of pretending that the world is square. In 1972, we were told that, if we entered the European Community and joined the club called the common agricultural policy, my farmers, the consumers and everyone else would benefit.

My case is that the goods were oversold. Europe did not deliver on the promises made in 1972, as I shall try to show. We lost the right of veto, which we were told was built in. We were told that the Single European Act, which affects industry, commerce and tourism, would be to our advantage. I point out that insurance still does not have a level playing field. If I may stray into a later group of amendments, I also point out that transport does not have a level playing field, although it is part of commerce.

Some hon. Members who voted for the Single European Act did so under a little pressure called a three-line Whip. We are constantly told today, "If you voted for that, you cannot possibly have any views on the Maastricht Bill and treaty." I am in the fortunate position of not having supported the Single European Act; nor did I support entry into the EC under the conditions and terms in 1972.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Before my hon. Friend leaves amendment No. 184, would he tell that silly hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that, if the amendment were passed, every farmer in Britain with a farm of more than 40 hectares could get £127,000 per year fully indexed? Every farmer with a farm under 40 hectares could get £40,000 fully indexed. That is without any increase in resources. To hear a socialist Member of Parliament arguing for a policy that involves the expenditure of £250 million every week solely for the storage, dumping and destruction of foodstuffs is an insult to all that socialists have stood for over the years.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful intervention. There is no doubt that if we were able to make decisions in the House first, on the pricing levels that the market in the United Kingdom would accept and, secondly, on how we supported various activities, including agriculture, and if we were completely answerable here for what we were doing, we would be in a different position.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, who argued for the Liberal Democrats' position, may be interested to know that the Dewars bottling and blending plant, which is part of the United Distillers-Guinness group—it is in my constituency and not in the neighbouring constituency of Perth and Kinross—was advised last week that it is to close.

I believe that, if those lovely lines that have been drawn on maps at different times had been applied—I am talking about support for areas in need—and if the area around Perth had been designated an area of need and were able to receive the grants and aid that are provided in such circumstances, it is probable that the plant would not be closing.

It is well known that the work force at the plant has been loyal and hard working. It has been non-militant. The grants and aid available for massive investment elsewhere in bottling and blending plants by United Distillers in areas such as Kilmarnock, which will enjoy benefits, seem to be a funny way to repay the work force who have been loyal and non-militant. I do not argue about what is happening, as that is for the company to judge.

9.30 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I join the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) in paying tribute to the Dewars plant at Inveralmond. I represented the workers at that plant for many years and I pay tribute to their long-standing loyalty and their productivity. They have produced a product which has been successful all over the world. However, has anyone at any level in United Distillers ever suggested to the hon. Member for Tayside, North that, if the area had been one of special preference, that would have changed the company's decision last week?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is asking me about commercially confidential conversations. One of the reasons why industrialists trust the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and, I hope, trust me is that when, they talk to us privately and confidentially, they know that we will not blab it in this place.

From my experience of the boardroom, I know that, when one takes decisions on where to place investment, one must necessarily look very carefully at areas that receive aid and those that do not. If one has to decide which plant to close and which plant to invest in, that decision will inevitably be part of a package that will contain the amount of Government assistance or aid that is available. That is the normal way in which boardrooms work. We have always worked that way in the boardrooms of which I have experience.

I am deeply concerned, because my constituency will lose all round. The European club, of which everyone has told me we should be pleased to be a member, has failed to deliver in many different ways. For example, it has failed to deliver in respect of jobs, trade and investment. Those failures cannot be hidden for ever.

The cold, hard facts are that, when we joined the Community in 1972, unemployment in the United Kingdom was just over 800,000. Today, unemployment is 3 million. In 1972, we were told that, if we did not join Europe, we would face massive unemployment. However, Europe has failed to deliver. In the five years before we joined the Community—this is important to the whisky industry and others—the average trade deficit with the Community countries was around £230 million a year. In the past five years, the deficit has averaged £12,000 million a year. Again, Europe has failed to deliver.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: I have a very straightforward question for the hon. Gentleman. If all those problems —the hon. Gentleman mentioned unemployment, for example—can be laid substantially at the European Community's door, why did the hon. Gentleman, along with his hon. Friends, subscribe to an election campaign which said, "Vote Conservative on Thursday and the recovery will continue on Friday"? How come the recovery could be dependent on the domestic political result here if all our economic woes are decided in Brussels?

The Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) will not go down that route.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is tempting me, but of course it is nonsense. I am not blaming Europe. The structures and the way that Europe has evolved are the problem. It is right that we should be in Europe. It is right that we should be working within the Community to obtain benefits and advantages. I just think that giving away powers in the way that we did in 1972 and the Single European Act are not what we were told would happen. Europe has failed to deliver. As a former shopkeeper, I know that, if one sells goods that do not live up to expectations, the public become disillusioned.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend has told us about the importance of whisky distilling not only in his constituency but throughout Scotland. Can he tell us of any major whisky distilling or exporting company in Scotland that, as a matter of policy, is opposed to the ratification of the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Walker: A major United Kingdom whisky company director—the chief executive; without asking him I cannot say his name—at a function in the House which was run by the Scotch Whisky Association, told me that I was right. That is all that I can say. He wished me luck. He said that I was right. *[Interruption.]* He happens to be the chief executive. As for my views on Maastricht —that is what we are debating. That is the question that was put to me, Mr. Morris. I was responding to the question. I have lived long enough to know that, more often than not, one is rarely right. I live in a house full of women, and one is regularly reminded that one is not right.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend tell our right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office that we will never know what the people of Britain think about the Maastricht treaty, and we will never know about the damage to their jobs and their freedom and liberty until the Government have the courage to hold a referendum so that, instead of— *[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. I appeal to hon. Members to stick to the amendment. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) knows that there is an amendment on a referendum to be discussed later in our proceedings. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman will want to catch my eye, not least because he has the lead amendment. I do not believe that it is appropriate that we should bring the referendum amendment into the other amendments.

Sir Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I do not cause trouble by making unrealistic points of order. Surely, if the Minister brings in something relating to the views of people, it is fair for someone else to make the same point.

The Chairman: I heard the Minister refer to the whisky industry, which was the point that the hon. Member for Tayside, North had been contributing to. Both were entirely in order.

Mr. Walker: The whisky industry, like the rest of the United Kingdom, has different views on the European Community. The country is divided, just as France was divided when it was given the opportunity to show how it felt.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): On the opinions of industrialists, I wonder whether my right hon. Friend the Minister could tell us of that famous evening when a letter was circulated at a Confederation of British Industry dinner at which, apparently, 60 industrialists were present. About 15 industrialists were prepared to sign that letter and others, for private reasons, did not do so.

[Mr. John Butcher]

Does that mean that more than 50 per cent. of industrialists who were especially invited to back the Government's position could not bring themselves to do so? Surely all such matters are nonsense. It is not entirely fair for my hon. Friend to say, "Find an industrialist to take one position or another," because, for very good reasons, many wish to keep their opinions to themselves.

Mr. Bill Walker: The point has been well made. The country is divided and there are different views at all levels. It is nonsense for either myself or Ministers to suggest that we have a monopoly on the views—we do not, and we do not know the position. Anyone who suggests—as was suggested earlier—that we fought an election and have now given way is incorrect. I fought the election on the basis that I would oppose the treaty. I want there to be no question about that—my integrity is not in doubt. Others may doubt my judgment, but not my integrity.

Between 1981 and 1990, the United Kingdom's overseas investment outside the European Community was 76·4 per cent. of all investment. There was far greater investment outside the European Community, and it produced a surplus of £40,100 million. Within the European Community, 23·6 per cent. of United Kingdom overseas investment created a deficit of £75,400 million. That means that more and more Scots—not just fishermen and farmers—will feel that they are not receiving many of the advantages that they were promised in 1972.

Consequently, when I look forward, I am concerned. I consider my good fortune and the ghastly future in store for so many other members of the human race. I wonder if my good fortune will continue. I live in a country called Scotland, which is free and democratic. I am an elected Member of one of the few Parliaments where membership cannot be bought—in a country where the Government are changed by the ballot box, not the gun.

I also reflect that, for many people, last year was ghastly, and many of them will face famine, drought and other problems. My constituency faces flooding, but no one seriously believes that many of my farmers will die next year as a result of starvation caused by flooding. Many of them will be in terrible financial straits, but they will not die.

I consider how different it is in Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom. Despite the substantial difficulties caused by unemployment—to which I have drawn attention—and the world recession, the young and the old in Scotland will not face famine, pestilence or war. However, Scotland's good fortune was not created by chance, but by our forefathers, who fought for Scotland's and the United Kingdom's democratic rights, and defended our right to be free. They also negotiated a Union, where the leadership, courage and talents of the minority population from Scotland would be employed to the advantage of the new country that had been created: the United Kingdom.

I know that we are changing United Kingdom law, but my view is that, if substantial amendments are accepted and the treaty is changed as a result, so that the treaty has to be renegotiated, the original treaty will be dead. I believe that the time has come for us to look at how the United Kingdom population has benefited and 9 per cent. of that population—the Scots—have always enjoyed much more representation in agricultural, industrial, consumer, commercial, political and trade union matters. They have enjoyed a greater share of the key positions. Scottish power and influence has been greater than its percentage share of the United Kingdom population. Any possible future Labour Cabinet would consist of more than 20 per cent. of Ministers from Scotland, even though Scotland has less than 9 per cent. of the United Kingdom population.

I am worried that all this is liable to change. Hon. Members can ask Ministers questions about all relevant matters, but if we give away these powers to Europe—the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) drew attention to the dubious nature of our authority to do that—the European Court will base its judgments on the political intent as well as on the contents of the treaty, as we know from the preamble to the Bill and from elsewhere.

9.45 pm

Unless the House agrees to these amendments, the Maastricht treaty and its amendments to the Single European Act and the treaty of Rome will give away massive powers that have hitherto belonged to this Parliament. Members representing constituents will no longer be able to ask Ministers questions on behalf of those constituents. The cornerstone of our unwritten constitution, which is part of the cement binding the United Kingdom together, will thus be eroded. That cornerstone consists of a Member's right to ask questions and to have them answered. Already, more often than not, we are told by Ministers that our questions have nothing to do with them: "Hard luck, this matter has to do with Europe."

As Scottish constituents see their Members of Parliament becoming less able to pursue their interests——

The Chairman: Order. I have been very tolerant of the hon. Gentleman, who keeps on using the phrase, "If these amendments are agreed to". That, however, is really not sufficient to keep him in order. He must speak specifically about the amendment—not generically.

Mr. Walker: I wish you had not asked me that, Mr. Morris, because I was coming directly to the amendments. This House is the key to maintaining the Union of the United Kingdom. There are more separatists on the Opposition Benches than wear the nationalist colours. Once they see they no longer have an opportunity to become Ministers after the next election it is just possible that we may find ourselves facing the end of this Parliament as we have known it.

Mr. Devlin: My hon. Friend knows as well as we all do that Scotland has far more representations in the House than it is due given the nature of the population. But Scotland also has Members in the European Parliament. Just as my hon. Friend can scrutinise the actions of Ministers who make up the Council of Ministers, so Members of the European Parliament will be able to scrutinise the work of Commissioners and others——

The Chairman: Order. That has nothing to do with industry.

Mr. Walker: Like you, Mr. Morris, I shall treat that intervention with the contempt it deserves—*[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may find that amusing, but we Scots grew up on a diet of the constitution and some of us have spent

all our adult lives trying to protect it. There is not a Scottish Member of Parliament or politician who does not have a view on the Maastricht treaty as it affects the CAP, unemployment, commerce or industry—or who does not from time to time discuss the issue of representation in Edinburgh in some guise or other.

I am certain that, if we do anything to weaken the powers of the House, we will enter on the slippery road to separation. That may lead to Scotland remaining inside the United Kingdom as we know it, or in Europe as some Scots wish, or outside Europe. Denmark has clearly shown what a small country can do to the European juggernaut, and that has not gone unnoticed in Scotland.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The Minister spoke about Britain being a wealthy country, but that wealth is not being well shared. We seem to be wealthy enough to afford 3 million people on the dole, according to the official statistics. Of course, the real figure is far higher. That in itself is a shocking indictment. We have been in the EC for 20 years and unemployment in the EC is no fewer than 17 million: that is hardly a fact to cheer about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) spoke about the need for more research and development and education and training. I agree with that, but I have reservations about those functions being under the EC umbrella. This country certainly needs an industrial policy, and market forces will not cure the mass unemployment from which we suffer. Article 130 deals with

"speeding up the adjustment of industry to structural changes".

What does that mean? I look upon it with a good deal of fear and foreboding.

I am a Welsh MP of long standing. In Wales, we know from experience what structural change can mean. Thousands of jobs have been lost in Wales, but the Maastricht treaty does not contain a social chapter—so what are the safeguards for working people? Wales lost many thousands of jobs in the steel industry because of structural change. Ebbw Vale no longer produces steel. The community there has never got over the experience of losing all those jobs in that vital industry. In north Wales, the Shotton works lost thousands of jobs, as did Port Talbot, Llanwern and many other areas.

Steel is allied to the motor car industry, which is next for rationalisation: it is top of the list for the structural changes referred to in the treaty. There is already speculation about the German company, Volkswagen, taking over Rover. I read about that in the press. What will that mean for jobs in this country? What will it mean for the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith)? There are ominous signs for Vauxhall in Luton. Could the work there go to the continent to join the rest of the General Motors organisation in Europe? Such developments would be highly damaging to the British economy.

Wales relies heavily on the motor components industry. We have major concerns in Wales: Ford engines in Bridgend, the Bosch plant in the Vale of Glamorgan, Lucas Girling in Cwmbran, and many more besides. If the assembly plants were to be wound up, would the component sectors go as well? It would be a disaster for employment if that were to happen.

The engineering sector of industry in Britain today is largely dependent on the motor industry for work. That industry is the key to the future economic success of the country. Vehicles of first-class quality are being produced here, but if the structural changes take place, the quality of our products would count for nothing. We know that we have an efficient coal industry, but the Government cannot close it down fast enough. I cannot over-stress the importance of the motor industry to our economy. That must be born in mind when we consider the structural changes set out in the Maastricht treaty. The economies of Germany and Japan are heavily reliant on their motor industries. It is not without significance that those two countries also have strong currencies.

We must examine the implications of the proposed structural changes. According to official statistics, our unemployment rate stands at no less than 3 million. That figure involves many factors. For example, it is directly related to our crime rate. It is as true now as it ever was that the devil finds work for idle hands. Unemployment has brought about social and domestic difficulties, with an increasing divorce rate and more marital difficulties. Those out of work are demoralised.

The structural changes could be a further step to the deindustrialisation of Britain. We have been in the European Community for 20 years. The Government must intervene in industry. They must not leave industrial policy to the vagaries of market forces, because unemployment is the most important issue facing us. The sooner we tackle it, the better.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Sir Teddy Taylor.

Sir Teddy Taylor: There are two amendments listed here——

The Chairman: Order. Is this an intervention or a speech?

Mr. Hughes: I have finished my speech.

The Chairman: In that case, I apologise. I thought that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) was making an intervention. I call Mr. John Butcher.

Mr. Butcher: I am grateful to you, Mr. Morris, for allowing me to start my speech so close to 10 o'clock and, I hope, to continue for some time afterwards.

I begin by addressing a point raised by three hon. Members in the course of the debates that we have held on the general principles of the treaty. My hon. Friends the Members for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) have all said that the treaty is no different to those which set out our defensive alliances with NATO or our agreement to UN conventions. I never thought that I would see the day when there was such a fundamental misunderstanding by any parliamentarian of the nature of this treaty as compared with treaties, such as the NATO treaty, signed by sovereign states for mutual defence. It is in the very nature of the NATO treaty that we bind each other one to another to defend the sovereignty of individual nations. Yet the Maastricht treaty is about the passing over of powers away from sovereign nations. I hope that we never hear that canard—that fundamental misunderstanding—mentioned again in the Chamber.

The amendments deal with industry and consumer affairs. We have had no reassurance from the Government

[Mr. Butcher]

Front Bench that the treaty implies that we should re-enter the exchange rate mechanism. We have had no reassurance that that is not within the implications of the treaty. If history——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at this day's sitting, the European Communities (Amendment) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—[*Mr. Robert G. Hughes.*]

The Committee divided: Ayes 304, Noes 271.

Division No. 112] **[10.00**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard

Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Sir George
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawksley, Warren
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rayneford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Butcher: A few moments ago, Mr. Morris, I was reflecting——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Have you had any information from, or discussions with, the Government? They obviously intend to get this business through on the basis of Liberal party support. Do they intend to get the rest of their programme through in the same way?

The Chairman: I have no idea of any honourable Member's intention.

10.15 pm

Mr. Butcher: Earlier, I was reflecting on the rather unhappy spectacle of two hon. Members equating the treaty on NATO, or our United Nations obligations, with the Maastricht treaty. I was trying—*[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. I ask hon. Members either to listen or to depart quietly.

Mr. Butcher: I was trying to point out that it is surely unforgivable for a parliamentarian to misunderstand the nature of the Maastricht treaty to such an extent—to see it as just another treaty between sovereign nations which does not hand over sovereignty, as this one does. The other two treaties were between countries which were sovereign, and they were designed to protect the sovereignty and independence of nations. To assume that the Maastricht treaty does the same is to perpetrate a misunderstanding that no parliamentarian should ever repeat.

Mr. Devlin: I think that my hon. Friend is fundamentally mistaken. Comparisons were made earlier between the ceding, or rather pooling, of sovereignty——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman seems to be comparing the NATO treaty with the Maastricht treaty. The two have nothing to do with each other.

Mr. Butcher: The comparison was made earlier, Mr. Lofthouse. I hope that you will forgive me for wandering into such a generality.

I want to examine precisely how the Maastricht treaty would affect the performance of industry.

Mr. Devlin: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Before the Division, my hon. Friend made a comment about myself, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler). When I intervened, I was merely seeking to answer his point. If I am not permitted to do so, how am I to answer arguments that were put earlier in the debate?

The First Deputy Chairman: That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Butcher: As to the effect of the treaty on Britain's industrial and commercial future, I shall refer to those parts of it which in my view will impoverish Europe, make the continent uncompetitive and cause us eventually to hide behind a protective barrier—a barrier behind which all the people of Europe can grow poorer together. That is the inevitable conclusion of a number of trends presaged in the treaty.

I begin with the exchange rate mechanism, for we have not yet had a satisfactory answer as to whether there are provisions in the treaty which imply that by our adherence to stages 1 and 2 we must eventually rejoin the exchange rate mechanism. We must have an answer to that fundamental question. This is the Committee stage of the Bill. It is an iterative process. Our function today is to do that with which we have been charged: to examine the treaty. If we do not obtain an answer to that fundamental question, we shall strengthen the argument for a referendum because the famed sovereignty of Parliament —the function of Parliament to examine legislation—will not have been properly discharged.

In a later debate, we shall have to decide whether to vote for a referendum. On that occasion, I hope that every hon. Member will remember these amendments and the extent to which we received answers to the questions posed by them.

I am very worried about the Confederation of British industry. Bang on cue, the CBI signed the appropriate letter for public distribution. Bang on cue, it has organised a letter-writing campaign to Members of Parliament. In my view, it has done so on a number of non sequiturs. For instance, it says that if the treaty is not ratified we shall endanger Britain's commercial position at the heart of Europe, that we shall risk isolation and that we shall risk being part of the outer tier of a two-state Europe. Someone has to ask the CBI whether, if it believes in the concepts behind this treaty, the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act, it is prepared to say that other members of the Community can break treaty obligations in the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act in order to release us from the confines of the common tariff barrier and deny us access to the internal market.

The treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act, binds each member unto each other by keeping us all within the common tariff barrier and by allowing all of us access to that internal market. The European Community would have to break its own laws in order to achieve that which the CBI fears. The CBI says that this organisation is so unprincipled that solemn treaty obligations, signed by the Twelve, can be broken by one, or three, or five members of the Twelve in order to push us out of the inner tier. If that is so, what kind of organisation is it that we are being solemnly asked in this debate to sign up to by means of a third party?

Mrs. Currie: I do not think that the point is that anybody would want to break legal obligations. The point being made by the CBI and by many industrialists is that international business, including British-owned business, which could go anywhere in the European Community and which promotes its activities throughout the European Community, might in future—were we not at the heart of the Community—choose to go elsewhere.

Mr. Butcher: Despite my limited experience of multinational corporations, I know that it is very much their wish to make their European base in the United Kingdom because they see competitive advantages here that they do not see elsewhere. Five or six years ago, I had a conversation with the chief executive of an American multinational company with which I did not have a direct connection. He said, "If the British want to maximise inward investment they should persuade all the others to sign up to Vredeling and then not sign themselves." That would do more for inward investment than almost any other measure.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South that, when my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Minister of State negotiated our exemption from the social chapter, it was the best they

could do in the limited rules of engagement that they faced at Maastricht. Those limited rules of engagement and the confines within which the debate took place will eventually impoverish Europe. I welcome that tactical win.

Why, therefore, do I say that our friends the Japanese will continue to invest in this country? It is because they know that we shall stay within the tariff wall, that we shall continue to have access to the internal market and that we shall always have a 20 per cent. competitive edge—provided we do not sign up to the social chapter. Hon. Members should beware, however, as there are signs in the treaty that other ways of introducing chapter costs will be found. None the less, the Japanese are here because they like our competitive position and our labour relations and, above all, because they feel closer culturally to the United Kingdom than to the continental Europeans.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Japanese choose to base their industries here rather than other parts of Europe because most of their material is translated into English for the American market and because almost all their senior managers in Japan are fluent English speakers and therefore find it easier to deal with a British work force? Furthermore, they are violently opposed to the ERM, a single currency and a central bank. That is another reason why they were pleased when we fell out of the ERM.

Mr. Butcher: The English language is a national asset. An Irish Commissioner—I may be wrong, and I hope that I do not malign him—was credited with the malapropism that English is now the lingua franca of Europe. It is the trading language of the world—which brings me to our trading position, British jobs, the future of British industry and customers.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I do not want to undermine my hon. Friend's opposition to the Bill, but will he be very cautious about making too much of the social chapter? The Commission has made it abundantly clear that, whether we have a social chapter or not, it will shove this through under the Single European Act. The phoney debate between Labour and Conservative about whether the social chapter is good or bad is a load of rubbish, and people should wake up to that fact. The Commission will shove it all through anyway, and all of them know it, particularly the Ministers sitting on the Front Bench.

Mr. Butcher: The social chapter is an industrial and commercial question. My hon. Friend has made his point eloquently and briefly but I must add that certain elements of the on costs which the French and Germans would like to wish on us will come to us willy-nilly round the flank, through social measures, not least those involving health and safety.

It is still not widely enough accepted that, if one amalgamates the foreign earnings of Britain's top 20 manufacturing companies—I emphasise the term "manufacturing"—half still come from the north American market. Why is that relevant to today's debate? If in future we are to negotiate on a pan-European basis, will a majority of the companies negotiating have a vested interest in making sure that we continue to have open access to that market at the lowest possible tariffs?

10.30 pm

We have already been warned. I have seen what I thought were ghosts returning during the debate on the general agreement on tariffs and trade. There is in Europe—more so than in the United Kingdom—an element of opinion which is protectionist and anti-American. Some of it came into play during the GATT negotiations, and we suffered as a consequence. I shall not go into detail about the negotiations, even as they pertain to agriculture, which is covered in one of the amendments, but just before Christmas we were in great danger of jeopardising hundreds of thousands of British jobs in the manufacturing sector for the sake of 2·5 per cent. of Europe's population. The French farmers represent 2·5 per cent. of the continental population of Europe, but through their contacts with their Ministers and their people in Brussels and by obscurantist methods, they were able to jeopardise the negotiations which were so vital for British jobs.

I mention that in speaking to the amendment because, unless we are clear about who will be negotiating what on our behalf for the foreseeable future, and unless we vote fully informed, we may run the risk of things happening to our manufacturing industry which we have hitherto seen happen only to our fishermen and farmers. I beg my hon. Friends and members of the Opposition parties not to vote away our powers and thus affect in key ways our vital commercial and industrial interests.

I am still puzzled about the Confederation of British Industry. When we were debating whether to join the ERM, the CBI—the people whom I suppose Chairman Mao would have called the "running dogs of the Administration"—decided that they would press very hard for our membership. They did so with other prominent members of the chattering classes and on the basis—I believe that I summarise their arguments correctly—that they did not want to tolerate the costs of fluctuating currencies: they wanted the convenience and surety of fixed exchange rates moving eventually to a fused currency to give a tremendous advantage, as they saw it, to their companies.

The fact is—I say this with as much accuracy as I can—that the transaction costs in currency terms of doing a deal in the export market are 0·5 per cent. of the value of the contract. It is for the 0·5 per cent. that we sought fused currencies. Chasing that particular god or objective, we placed our manufacturing companies at a price disadvantage of 12·5 per cent. to 15 per cent. for two years. Anyone who wishes to argue that that exchange rate had nothing to do with the deterioration in our economic performance over the past couple of years need not accept my word for it, but simply ask any economist of any school——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I note that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is dealing with correspondence. Facilities are made available in the Palace for dealing with correspondence, and the Chamber is not the place. I should be grateful if the hon. Lady would refrain from dealing with correspondence here.

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order Mr. Lofthouse. I beg your pardon—*[Interruption.]* I wish that hon. Members would shut up. I have been here for 10 years. This is the first time that I have heard that rule. I know that we are not allowed to read a newspaper in the Chamber. I am answering queries about Europe.

The First Deputy Chairman: It is fairly obvious that, if the hon. Lady has not realised the rule before, it is because she has not been taking notice.

Mr. Butcher: I was inviting the House to consult whichever economist it wished about the effects of our overvalued and fixed exchange rate on our industrial and commercial performance.

When we had an economic stance as a result of which we invoked deflation, when we had prolonged recession and, for the first time in our economic history, when those other factors were brought into play, we ran a deficit on our trading account in goods and manufactures. That is a sure sign that a currency is overvalued.

I am not an advocate of continuing competitive devaluations as a panacea for our troubles. That is another totem which is set up and then demolished. I advocate an independent British bank on the lines of the Bundesbank or the Federal Reserve——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying by moving on to banks. I hope that he will stick to the amendment.

Mr. Butcher: I hope that I can demonstrate to your satisfaction, Mr. Lofthouse, that our industrial and commercial performance depends vitally on having a stable economic framework against which we can plan. The argument here is whether that should be imposed as an external force, à la ERM or Maastricht, or whether we can do it for ourselves. We have signally failed to do it for ourselves in the past because we have not had the advantage of a policy, which has given Germany 40 brilliant years, of taking day-to-day economic management out of the hands of the Treasury and giving interest rate policy to an independent bank. That is how the Germans ironed out the peaks and troughs of boom and slump, and that is how we should do it.

It is an industrial question. No industrialist can plan anything against wild fluctuations. I agree with those who support Maastricht that we need to have a more stable economic framework. However, I fundamentally disagree with having that framework imposed by continental European considerations of their position in the trade cycle as opposed to ours.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point) *rose*——

Mr. Butcher: I challenge my hon. Friends the Members for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) to intervene in two minutes' time when I have explained why we must have a domestic smoother of economic policy as opposed to one driven from, for example, Frankfurt.

The reason is as follows. If one examines the trade cycle as it has affected this country since 1945, one finds that our economy is a so-called "early cycle" economy. We tend to move on the demand phase of the economic cycle whereas, in the main, Germany and continential Europe move on the second, investment phase of the economic cycle. Because we are a year ahead of Europe, when we are at risk of inflation as our recovery is going too fast, the rest of Europe is still in the stagnant phase. When we want interest rates to be stable or to go up a bit, Europeans on the continent want them to come down because of the phasing difference. The reverse applies when we are going into recession, and the rest of Europe enters recession a year to 18 months after us.

If we set interest rates from a central bank based on the conditions which pertain in continental Europe, we shall invariably be out of phase. There will also be an addition to the inflationary and recessionary pressures in this country. That is how the trade cycle has operated since 1945. If we want to smooth it out, to integrate with Europe and—dare I say it—converge with Europe and all enter the same phase, that will cost a further 500,000 British jobs.

Mrs. Currie: We have been following my hon. Friend's interesting analysis of the cusp, the moon in Jupiter, and all the rest of it with great care. However, a moment ago my hon. Friend was praising Germany's 40 years of growth and he seemed to imply that that occurred because the Germans have an independent central bank. Does my hon. Friend now support that for this country?

Mr. Butcher: One of the things that has typified this debate has been selective deafness. The intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) was the most vivid example of that that I have heard so far.

Mr. Devlin: The point about the European market is its fundamental interdependence: what happens in one country affects what happens in other countries. We have a choice at this point and crossroads in our history of having a deutschmark-dominated continent where all European economies are at the whim of the deutschmark, or a truly independent currency with a truly independent central bank operating in the interests of all the European economies. That is the fundamental choice.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) wants to opt for the slow lane or the second rank, we shall lose not only the inward investment to this country but a say in what happens in the central banking system which develops in Europe.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The debate now appears to be about the economy and not industry. Before anyone says that the two cannot be divorced, I remind the Committee that the economy can be discussed thoroughly in the group of amendments headed by amendment No. 79. I hope that we can return to industry.

Mr. Butcher: Our industrialists do not operate in a vacuum. They need a stable economic framework in which to operate. The majority of our industrialists now believe that we need an independent British bank to give them that stable framework. For the reasons that I have adduced, that is far preferable to stability set by an external force and conditions which may not pertain in our country due to the structural differences between this economy and the mainland continental economy.

Even when the CBI's economists may be cynical about ERM membership, why has the CBI pushed so hard for that kind of deal?

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I have been listening very carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has been saying about membership of the ERM and I noticed that he drew our attention to the situation of this country with regard to Germany. Has he considered the present situation in the Irish Republic, where interest rates have

gone through the roof, where there must be considerable hardship with debts being deferred and increased by the application of interest rates, and where——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We are going down that same track again. I have just said that we are discussing industry and not the economy. There will be an opportunity to discuss the economy on a later group of amendments. I hope that we can stick to industry and that the Committee can make progress.

Mr. Butcher: I should like briefly to consider convergence funds and what they will mean for us and for our constituents. We are one of the two key contributors to the budget. We shall be asked for much more money in the coming years. The bills will be presented long after this debate is concluded one way or the other. I am tempted to make remarks from two standpoints: first, the experience which I enjoyed but occasionally suffered from as a junior Industry Minister in a national Government and, secondly, my experience of Industry Council meetings over about five years in Brussels, Research Council meetings and, once, an Environment Council meeting. My experience wearing those two hats and as a British negotiator has tempered what I am about to say.

10.45 pm

If colleagues are going to vote for the treaty assuming that, once it is passed, we can gradually work it out together rationally, building consensuses and making our points and standing up for our interests, gradually making it work to the dream—for it is a dream—with the noble aim of producing the full employment that we want, the inflation-free society, that industrial Valhalla that Commissioner Bangemann would like us to achieve, they should realise that it does not happen that way. Once the treaty is passed, that will be the end of House of Commons input into the policy-making process which will subsequently take place.

I shall now say a little about what actually happens in Industry Council meetings. The Minister is delivered to the airport at Brussels. He shoots straight through with one of those effective civil servants to take him through the side doors to bypass customs. In he goes and he meets UKREP, who is a very interesting person—the gentleman who, in previous weeks, has been doing deals with the ambassadors of the other countries about the Industry Council budget. Some hon. Members have been through that process. UKREP's job is to deliver his Minister and his position. Much will have been fixed within the machinery, and much of it will have been fixed through horse trading inside the Commission, but it is a matter of pride for UKREP that, when his Industry Minister arrives, there should not be too many differentiations between the position as advised by UKREP and what the Minister actually does.

I found—perhaps I was slow on the uptake—that the only way in which I could have an effect on that cosy bringing together of industrial policy was not to read my brief. My brief, of course, had been put together as a consensus piece. It had probably been trailed around other Ministers from other nations—they had done their trading and come back.

I found that I had to adopt a tactic which I called the ear jiggler. Everyone at those meetings wears an earpiece. I found that if I went off the script and introduced something new which had not gone through the machinery, they started to jiggle their translation earpieces. Their ambassadors would lean across to their Ministers and say, "He is not supposed to be saying this; it is terribly wrong." Of course, their ambassadors were subsequently discredited, or rather made to feel uncomfortable.

I found that I could actually have a negotiation because I caused a weakness in my opponents' hand; I had taken somebody by surprise, and I could try to win a few points. Deals were done, sometimes with Commissioners in the lead. I met a Commissioner called Davignon. I had never met a civil servant like him. Admittedly, he was a vicomte——

Mr. Skinner: A what?

Mr. Butcher: A viscount—in the vernacular of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), a Euro-toff. He was the most powerful civil servant I had ever come across. He not only proposed, he disposed. He admonished us; he chastised us. When that did not work, we used to break and go to lunch. Lunches were working lunches and, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Technology can confirm, they were very good. The reason that they were so good was that they had to last at least two and a half hours as that was the time during which most of the advisers were chucked out and we began horse trading. We sat around the table, with the Commissioner at the head, horse trading took place and deals were done. One scored 10 points for Machiavellian negotiating skills and one point for the merits of the argument, so we were lumbered with all sorts of technological lunacies which should not have occurred. Hon. Members should not pretend that the House will have a significant effect on policy formation once the Bill has been passed. They should not fool themselves about that.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Does my hon. Friend accept that the conditions that he has been describing are ones which exist in almost all forums of international negotiation and are not peculiar to the European Community? Indeed, they apply within our own country.

Mr. Butcher: I readily concede that such things have been known to happen in our country, but I believe that I am making a significant point. Many of those who advocate the adoption of the treaty have said in the debate, "Don't worry about the words; we can sort bits of it out as we go along; do not take the words at face value." If we take many of the words at face value, they give many people powers of initiation, instigation, influence and persuasion—powers which cannot be formalised and which will change policies and the way things happen in this country, in the House, and in British companies, farms and workshops. Let us at least vote for such provisions with our eyes open.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Is not the lesson of the negotiations at Maastricht that Ministers did prepare themselves before they went to Brussels and Maastricht and knew the issues involved, their civil servants had been fully briefed and Britain was at the centre of the negotiations and, as a result, obtained a treaty that is very much in its interest? That is quite unlike the standard preparation that my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) said that he was unable to command when he was a Minister. It is only by

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

negotiating in Europe that Britain will obtain achievements in the European market in favour of its industry and commerce and the country as a whole.

Mr. Butcher: I think that I said at the beginning of my speech that I would compliment my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on an away win—3:1 within the rules of the engagement. He did better in his negotiations than any other Head of Government at Maastricht. We are fortunate to be blessed with both a Foreign Secretary and a Prime Minister who can knock the spots off their competitors in such negotiations.

I also said that I questioned the basis of the Bill. Is it not curious that, skilled as all the negotiators may have been, some of those returned to their capitals and said that the treaty would cause the integration of Europe, but one has returned to his capital and said, "Don't worry—it will not really cause the integration of Europe." Therefore, we have a brilliantly negotiated, elegant treaty, containing some wonderful objectives, which is already subject to great disparities of interpretation. One of the reasons for the hyper-ventilation in Committee is that we had thought —whether Europhobes, Euro-realists or Euro-sceptics— that we would try to solve some of those mysteries in Committee.

What exactly does the treaty mean? For instance, we discovered by a fluke—the information was not volunteered—that the pillars, which are outside the treaty and may not be justiciable by the European Court, are legally binding. That is a pretty weird distinction. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) shakes his head. I appeal to him to join me in getting to the bottom of this matter, or we shall be selling the British people a pup. We must either call for an advance interpretation by the court or ask for one from our own Law Officers, whom we have not yet seen on the Front Bench. Will the pillars be legally binding?

Mr. Wells: Yes.

Mr. Butcher: In that case, a number of the propositions to which we have been treated over the past six months have been erroneous.

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Do I not recall your saying earlier that this part of the debate should be on industry, agriculture or fishing?

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means: That is certainly right, and I have had to draw that to the attention of the hon. Gentleman on two or three occasions. I hope that he will now stick to the amendment.

Mr. Butcher: With your guidance, Mr. Lofthouse, I move on——

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): May I bring my hon. Friend back to more concrete matters—specifically to the concrete and cement industry? He will be aware that Rugby Cement, a well-known company, operates in his constituency and in mine. He may not be aware of the fact that, owing to the way in which the Community operates, certain environmental conditions are being imposed which are being adopted eight years earlier in the United Kingdom than in other member countries. That implies great additional costs for our home-based industry, and it will mean that we are greatly disadvantaged. Would my hon. Friend care to offer his advice to hard-pressed companies such as Rugby Cement on what action they should take?

Mr. Butcher: I defer to my hon. Friend's expertise. He does not need me to tell him, however, that in the first instance he should hold another meeting with the company and discuss with it his powers to do anything now—and then perhaps discuss what powers he will have in, say, a year's time, after ratification has taken place.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is not the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) raising a salient point? As the European Court is wholly involved in reaching judgments on the present treaties, it will have a direct effect on industrial matters—that is one of its functions. It judges whether countries are complying with the law. Unless the Community takes action against countries and companies, certain companies will be able to escape the industrial and economic effects of the treaty—precisely the sort of inequality to which the hon. Gentleman referred. That will have an impact lasting in some cases for years, and will have a direct effect on competition. If the Government believe all this rubbish about fair competition, is it not time they did something about it?

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Lady makes her point well. It is refreshing to see cross-party unity breaking out. It is also refreshing to see that some Members, at least, are searching for truth.

Under convergence policy, grants will be pushed around on a Euro-basis. The debate on the effectiveness of industrial grants has been going on in this country for at least three years. There is also debate on what kind of industrial policies should be adopted to put right some of our problems. To some extent that debate is a dialogue of the deaf. To equate an industrial policy with turning the Board of Trade into a grant factory is a curious phenomenon, which has long been discredited, but on a pan-European basis. The problems of efficiency and effectiveness and the effect on the motivation of what went on among the decision makers were serious and would be compounded on a European basis because there will be even less knowledge about what was happening on the periphery.

11 pm

If we opt for convergence and try to bring all our economies up to the same standard, producing almost mirror image economies in the nation states, money will be transferred by Europe's industrial grant mechanisms, mainly from north to south. That will ensure that Greece can have industries like ours and Spain and Portugal can mirror the industrial composition of Germany and, say, central France. That flies in the face of everything that we have learnt from economic and industrial history since it first became a matter for policy discussion, perhaps beginning with Adam Smith.

I thought that the whole point of free markets was that they allowed specialisms to develop and countries and companies to seek their own salvation by becoming better and competing with other countries. I wonder about the philosophy behind this. Anyone who doubts that we are creating a nation state should look at what this thing which may not be a nation state will be doing. Surely only nation states pursue industrial policy, legislate and

supervise consumer affairs. Surely only such states have commerce Ministers and Ministers to supervise pan-European competition.

Before my hon. Friends who are pro-Maastricht accuse me of being entirely negative or dogmatic, I should say that if I were pushed into a corner and asked to state the boiled-down kernel of my policy on Europe, I would say that it would be to strengthen the competition Commissioner's brief—the brief of Sir Leon Brittan. He should be given powers to construct a level playing field. If it is suggested that we should not have tariff barriers against the outside world, that Commissioner's role becomes even broader and more relevant to the wealth-creating parts of our economy.

I doubt that Britain, as one of the two net contributors, will be able to afford the money to persuade others to provide even more competition for our companies. That is nonsense, and it is difficult to understand why that has not been recognised.

I am a free trader and an internationalist in the broadest sense of the word. I am frightened that elements of the treaty's industrial and commercial policy have more to do with the mercantilism of Colbert and Mazarin and Richelieu than with the inheritors of the economic policies first enunciated by Adam Smith. There is a sort of déjà vu, an out-of-date feel about all this. I do not know why we are buying it, because Conservatives spent the last four elections trying to turn back such policies. It is weird.

I am worried because I want us to continue to trade with the rest of the world as well as with Europe for the jobs reasons that I gave earlier, and I feel that if the economic, social and industrial policies and some of the treaty's other policies affecting industry are adopted, we shall institutionalise the declining competitiveness of Europe.

It may be controversial to say that today, because who can deny that Germany, for example, has had 40 brilliant years? I wish that we had had 40 years like the Germans have had since about 1948, when the Wirtschaftswunder was first built by Erhardt and somebody who, for my money, was the best and most underrated economist of the post-war period; a chap called Euchen. We did not do it —they did. Those 40 brilliant years are being sold away. The Germans and the French have loaded into their economies a number of on costs and anti-competitive trends that will make them weak in competing in global markets—and all markets are now global.

One of the reasons why the treaty has been pressed so hard on us is that German and French industrialists want to see British industry lumbered with some of the same conditions that have already been introduced by their national legislation. While Germany has had four successful decades and France two, what they have done recently will undo all that. Furthermore, they are trying to wish it on us. The House should be on its guard about looking to continental Europe for leads in economic policy making.

If we are to institutionalise the gradual uncompetitiveness of Europe, the only way to safeguard Europe's position is either to fail to reduce the tariff barrier further under GATT, or to increase it again. We are already seeing reactions to the continental Europe system in other parts of the world. America is building a North American Free Trade Area, which includes Mexico, Canada and the United States. Those who talk to American politicians know that there is a great deal of "me-tooism" about the decision to build that continental trading system. They looked at Europe and wanted to have something similar, but bigger, with even more people.

Elements within the treaty make a fortress Europe more likely. That is particularly so, given my next point—an economic point arising from politics. We should not assume that the dominance within Europe of the centre and centre-left parties in the Parliament and of tthe centre parties of policy-making in the Council of Ministers will continue for ever. We do not know what will happen in our next general election or in the French and German general elections. Those elements that are slightly more concerned about a nationalist Europe—that is, a continental Europe —having clout and power and producing reactions elsewhere, may be reinforced at the expense of an element of opinion that we have always espoused: internationalism, outward-looking, free-trading, "win on competitive grounds if one can". That philosophical point is still in doubt. The jury is still out.

I cannot support the industrial and commercial measures in the treaty. When it all boils down, I am in the House to provide jobs for my constituents. Jobs and more jobs are the best welfare programme of all. With fuller employment, we would not argue about welfare programmes. My fear is that in deepening rather than widening Europe, in bureaucratising rather than in freeing it up, in loading Europe with uncompetitive situations, we may be making it less likely that, in coming years, we shall be able to face our constituents with a clear conscience and say, "I voted for Maastricht to preserve and build jobs."

Mr. Shore: The hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) was right to emphasise the enormous competitive power of Germany after 40 years of successful industrial and economic development. That is my starting point to reinforce his argument that it is essential that the United Kingdom, faced with that formidable manufacturing and industrial power, insists upon the retention of control over its own interest rates and exchange rate so that it is not bottled in and circumscribed by the exchange rate mechanism.

I do not agree with the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West that exchange rate policy alone will be sufficient to deal with the problems that now face British industry. We are far behind our competitors, and we need an effective industrial policy. In so far as my hon. Friends have advocated that in supporting amendment No. 1, they are right.

There are several difficulties. One of them—this was confirmed by the Minister of State in answer to a direct question—is that there is nothing in article 129 that will assist in developing an effective industrial policy over and above what is already in the Rome treaty and the Single European Act.

Mr. Garel-Jones *indicated assent.*

Mr. Shore: I am glad that the Minister of State nods. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench will take this in. There is nothing in the article except that which the Minister of State went out of his way to emphasise, which is contained in the final sentence. It reads:

"This Title shall not provide a basis for the introduction by the Community of any measure which could lead to a distortion of competition."

[Mr. Shore]

Even the generalities—they add nothing to powers that already exist—are subjective. They do not infringe on or distort competition. In other words, the principle has been established that industrial policy, to which my right hon. and hon. Friends attach such importance, is wholly subject to competition policy. There can be no effective industrial policy for as long as competition policy is allowed to reign supreme.

I do not understand why my right hon. and hon. Friends have chosen to make No. 1 their lead amendment. It has, of course, opened up a major and interesting subject for debate, but if anyone thought that he should identify article 129 as the sunny face of the treaty from the point of view of those who wish to have an effective industrial policy, he would be wrong and disappointed. It is not there. We would wish it to be there, but it is not.

Even if the Community developed an industrial policy —it would not get very far—at a later stage and it helped European industry, would it necessarily help British industry? What are the principles of distribution among member states and the different industries of the European Community? I put that unanswered question to the Committee. Anyone who believes that Britain would benefit automatically from a European industrial policy has much explaining to do. He would have to search for any evidence that that would follow.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) drew attention to another important feature of the so-called industrial policy. He talked about accelerating structural change in the context of article 129.

Mr. Rowlands: It is article 130.

Mr. Shore: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that correction. I have been referring to article 130 throughout. I do not know why I identified it as article 129.

It is right that the article emphasises an acceleration of structural change. Those are pleasing words which disguise what we know is the reality—mergers and the elimination of firms as they go to the wall. Those are not pleasing prospects. The motor car industry is an example which we must all have in mind. When we look across the Atlantic, see where the American single market has left its motor car industry and consider how many separate units remain, it is surely not fanciful to talk about takeovers and mergers between the eight or more major motor car companies that are in Europe. Those problems will arise.

To anyone who looks a little further ahead, I say that that is not a pleasing prospect. There could be a takeover bid for one of the remaining British car companies, such as Rolls-Royce. If the scale were big enough—for example, if ICI were the subject of a takeover bid by I.G. Farben—it would be no use arguing that that would not be in Britain's national interest.

Under the Single European Act, we have already abandoned the power to decide whether a merger or takeover should take place; we have given that power to the European Commissioner. That is no longer Sir Leon Brittan—although, quite frankly, I would not have any greater confidence if it were, as he is a great believer in competition policy. In appropriate conditions, he is in favour of mergers, amalgamations and takeovers where they do not disturb the objective of competition.

11.15 pm

That is the reality of competition policy. There is nothing in the treaty that helps, safeguards or strengthens British industry. Instead, it is possible that there will be an open season on British firms. There is nothing to protect them other than their own strengths and competitiveness. Whatever their temporary difficulties may be, they could easily be brought down.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) rightly pointed out that we have the considerable difficulty that our capital market is so open. Our firms are vulnerable to takeover bids because there is no protective institution in the United Kingdom. They may run into short-term difficulties and their stock market values may tumble. Then, regardless of their long-term potential, they become very vulnerable. That is not true of Germany. As my hon. Friend explained, many German shares are held by German banks for a long period. They will not give them up, so there are not the same pressures.

Those are real dangers for British industry. If nothing else, we have drawn attention to that by putting article 130 under the spotlight.

Mr. Wells: Is it not true that, as the right hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his remarks, article 130 is the product of the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act, and that the Maastricht treaty makes no change? Although we respect the right hon. Gentleman's objections to the whole concept of Europe and a European industrial policy, in fact the Maastricht treaty, and therefore the Bill, do not affect what is already in existence and will remain so even if we reject the Bill.

Mr. Shore: I agree that the Bill repeats and reaffirms what is already in the Single European Act. Perhaps those of us who fought that Act tooth and nail may be accorded some understanding of why we opposed it when it was pushed through this Parliament on a three-line Whip.

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. Gentleman said that European mergers and takeovers will be all one way because of institutional problems in other European countries. Is it not worse than that? If any of our television companies wanted to take over a European television company it would be unable to do so, whereas potentially in a few months' time European television companies will be able to take over our television companies.

If our steel industry, which is the most efficient in Europe, wanted to take over some of the rotten remnants of European steel, it would be unable to do so, because other European Governments would get in the way. In every area of endeavour, by and large, the dice are loaded against us.

Mr. Shore: Yes, and with some European countries more than others. The French and Germans in particular protect their industries—not completely, but they provide their industries with defences against predatory raiders and takeover bidders.

Mr. Rowlands: Since the Minister stated that article 130 does not change the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act, I researched the matter as best I could in the Library. I can find nothing as explicit as the reference in article 130 to

"speeding up the adjustment of industry to structural changes".

Perhaps my right hon. Friend will press the Minister to say, when he winds up, whether that phrase comes from the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act, or whether it is a new provision—and therefore potentially rather more dangerous.

Mr. Shore: I thank my hon. Friend for that valuable intervention. I ask the Minister to address himself to precisely that part of article 130 that refers to

"speeding up the adjustment of industry to structural changes".

Is that a new form of words, and does it carry the general implication that I have placed upon it?

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I agree with my right hon. Friend that this issue is important, but is it not one that already confronts us in the United Kingdom? I refer, for example, to the threatened takeover of Pilkington plc, with the potential loss of regional and centralised jobs. More tellingly, did not that issue arise when Distillers was taken over by Guinness? It is nothing new—it is just that we have to face it on a European rather than a British stage. Presumably my right hon. Friend's solution to the Guinness-Distillers case is not to argue for independence for Scotland, to be able to defend its own industries. We must work out an investment strategy on a British stage, then on a European stage.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend misses the whole point. Of course some United Kingdom takeover bids were very unwelcome. If Hanson had pursued its quest for ICI, an issue of major importance would have been raised—with most right hon. and hon. Members, I believe, wanting ICI to remain independent. Until the Single European Act, the arbiter of whether such a takeover bid should, in the national interest, proceed was the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—a British citizen whose primary concern was the welfare of his own country, not of some generalised European future nation state.

Mr. Macdonald *rose*——

Mr. Shore: No, I will not give way again to my hon. Friend on that point.

Mr. Spearing: I am not sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) understands the purport of that important phrase,

"speeding up the adjustment of industry to structural changes".

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) referred to structural change in the financial sense of markets, takeovers, the ownership of firms, and so on. He cited the chemical industry as an important example. However, as we know only too well, structural change in this context means not just takeovers but market changes. Does not article 130 attempt to enjoin nation states, in so far as they have any powers left, and the Community to speed up the process of change irrespective of the social effects?

Mr. Shore: There is no suggestion in the section on industrial change that any regard or consideration will be given to such matters as employment.

Mr. Macdonald: Surely the aim is to secure an industrial policy in Europe of which we, as socialists, would approve. The controversy over the Secretary of State who decided the question of the Guinness takeover bid, the Hanson attempt on ICI or the Pilkington issue concerned not whether it was a British Secretary of State, but whether it was a socialist Labour Secretary of State or a market-oriented Conservative Secretary of State. The solution to the Guinness takover was to involve not a Scottish but a socialist, Labour, Secretary of State.

Mr. Shore: Clearly, there are differences between Conservative and Labour Governments and Presidents of the Board of Trade. There is, however, a fundamental interest that unites us all; I am amazed—indeed, shocked—that my hon. Friend does not seem to share it. I refer to the British interest. Britain as a whole is a nation and a people: we have our own interests, and those interests—while not necessarily hostile to those of our European neighbours—cannot be assumed to be identical to them. To transfer these powers from our people, our Parliament and our Government to our European neighbours is, in my view, a great mistake.

Article 130 deals with research and technological development. Its proposals are quite ambitious. What does the Minister understand by, for instance, the following passage in article 130h:

"The Community and the Member States shall co-ordinate their research and technological development activities so as to ensure that national policies and Community policy are mutually consistent"?

What is the "mutual consistency" of such research and development programmes likely to entail?

According to article 130i,

"A multiannual framework programme, setting out all the activities of the Community, shall be adopted by the Council, acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in article 189b."

The purpose of all that is as follows:

"The framework programme shall . . . establish the scientific and technological objectives to be achieved . . . indicate the broad lines of such activities . . . fix the maximum overall amount and the detailed rules for Community financial participation".

Do we really envisage the taking over of research and development, on a massive European scale, by the European Commission? Are those policies backed up by any budgeting arrangements, and any allocation of funds? I think that we should know the real meaning of title XV.

People may wonder about this at times, but agriculture is an industry—an important industry, with separate and special characteristics. One of the great puzzles of the Maastricht treaty is the fact that, although so much was examined—the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act were rephrased, added to and, sometimes, subtracted from—the agricultural matters in articles 38 and 47 of the treaty of Rome were not subjected to a single amendment. The only reference to agriculture is dealt with in amendment No. 184: it comes into the list of common policies, and is dealt with in just two lines. Not a single amendment was proposed. That is extraordinary.

The CAP is one of the least efficient, highly protected and most expensive policies for consumers, farmers and the nation that have ever been devised. It was a constant worry during the simultaneous GATT negotiations and nearly brought that round to a dead stop. Another extraordinary feature of the CAP is the great cost that it still imposes upon the whole Community and upon Britain as part of the Community. We heard earlier about the substantial reduction in farmers' incomes over the last few years. That reduction in farm incomes and the continued rise in food prices has to be set against the continuing increase in agricultural expenditure. The guarantee and

[Mr. Shore]

guidance sections of the CAP accounted during the past year for 60 per cent. of the total budget of the European Community.

11.30 pm

I notice in today's press that one of our colleagues in the European Parliament has stated that up to £5 billion a year is defrauded from the European Community's agricultural budget by means of simple administrative procedures. I refer to Mr. John Tomlinson, who was formerly a Member of this House. He said that the Community's export refund regime is the biggest incentive to crime in Europe today and that it is extremely wasteful and costly.

Why is the CAP so costly? It provides guaranteed prices for almost unlimited quantities of production, although it tries to claw them back and to limit them where there are obvious excesses. It operates a system of levies that leads to any third-country producer, however efficient he may be, being cut off. His produce may be pounds per tonne cheaper than the European Community guaranteed price, but he will never be able to sell his produce within the European common market. However big the difference is, the levies will impose themselves and make up that difference.

One of the most extraordinary features of any protective system that I have ever heard of is the system of export restitutions—selling the surpluses produced, at dumped prices, in third world markets, thus affecting both developing countries and developed countries such as our old temperate food suppliers: New Zealand, Australia, Canada—and Argentina, for that matter. The CAP structure consists of export restitutions, guaranteed prices and import levies.

Despite the fact that the GATT negotiations were taking place at the same time, not a single amendment was tabled to change the CAP. I find that extraordinary. I am sure that the Committee does so, too. There is a strong common-sense case for dismantling a large part of the CAP. If we are serious about subsidiarity, surely we ought to be repatriating many of the powers that were handed over when the CAP was devised 20 years ago.

Can the Minister of State tell the Committee whether that question was even raised with the Commission or the Council of Ministers during the protracted discussions before Edinburgh, and ending in Edinburgh, about subsidiarity? Is it on the agenda, and if not, why not? It is the costliest and most foolish policy that the Community has devised. If we are serious about subsidiarity and repatriating powers that we should never have let go, it must be the prime target for examination and change.

I do not intend to pursue that issue further, because I am looking forward to hearing the Minister's reply. However, if we are to be competitive in Europe we must, first, keep our exchange rate policies under control and, secondly, find ways not of trying to invent European industrial policies but of assisting our own industry, which is so grievously out-classed by Germany's.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am able to oblige the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) by seeking to intervene at this stage and deal with at least some of the points that have been made.

I shall start with what the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said about the common fisheries policy. A number of his points were dealt with by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who was present at the time.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) expressed delight at being instructed for the first time in a matter concerning the treaty of Rome. I must disappoint the hon. Gentleman: the hon. Member for Great Grimsby has not opened a new window. The first important fisheries decision, equal access to stocks, was adopted by the Six just before we joined the Community in 1972. As the hon. Member for Great Grimsby will recall, Lord Wilson did not challenge that——

Mr. Lord: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I have sat throughout the debate hoping to speak on behalf of my farming constituents. I am not anxious to conclude the debate, but experience has shown that, when the Minister speaks at this point of the evening, he is making his wind-up speech and a closure motion will follow shortly. Are we to assume that that is so this evening?

The First Deputy Chairman: I do not think that we can assume anything. We shall have to wait and see.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Member for Great Grimsby will be aware that that position was not challenged by the Labour Government in 1974, when we sought what was euphemistically called renegotiation. The European Community has always used article 43 as the treaty base for fisheries. As far as I am aware, that has not been challenged before the European Court of Justice, so it is clear that no one shares the hon. Gentleman's rather idiosyncratic view.

Another point was made about fishing by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who is not in his place at the moment. I do not say that in a critical sense; he has spent a considerable amount of time with us in the Committee. He mentioned United Kingdom quotas in one fishing area. Traditionally, as I am sure the hon. Member for Great Grimsby will confirm, we have never been big takers of monkfish from the area to which my hon. Friend referred. Our interests are in the North sea off Scotland, where our share of the take is high. For example, we take about 80 per cent. of the haddock caught in those waters.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney is, of course, correct to say that there are no reforms per se in the treaty of the articles which refer to the common agricultural policy. However, there is probably unanimity in the House that the CAP should be the subject of continuing pressure for reform. The right hon. Gentleman will know that the CAP has been reformed this year, as a result of which price support has been reduced for cereals by almost 50 per cent.—or will be reduced by 50 per cent. in time.

The amount of resources which the Community devotes to the CAP is already down—not least thanks to pressure from the Government—to 60 per cent. of the budget, having been almost 80 per cent. at one time.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall finish this point and then I shall of course give way to the hon. Lady.

The Edinburgh future financial deal reinforced discipline in that respect and maintained the guidelines

restricting budget growth. We expect that the CAP share of the EC budget will be less than 50 per cent. by the end of this financial perspective, by 1999.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is it not clear from the pattern of past years that the CAP budget is agreed at an early stage but, because of the number of supplementary budgets agreed throughout the year, it is only well into the financial year that the true total, as opposed to the budgetary total, becomes clear? Inevitably, it is obvious that the budget rises well above 60 per cent. and has in many instances reached 80 per cent.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Lady is not correct. One of the things that gave us a fair amount of leverage in arguing the financial perspective for the next seven years was that there had been a considerable underspend by the Community, not least in agriculture.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney and other hon. Members referred to article 130.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I should like to make my point, and then I shall give way.

Hon. Members have been broadly correct to say that there have been no what I would call "changes of substance" in article 130 as opposed to the text under the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act. As I said earlier, the key change for which Britain pressed was the sentence that I quoted on the need to preserve "open and competitive markets". Hon. Members have expressed concern about how the British interests will be defended by the Government. The quick and not so simple answer—the quick and easy answer—is that unanimity will be required, which seems to give the Government every opportunity to defend Britain's interests.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: In a moment. I want to respond to as many of the right hon. Gentleman's points as possible.

He also mentioned the Community's research and development programme. It is well known that the United Kingdom has been very successful in gaining funds under the Community's research programmes. For example, it has more participants than any other member state and we certainly receive substantially more than we contribute to the EC's research budget. A recent report by the university of Manchester showed that the impact of the European research programmes is far greater than the research funding itself.

It has become a vehicle for links with Europe and for obtaining the two-way flow between researchers which is so important in the area. I am sure that the House and hon. Members who have universities and seats of learning in their constituencies will be aware that researchers from industry and in academia are extremely enthusiastic about their participation in the EC programmes.

We in the United Kingdom are very anxious to press the point—there is a danger here from other pressures within the Community—that EC research should be focused on generic issues and underpinning technology rather than seeking a back-door subsidy for particular industries within the Community

11.45 pm

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend has said that article 130 under title XIII with the heading "Industry" in the Maastricht treaty is substantially in the treaty of Rome. Is it under one heading in the treaty of Rome or is it spread about within it? If it is spread about within that treaty, in what parts of the treaty can one find it?

Article 130 contains the words:

"speeding up the adjustment of industry to structural changes".

Does that mean picking winners? If it means picking winners, where did the policy first appear in European legislation?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The best answer I can give my hon. Friend at this stage—if I am inaccurate in what I am saying, I shall write to him—is that under the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act there was an industrial policy. The Government have sought—this is the only substantial change in the text—to preserve unanimity so that we have a veto over any moves made in the area and, above all, to insert wording—I accept the point made by an Opposition Member that these are only words—in the chapter that ensures that nothing shall be done to undermine competitiveness within the Community.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Minister may remember that I intervened to commend to him the virtues of majority voting, which produced from him a paean of praise on the virtues of majority voting and how important it had been in the completion of the single market. Now he is telling us how important unanimity and the capacity to introduce a veto are. He does not seem to be very consistent.

Mr. Garel-Jones: What member states must do, and what the United Kingdom seeks to do, as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said in an intervention, is make judgments about what is in the interests of the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend Baroness Thatcher when she was Prime Minister judged rightly—this is the example I gave—that, if we were to achieve the single market, the only way in which we would achieve it would be qualified majority voting, because of the vested interests involved.

We have judged that there is a danger that research and development resources could be used to underpin uncompetitive industries in Europe. We want to be certain that the decisions taken about research and development should be taken by unanimity, so that we can ensure the pure, generic research of general application, which we think is the right way in which the Community should spend money. That is why we judged, in this instance, that it was right to preserve unanimity. We should not seek to elevate qualified majority voting or unanimity into a religious principle. One should seek to make judgments in each instance about what is in the best interests of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister define in greater detail what he means by competitiveness in this context? There is an argument about whether competitiveness should be justified in the European context, or whether it should be defined as Europe versus Japan or the United States. Do the British Government differentiate in terms of competitiveness, or do they accept that there is an argument for European competitiveness in certain

[Mr. Fatchett]

industries against Japanese and American interests? Or are the Government taking a view of competitiveness that relates to the European Community?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I reassure the hon. Gentleman that we are doing both. On the one hand, we want to ensure that anti-competitive practices shall not flourish within the Community, and that Community funds should not be used to support and sustain uncompetitive industries, particularly in matters of research and development. In doing that, we seek to make this country and the Community as a whole competitive in world markets.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has referred to the pre-existence of industrial policy under the treaty of Rome. To begin with, I presume that my right hon. Friend meant to refer to the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act. Does my right hon. Friend agree that article 130 of the Single European Act, which deals with the European investment bank, and title 5, which relates to economic and social cohesion and research and technological development, do not deal with industrial policy in the terms in which he put it?

Furthermore, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State referred to Baroness Thatcher and her policies. The concept of economic policy under the critical title 2 was based exclusively, directly and deliberately on the notion of co-operation and not in terms of the proposals included in the Maastricht treaty that are intended to lead, and do lead, to a single currency and fixed exchange rates and have nothing to do with co-operation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not know whether my hon. Friend was in the Chamber yesterday when my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury dealt with these points——

Mr. Cash: Rubbish.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I was about to deal with the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Butcher). It is all very well for my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) to make derogatory remarks from a sedentary position about the speech of my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. I would limit myself to saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Lindsey, East (Sir P. Tapsell), who is no great lover of the treaty, described the intervention of my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary as brilliant, and his mental approach as first class.

Mr. Lord: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will give way when I have finished this point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lindsey, East said that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary had a first-class mind. I thought that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary, to the satisfaction of the Committee, made it perfectly clear that there was absolutely nothing in the treaty that obliges the United Kingdom to join the exchange rate mechanism at any particular date and absolutely nothing—and rather the contrary——

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am not going to give way again to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford on this point. My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary made it absolutely clear that nothing in the treaty forces Britain or the House to take a decision, if the circumstances arose when that might be possible, to move to stage 3.

Mr. Lord: May I remind my right hon. Friend of a point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) about the funding of research and development and how the whole thing fits together? If we are talking about nation states or multinational companies and the kind of competition between Europe and America, is not the great contradiction and conundrum the fact that we are being asked, almost in the same breath, to support both co-operation and competition? Somehow, that does not seem to hang together.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is making a perfectly intelligent point—I do not say that in a patronising way. That is why, in the discussions about research and development, we sought to ensure that the Community's money was put into generic research. Of course my hon. Friend is right: a number of vested interests in the Community will seek to divert the research and development funds into the support of uncompetitive or failing industries. That is not something that we would wish to seek.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I should like to make a little more progress, if I may. A number of my hon. Friends are still rising, and they might wish to catch your eye, Mr. Lofthouse.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I promised to give way.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry to be so tiresome about this matter. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his great courtesy. Under the Maastricht treaty, there is a distinct title—"Industry"; article 130. My right hon. Friend has said that there is a minimal amendment since the treaty of Rome, as amended by other treaties. He is surrounded by Industry Ministers, and there are three people in the Box. I wonder whether my right hon. Friend would tell the Committee precisely where in the treaty of Rome, as amended by previous treaties, there is that industry policy which is virtually the same as article 130, except for the amendment with regard to competition. The Committee would be very pleased to know that. I do not doubt that it is there, but these matters are very complex and it would be very helpful for the Committee to know where it appears in the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I cannot answer my hon. Friend at this moment, but I will certainly ensure that he receives an answer to his question. I think that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made the point that there is very little difference between the industry provisions as contained in the treaty of the Union and those which pertained during the Single European Act. I cannot quote the exact article to him, but the main changes made during the negotiations were the strengthening of competitiveness.

On the cohesion fund, which a number——

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) *rose——*

Mr. Garel-Jones: May I make my point on the cohesion fund? On the cohesion fund, to which a number of hon. Members have referred, I have already made the point that, by 1999, the increase in the British Government's contribution to the budget will be about £200 million—0·1 per cent. of our total gross domestic product. In the case of the cohesion fund, by 1999 it will be 3 per cent. of the total Community budget.

The key point so far as the abatement is concerned is that we, the United Kingdom, will contribute only 5 per cent. towards that cohesion fund; 30 per cent. will be contributed by Germany and 20 per cent. will be contributed by France. Despite pressure from other member states, in Edinburgh we succeeded in ensuring that the abatement should apply to the new cohesion fund as well.

As I said to one of my hon. Friends, for the reasons that I gave, the cohesion fund represents a very good bargain for Britain, and a very good bargain for our constituents.

Mr. Rowlands *rose——*

Mr. Timothy Wood (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—
The Committee divided: Ayes 299, Noes 61.

Division No. 113] **[11.58 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, Clynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Home Robertson, John
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Rayner, Nick
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*

Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mackay and
Mr. Robert Hughes.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Bell, Stuart
Betts, Clive
Budgen, Nicholas
Butcher, John
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cohen, Harry
Cousins, Jim
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Graham, Thomas
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Jessel, Toby
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lewis, Terry
Lord, Michael
McMaster, Gordon
Mahon, Alice
Marlow, Tony
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliot
Pawsey, James
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Tipping, Paddy
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I beg to move amendment No. 2 in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 129b on page 34 of Cm 1934)'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 130, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(excluding Article G D(16) on page 15 of Cm 1934).'.

No. 185, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(f) on page 9 of Cm 1934'.

No. 191, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(n)'.

No. 195, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(t)'.

No. 371, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 75 as referred to in Article G on page 15 of Command Paper number 1934'.

No. 383, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 129d as referred to in Article G on page 35 of Command Paper number 1934'.

No. 218, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert 'but not Article 129c of Title II thereof'.

Mr. Wilson: The unexpected arrival on the Government Front Bench of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) is final confirmation that the lunatics are in charge of the asylum. Fortunately, his efforts have been overruled and he will doubtless retreat to decent obscurity. *[Interruption.]* I was at the game between Queen's Park Rangers and Manchester United earlier tonight and the crowd noise was probably lower there than it is here. I shall battle on regardless. *[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. I am sure that hon. Members will wish to listen to the hon. Gentleman so that they may fully understand the amendment. May we have a little quiet?

Mr. Wilson: I am sure that those who arrive expecting a vote on the amendment would like to have a remote idea of what it is about. However, this is a probing amendment and we shall not press it to a vote. We totally favour trans-European networks and better communications as set out in article 129b of the treaty. There are some extremely interesting concepts to explore in the article and I welcome the opportunity to debate the needs of Europe's islands and peripheral regions.

I hope that the debate will affirm that the European Community has much to offer such regions and will help us better to devise how the treaty can be used to strengthen that purpose. Many people in the islands and peripheral regions of Scotland see Europe as a better friend to them, and an agency more responsive to their needs, than British Governments and the Scottish Office have been. They hope that, if there is to be an improvement in the communications systems, the European Community will play a large part in the process. Encompassing that proposition into article 129b would offer a great deal and provide plenty of material for debate.

12.15 am

Mr. Spearing: Will not the improvement of networks of any sort to further competition—that is the aim, as the Minister told us in the last debate—not only allow access out, whether it be from the highlands and islands of Scotland, the mountains of Wales or the moorlands of the south-west, but access in from outside? If the advantage to those going in is greater than the advantage to those going out, is not improved communication a disadvantage to the peripheral areas, instead of being the advantage that my hon. Friend and many others think that it will be?

Mr. Wilson: It may sound paradoxical, but in my experience, islanders rarely suffer from insularity. For example, many of the residents of the islands on the periphery of Scotland have been two or three times round the world as merchant seamen. It is a myth that they are concerned about people moving in or out of their area. What they want—this underlines my hon. Friend's point—is the opportunity to live and work within their area. They do not want a magnetic force drawing them out of that area.

I hope that no hon. Member would propose that we should impose poor communications lest people should be able to remove themselves from any part of the country or the community. That would doubly penalise them. The communications envisaged under the title would lead to a greater flow of people, but there would also be a greater flow of economic activity. That could only be to the advantage of these communities.

Mr. Macdonald: I want to reinforce that point. In the island communities of Scotland, the traditional economic disadvantage has not been lack of material resources or of skills, talent and enterprise on the part of the people, but simply distance from the main centres of population and markets. Anything that develops communications and transport networks and helps to overcome that distance is hugely to the benefit of those people.

Mr. Wilson: I entirely agree. As my hon. Friend knows as well as I do, one of the great growth industries in the islands and peripheries of Scotland is the seafood industry—both its cultivation and the catching of a high quality produce. In the old days, people who caught fish or shellfish in those places sent the catch off to market in London. Whether the catches arrived dead or alive was at the mercy of those who transported them, and they took what price they could get. Now, there is an immensely sophisticated system that transports live shellfish and fish from the furtherest parts of the United Kingdom to the extremities of the European Community.

It can only be in the interests of the primary producers and those who are involved in transportation that every barrier is broken down to ensure that consignments are moved more quickly, efficiently and healthily so that each catch has a higher value. The idea that there is any advantage in diminishing progress towards optimum communications is farcical. The idea that we protect peripheries by refusing to implement optimum communications is patronising and no part of my philosophy.

Mr. Devlin: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the problem goes much wider? We are talking not of the peripheral regions of Britain but of those of the Community, which encompass the north of England, the whole of Scotland and, some might argue, Britain itself. We know that Britain is away from the centre of the European market and that it will need a great deal of assistance. I am pleased to say that assistance is developing in the north of England—I know that it is being developed in Scotland—in terms of communications, including direct links so that it is not necessary always to go through the south-east of England, which in the north has been the bane of our life.

Mr. Wilson: Up to a point, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I say in the nicest possible way, in putting down a marker, that I shall not allow the word "peripherality" to be hijacked on behalf of the whole of Britain. We have seen that happen already with "subsidiarity", which has been falsely translated to mean the level of national government. To me, peripherality does not mean the whole of Britain. It means places that are genuinely peripheral to Europe, which means in turn the fringes of the coast, areas that are disadvantaged within a country, or a region which is also disadvantaged by relative remoteness. "Peripherality" is a specific word that means the edges, the places on the edges. From a Scottish perspective, those are places that are far from national markets, never mind any others.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: I am happy to work within the confines of the definition that the hon. Gentleman has outlined. To take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), does the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) agree with the fair point, as I see it, that the Commission often takes a sensitive approach to the problems of peripheral areas within Europe, not least the highlands and islands of Scotland? That approach is brought into sharp and vivid relief when we consider the sky-high tolls that are about to be levied by the Scottish Office on the Skye bridge, which is in the early stages of construction. That policy will affect the Skye community and it will have a knock-on effect.

That is an argument which we do not need to advance in detail now, but the knock-on effect on Caledonian MacBrayne could well disadvantage the farther communities on the Western Isles which depend on the existing ferry link, which will be adversely affected economically by the provision of a bridge. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that many of us will be looking to the Commission to take a direct and active interest in the project and the financial scheme? The Scottish Office has lamentably failed peripheral communities.

Mr. Wilson: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, I agree with every word that he has spoken. I do not, however, want to be taken away entirely from the structure of my speech by diverting interventions, attractive though they may be. I shall come to the Skye bridge and ferry services later. I agree that we could have a long debate about ferry services in a real periphery. Of course, it is not only about the periphery; it is about the interconnection and interoperability of national networks, as well as access to such networks.

As the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) rightly said, that means the maximising of communications. Surely we all want it to be possible to get on some form of transport at any point in the United Kingdom and, with the least possible trouble and the best possible connections, arrive somewhere within the European Community in the shortest possible time. That is a tremendous aim, on which all hon. Members should agree.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Did not the immensely sophisticated communications system for the transportation of shellfish and other goods come into being before and without the Maastrich treaty, and cannot it be extended without that treaty? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Council of Europe, which goes wider than European union and the European Community, is considering the introduction of fast communications throughout Europe? Why do we need a Maastricht treaty to bring about what the hon. Gentleman wants?

Mr. Wilson: That is a catch-all question. I was expressing the general view and perception of people on the periphery that communications should be speeded up. A journalist friend recently travelled with a consignment of shellfish from the Isle of Skye to Barcelona. His purpose was to observe the product from the moment of the catch to the moment it was sold, covering the various intermediaries. It was anything but an obstruction-free journey. It was not a single market; it was not a seamless movement through an internal market. Apart from other obstructions, at various points along the route it was necessary to pay Customs officers in kind. On entering France, that meant handing over eight crabs.

I do not know whether the aim of a seamless journey from Skye to Barcelona is feasible under the previous arrangements, but I want it to be feasible under the new ones.

Mr. Jessel: Why should that be through the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Wilson: That is a question which the hon. Gentleman must ask himself. I want to move from discussion of the periphery to the question of rail links currently being developed in Europe.

To my knowledge, several hon. Members in the Chamber have visited France to look at the development of French railways. I know that several hon. Members have travelled on the TGV. Several have looked at the infrastructure projects in the Pas de Calais area. I ask hon. Members, irrespective of party allegiance, to ask themselves whether what is being done on this side of the channel to facilitate the concept that underlies title XII is being undertaken with an iota of the enthusiasm being shown on the other side of the channel.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the hon. Gentleman is so enthusiastic—as, indeed, are some of his colleagues from the Scottish islands—could he tell me whether he has received an assurance that the United Kingdom will get more money out of the new slush fund for transport than it has to put in because of Maastricht? There will be no benefit if we had to put in a great deal of money only to get out very little. Has the hon. Gentleman received an assurance from the Government, the Commission or anyone else that we will get more out than we put in?

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman, from the remote region of Southend, is trying to return to the peripheral question. I am trying to move on. Past experience suggests that the peripheral regions get more out of the Community than they put in. I know of the hon. Gentleman's long-standing objections.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I just asked a simple question.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman always asks a question three times. I will try to answer it once.—*[Interruption.]* That makes it five. If the hon. Gentleman will pause, I will try to answer.

Sir Teddy Taylor *rose*——

12.30 am

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman is incapable of resisting the temptation to ask his question a sixth time. I will try to think of a profundity, given the build-up that the hon. Gentleman has given me. If he is asking whether the periphery of Scotland and of Britain get more or less out of the Community than they put in——

Sir Teddy Taylor: That was not my question.

Mr. Wilson: That was the hon. Gentleman's question.

Sir Teddy Taylor: We want to make progress, and to save time I emphasise that I was simply asking whether the hon. Gentleman has received an assurance from anyone —the Government, the Commission, or anyone else—that Britain, which includes the peripheries, will get more out of the new transport slush fund than the extra it will pay towards it. We are not asking whether Skye will receive more from Southend, but whether there will be a net gain or a net loss from the introduction of the new transport subsidies. If the hon. Gentleman can say that he has received an assurance on that point, it would save a great deal of time and we could progress with our business more quickly. Is the answer yes or no?

Mr. Wilson: I do not want to be as pedantic and semantic as the hon. Gentleman. I have not received any assurances as to how much Britain will get out of any fund. I do not have an assurance that I will be here tomorrow. The hon. Gentleman asked a rather silly question. He began by asking whether the peripheral regions would get more out of Europe.

Sir Teddy Taylor *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Wilson: Yes, he did. I am hypnotised by the shaking of the hon. Gentleman's head, but that is the question that he asked. It is a matter of historical record that the peripheral areas of Scotland have done rather well out of the Community. A lot of money has come from the Community, albeit it came from the British taxpayer in the first place—but if it had been left to Government Departments to make decisions on such ventures as the integrated development programmes in the Western Isles, they would never have seen the light of day.

I am by no means an uncritical admirer of the institutions in question, but had it been left to the British Government, many of those schemes would not have happened. Even then, it had been difficult getting the Government to chip in their share in the form of additionality. Whatever may be the balance sheet between Britain and the Community, from my own extensive observation of the periphery I have not the slightest doubt that the periphery has done rather well out of the Community and has nothing to fear from the transport fund or any other.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does the hon. Gentleman consider that the railway line between Perth and Drumochter is peripheral?

Mr. Wilson: Since part of that line serves the hon. Gentleman's constituency, it follows logically that it is at the heart of the universe. I do regard it as reasonbly peripheral, but it depends where one starts. If one starts at Pitlochry, it is not peripheral. I have seen a proposal to site the European investment bank at Dunoon, but I have not yet come across a proposal to site the European Commission at Pitlochry.

I shall try to return to the other point, about——

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Shellfish.

Mr. Wilson: I am trying to get off that subject; shellfish can have deleterious effects after midnight. I shall try to return to the point about the railways.

I well understand why the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was not present earlier, and I am sure that he was as pleased as I was about the tabling of a private notice question about storm damage in Perthshire. No doubt he is well aware of the damage that has been done to railway infrastructure in his constituency, and elsewhere north of Stirling.

We accept that British Rail, in recognition of the social obligation to maintain peripheral railway lines, will put the necessary investment into restoring that infrastructure. Is the hon. Gentleman as confident, however, that under a privatised railway system someone would be prepared to put several million pounds into the repairing of bridges, and all the other work that will have to be done to put loss-making railway services back in place?

The Chairman: Order. The merits or demerits of privatisation are not appropriate subjects for debate on amendment No. 2.

Mr. Wilson: I respect your ruling, Mr. Morris. Surely, however, an interrelationship exists between privatisation —particularly privatisation of a railway network—and the probability of maintaining the transport services referred to in article 129b.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Article 129b(2) states:

"Within the framework of a system of open and competitive markets, action by the Community shall aim at promoting the interconnection and inter-operability of national networks".

That could imply that, at some stage in the future, privately operated transport networks would be expected to exist in every member state. It is implied that privatisation is within the framework of article 129b.

The Chairman: Order. That does not include the pros and cons of privatisation.

Mr. Wilson: One form of transport competes against others. No one but a clown would believe that there will be a competitive system on the railways, in any meaningful sense: trains cannot overtake each other.

Mr. Home Robertson: May I take my hon. Friend back to Drumochter? He will be aware that virtually all the cement in Scotland is produced at Dunbar, in my constituency. As a consequence of decisions made in the run-up to privatisation, the price of transferring rail freight to Inverness, via Drumochter, has been increased to such an extent that railway freight transport no longer competes with road freight transport. Instead of one train carrying cement up to Inverness every week, there will be 40 lorryloads.

That is the kind of dotty system that is operating in the United Kingdom. If we had a proper integrated policy providing for bulk transport around the country, we should not experience such problems.

Mr. Wilson: I could not agree more. The issue exercises me greatly as well. Obviously, I wish to remain within your guidelines, Mr. Morris; however, I want to highlight the contradiction involved in adopting article 129b, which pays lip service to the extension and development of communications to reduce the disadvantage to the periphery, while pursuing a policy that, on rational grounds, we can only expect to endanger railway services in precisely the areas that article 129b is supposed to benefit. I am not sure how we can avoid that.

I cannot imagine why anybody should not want what is envisaged. Article 129b does not set out a firm programme for achieving those objectives, but the aspiration—that Community funds should be used to support projects and that the Community should promote these objectives—is unexceptionable. I expect this country to be in a position to benefit from the cohesion fund that is to be established no later than December 1993 for the financing of specific transport infrastructure projects in member states.

The important word in article 129c is the word "may." The article states that the Community

"may support the financial efforts made by the Member States for projects of common interest".

The question is whether projects will be put forward by this member state in order to qualify for the support that is clearly envisaged in article 129c.

The United Kingdom Government are not bringing forward infrastructure schemes on the same scale as other member states. They lack vision. One only has to look at the envisaged railways map of Europe to recognise that fact. If one looks at a small map covering the north of France and the south of England, one sees a network of high-speed rail links, although speeds are lower on this side of the Channel than on the other. There is, however, some vestige of comparability between the north of Europe and the south of England.

If, however, we look at a map that encompasses France, Italy and Spain as well as the whole of the United Kingdom, we see that any pretence of high-speed links before the end of the decade ends in London, whereas the work going on in Europe is aimed at extending those links so that people arriving at Lille or at any other great centre of the railways industry will be able to travel in high-speed trains to every other member state.

Mr. Harris: The hon. Gentleman is talking rubbish. My complaint is that the sleeper arriving from mainland Europe will end at Plymouth instead of going all the way to Penzance. It will not end at London. The network is fanning out, although not far enough. I make common cause with the hon. Gentleman on that point. He is wrong, however, when he says that everything will end at London.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman seems to have established to his own satisfaction, and everybody else's, that the sleeper will end at Plymouth rather than Penzance, but beyond that I am mystified by the point that he is trying to make. There will be a nightly sleeper to Glasgow and Edinburgh, or from Glasgow and Edinburgh to London. It would be smashing to get on a night train in Glasgow and to get off it in Paris the next morning, but it is not a high-speed train link. The point that I was making, which the hon. Gentleman conspicuously failed to contradict, is that links are being established throughout the rest of Europe, but we are not at the races. We have not designated a route—unless the Minister knows something that I do not—between the tunnel and London, far less the rest of the country.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): The House will recall that the Government have said repeatedly that they will move to announcement of a new high-speed rail link route shortly and that public consultation will start on that. The only way to finance such a major project is not from an enormous European fund but from the private sector. The private sector will provide the majority of the finance and will carry the project forward. We shall have a high-speed rail link between Folkestone and London much earlier than if we had relied on European funding.

12.45 am

Mr. Wilson: I do not want to prolong my speech, but the Minister has opened a new seam to the debate. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Progress is being made in the Pas de Calais area, but we are still messing about finding a route between the tunnel and London.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): If a rail link is already faster than travelling by air and has already won the market, what is the purpose of expending a vast sum of money simply to make it faster?

Mr. Wilson: I did not quite catch the point, but if the hon. Gentleman is drawing a comparison between rail and air, I think that fewer people will want to travel between London and Paris by air if they can use a high-speed, efficient link.

Sir David Mitchell: A high-speed link in the United Kingdom is not necessary if the total journey is already quicker than by air.

Mr. Wilson: That is a fantastic argument: that because the French have speeded up their link we need not bother. That is a remarkably defeatist argument. It may find a market in the south of England between the tunnel and London, where there is resistance to a high-speed link, but it is no excuse for the Government's failure to develop high-speed links north of London, where the advantage to which the former Minister, the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), refers will not exist. It will not be quicker to travel by train from Paris to another major city in the United Kingdom if high-speed links are not put in place. At best that seems a parochial view, and at worst a defeatist one.

Labour Members and, I am sure, many Conservative Members recognise the need for good communications in Europe and want barriers broken down. My ambition for my children and their generation is that they will get on a train, plane or bus from Glasgow to Paris, Seville or any of the great European cities and will think of it not as an outlandish journey but as part of their common heritage. Good communications and a fair structure that accommodates all people are necessary to achieve that.

Mr. Bill Walker: As the hon. Gentleman is talking about the business of people being able to go by bus or by air, how does he feel about United Kingdom taxpayers paying money into a European fund which is then used to subsidise European state-owned companies in competition with our privately owned companies which are doing a better job?

Mr. Wilson: I have too much regard for the hon. Gentleman's probity in these matters to think that he is referring to Stagecoach——

Mr. Walker: I was talking about British Airways and British Midland.

Mr. Wilson: —which is at the moment reduced to acting as a booking agent for one coach on overnight trains from Glagow to Aberdeen, which is not quite the proud new Valhalla which the Minister went north to inaugurate some months ago. I should have thought that the mention of British Airways as a model of private success was a bit dubious in the present climate.

I certainly want taxpayers' money to be used to make transport cheaper and more efficient—I can think of no more sensible way of using taxpayers' money. Having a good transport system is in our environmental and social interests and counters the remoteness of some places. There is no better way to use taxpayers' money than to promote such an infrastructure.

We could debate all night. I shall continue only for a few more minutes, but I want to talk about the genuine periphery and about ferries and bridges in particular. I want my part of the country—the west of Scotland—and the north of Scotland to be served by an ever improving network of ferries. I do not want people who live on islands to be penalised. It is wrong and immoral that people who suffer many hardships and difficulties in order to live in island communities should have to pay high ferry fares for doing so.

I want subsidy—to the Tories it may be a dirty word, but to me it is a socialist word—because it equalises and is a safeguard against disadvantage for people who live in peripheral communities. I am glad that Caledonian MacBrayne, for instance, has been able to weigh in heavily to take advantage of European funds to build new ferries.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Wilson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman —no, I shall not, because I have been very generous. I am not filibustering—if we are to have this debate, we might as well ensure that some reasonable points are made. I wish to express my strong philosophical support for subsidies, for grants and for European support for transport systems in peripheral areas. The hon. Gentleman is extremely agitated so I shall accept one final intervention.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman went off the point —I was not talking about buses. Will he consider holidaymakers, for example, who travel from south-east and London airports to Spain? Does he think it right that the Iberia airlines should be subsidised, unlike United Kingdom airlines which work in a similar market? That was my question.

Mr. Wilson: If the hon. Gentleman had asked it properly, it might not have been veiled in such mystery. I defend the right of countries to have their own airlines, but how they manage those airlines' fiscal policies is quite another question—to get into that would require a whole new debate.

I return to what Government policies do to peripheral communities and the example cited by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). There are currently proposals—unique, for the moment—to construct a road toll bridge which will at the start, in 1996, result in the imposition of tolls of about £6 per car on an island community. The toll will be at least eight times higher than that for any other road bridge in Britain. That is what the Tories are doing to island communities.

If there is any fund in Europe to which the community can apply to get the funding that will remove that imposition on the island in question, I would rather place my faith in that European fund than I would in the political motivation of Ministers who have wished the toll on a community which patently does not want it.

Mr. Macdonald: When my hon. Friend pushes the point, he may care to contrast the current position, with the absence of any European funding going into the peripheral areas, such as funding for the Skye bridge, with the previous position whereby structural funds were available which went into financing a range of new ferries to serve the outer islands of Scotland. There were roll-on/roll-off facilities and the Kylesku bridge. All those were built with European money. Without European money, the Government are simply turning round and leaving the local community to finance the infrastructural projects themselves.

Mr. Wilson: That is a neat point for the end of my speech. My hon. Friend is entirely right. He has explained the perceptions of people who live in the peripheral communities. As long as there were European funds, people living in Skye could say to a European source, "This is a cruel and vicious thing, which is being done for political motivation. Is there any way in which to get round this?" Such people would expect to find—I believe that they would find—in European sources some sympathy for the plight into which they have been plunged by the determination of the Scottish Office to have a pilot project based on tolls.

What would the reaction of hon. Members be if a community in their constituency had imposed on it a toll bridge regime of £6 per car? If they cannot answer that question, why are they prepared to see it happen in the name of the Government somewhere else in the country?

Hon. Members should realise that there would be sympathy in Europe, whereas there is no sympathy in the Government. The islanders say, rightly, that, if there are funds to be drawn on and devices to be used that ameliorate the impact of Government policies, they want them. Islanders are not insular. They have no reason to trust the Government.

If there are Conservative diehards who cannot understand why people are prepared to support the EC even in communities that, 15 years ago, would not have been prepared to support it, they should look at themselves in the mirror and at the actions of their own Government. People are looking for defence mechanisms and for alternatives. They are looking for ways of avoiding the impact not of EC policies, but of the policies of the British Tory Government.

Mr. Cash: The provisions to which the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has just referred were directed to transport—to rail and to roads. We heard not a word that I can recall relating to telecommunications or to energy. For that reason, his speech skimmed over the surface of the matter. I have no doubt that we shall remedy that.

[Mr. Cash]

The provision that we are discussing deals not only with transport, but with telecommunications and energy. In effect, a perfect example of a governmental—in this case, supragovernmental—system which is being devised in Brussels. It is intervention in the market, although it pretends to respect the market.

There is a fundamental contradiction in the way in which the provisions have been cast which is characteristic of the contradictions in the Maastricht treaty, which I have described as a hall of mirrors. It looks both ways at the same time. Unfortunately, many of the perfectly reasonable objectives which could be achieved by European co-operation by private companies and private operators working within the Community are being subsumed, as the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North made clear, by a dirigiste, supranational, state-controlled, socialist-engineered system. No doubt the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North believes in that, but will it actually work? Is it the right way to proceed?

1 am

I have a slight historical interest in the matter in that my great-great-grandfather founded the London and Brighton railway in 1830. I believe that that was the second railway in Britain, if not in the world, although my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) knows far more about these matters than I. My great-great-grandfather also went to St. Peterburg in 1855. In other words, we were dealing with trans-European networks in the railway system, and also in respect of south and north America, more than a century ago.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I know that my hon. Friend lives in the past, so perhaps he was not aware that the motor car, which had a passing effect on the finances of the railways, had not been invented in those days.

Mr. Cash: I always defer to the superior knowledge of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch in respect of such matters. He, too, lives in the past. Indeed, he writes about it. However, we have a trans-European network which has been devised and based on a system set up more than a century ago.

The policy that has been pursued claims to want an open and competitive market, but, it then wobbles. It states that we will take into account the potential economic viability of the projects. It sets out a grand panoramic vision and, as with so much of the European dimension, it promises much, but it attenuates and begs the question whether it will deliver the kind of operations to which the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North referred.

Will it be able to provide a system that will benefit the people in the islands to whom the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North referred? Obviously, he made much of that point for parochial reasons. I doubt whether the north of Scotland will get the kind of system that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North hopes that it will get, simply because of the costs involved. The potential economic viability of a project will frequently be the reason why objectives are not achieved.

Mr. Spearing: I support the aspirations of my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), but does he agree that some colleagues inside and outside the House have underestimated the bureaucracy involved? My hon. Friend will be aware that the first report of the Select Committee on European Legislation reported on trans-European networks. In relation to transport, it stated:

"The Commission proposes to allocate the Declaration for transport projects following consultation with the existing Transport Infrastructure Committee."

The report then gives several criteria.

Does the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) agree that, while the promise may be great, the delivery via layers of bureaucracy and the Commission, with the Commission deciding in the end on a pork-barrel basis in relation to other matters, may not satisfy the aspirations that I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North?

Mr. Cash: I tend to agree with the hon. Gentleman. No one would remotely object to the idea of an efficient intercontinental rail system. However, for the reasons that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has given, and because of the qualifications about the economic viability of the project, it seems highly improbable that the proposal will turn out to be more than an aspiration. That begs the large question of whether the system will work.

We must also consider subsidies. There is no question but that in France, Germany, Spain, and so on, massive subsidies are paid to the railway systems. British Rail is only partially subsidised. There is an important issue. Maastricht permits subsidies to selected networks. Will subsidised Greek road transport, for example, compete fairly with non-subsidised British hauliers both operating, for example, in Germany? Does Maastricht mean that rail transport will be subsidised throughout Europe? If so, at what level, and will it be at the same level throughout?

At present, as I have said, British Rail is partially subsidised, whereas the French and other railway systems are heavily subsidised. I do not intend to complain at this moment about the Government's rail privatisation programme, but the fact that it is bound to reduce or even to remove subsidy will surely have an adverse impact on the relative competitiveness of our system vis-a-vis those of continental railway systems which are more heavily subsidised.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend is not right in asserting that our proposals for privatisation of the railways will automatically lead to a reduction and an elimination of subsidy.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted to hear that. The extent of the subsidy is relatively less than in those other countries. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will strive, in his departmental responsibilities, to ensure that the other nation states in Europe, within that framework, eliminate or at any rate level off the amount of subsidy they pay, so as to ensure a level playing field in respect of transport networks.

Mr. Adley: I understood my hon. Friend to agree with the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that he was opposed to bureaucracy. Which European railway has or intends to have an organisation called Railtrack, a franchising authority and a regulator, to name but three out of about eight new bureaucratic quangos proposed to be set up? If my hon. Friend would tell me that, I might be more interested in what he says.

Mr. Cash: I am not the slightest bit interested in setting up a bureaucratic system. The proposed system is likely to be extremely bureaucratic because it will have centralised control based on decisions taken within the European Commission to far too great an extent. That is one of the main problems. On the one hand, we shall have railway systems elsewhere in Europe which, on the face of it, are more heavily subsidised than ours without the prospect of ours having greater subsidy—to which I would object in principle, in any case. On the other hand, we shall also have more bureaucracy, because the system will be based on centralised control.

Mr. Dykes: I have been listening to my hon. Friend with great interest as he referred to the importance of the incidence and weight of subsidy. He is obviously something of an expert on the subject. As you know, Mr. Morris, he himself used subsidised mail recently when he sent out a letter advertising on Tuesday 8 December an anti-European meeting, when a French anti-federal leader —a foreigner—was going to come and speak with him——

The Chairman: Order. I ruled on this matter the other evening, so I do not think that we need to develop that point any further.

Mr. Dykes: I understand that, Mr. Morris, but may I continue? There is a further reply from the Department of the Serjeant at Arms, and that is what I was referring to. It is germane to the argument of subsidisation that my hon. Friend has been deploying. That is why I should like to continue this intervention—with your very kind permission, Mr. Morris, if I may, but I will sit down if you deem me to be out of order when I make my next few contiguous remarks.

On 14 January, the Assistant Serjeant at Arms kindly wrote to me again, referring to the letter that I wrote to Madam Speaker—that is why I am asking my hon. Friend about the important matter of subsidisation—saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) had conceded that he had wrongly used the subsidised mail system of the House of Commons, both the notepaper of the House of Commons and the official franked envelopes, and had repaid the entire amount.

Of course, I am interested in the extent and weight of the subsidisation in this connection, which is rather similar to railway subsidisation if one considers it in profound terms, Mr. Morris, because the Department of the Serjeant at Arms makes a policy point of never revealing to anybody how much public money was actually used in that illicit purpose of advertising a meeting to other hon. Members' constituents. Will my hon. Friend say how much of the subsidy he has now repaid to the public fund?

Mr. Cash: Every time we are in this position the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) raises the same issue. The matter has been dealt with through——

The Chairman: Order. We are not in this position—the hon. Gentleman is in it.

Mr. Cash: The matter has been disposed of through the Serjeant at Arms, the money has been repaid and that is the end of it.

Mr. Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. With great respect to my hon. Friend, the matter has not been disposed of. The matters were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and myself some nights ago, and we gave the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) opportunities to clear them up. We have returned to the matters tonight and the hon. Gentleman has again not cleared them up——

Mr. Adley: Cashgate.

Mr. Harris: Cashgate has been mentioned. The hon. Member for Stafford has not cleared up the matter. It has been put to him quite fairly, and he obviously wants to clear his name and dispel any uncertainty. In fairness to the hon. Gentleman it is only right and proper that we should give him the opportunity to dispose of the matter once and for all. All he needs to do is say by how much he has reimbursed the House authorities for the expenditure.

We all remember that last week the hon. Gentleman said that there was to be a demonstration in Trafalgar square this Sunday. He used the House to advertise the demonstration and he said that——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying wide of the amendment, and the issues are ones for the House authorities, not for the Chair. If the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) wishes to say something about them, I am sure that he will do so. If he does not, I would be grateful if he would return to the amendment.

Mr. Adley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. May I seek your guidance? Are we not discussing telecommunications under this group of amendments? Do not the issues raised by my hon. Friends fall perfectly properly under the amendments, which deal with subsidies on telecommunications?

The Chairman: I have just ruled and given guidance to the hon. Member for Stafford, who is to take one of two options relating to transportation.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Is it in order to ask for the sum to be spelt out in ecu?

The Chairman: I am not sure that that point of order is helpful.

Mr. Cash: The matter has been disposed of. I think that the figure was about £210. I am afraid that I do not have the correspondence on me, although my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) carries it around with him all the time. Every time I rise to speak, he raises the issue. The matter has been disposed of, and it would be best if I continued with the issue of road transport.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend receive the regular communication that I and all other hon. Members receive weekly, which is paid for by the public purse and informs us how grand the Community is? No one seems to be raising points of order about that.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend makes a good point.

The Chairman: Order. Before the hon. Member takes up the issue raised by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), I should tell him that it does not fall within the remit of the amendments. I am having difficulty hearing the hon. Member for Stafford, and would be grateful if he would speak up.

Mr. Cash: As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) says, there are matters relating to

[Mr. Cash]

subsidies all over the place. With regard to public subsidies, it would be as well if we could return to the provisions, as I initially wanted to do.

There is already a road transport market throughout Europe, in which British transport contractors are already well placed. The onset of the single market a few weeks ago has greatly speeded up road transport by removing some of the border red tape. Now, unfortunately, the extra regulations implicit in the Maastricht process will have a tendency to slow it down. How does the Minister see the provisions of the Maastricht treaty improving the market for British road hauliers in practice?

Mr. Wilson: Although the hon. Gentleman is out on a limb on this issue in his party, he is very much in the main stream on others. He believes that subsidies to British Rail should be heavily reduced, and should not be brought into line with the subsidies in other European countries. How representative of the rail industry does he think that view is?

1.15 am

Mr. Cash: The subsidy for British Rail must be weighed against the money being spent on roads and motorways in the United Kingdom. There is a proposal to widen the M6, part of which runs through my constituency. Much of that widening is quite unnecessary. The proposal, which would involve huge sums of public money, includes the creation of another spaghetti junction at junction 15—an idea strongly opposed by my constituents. No one has come up with any justification for the project as yet. The real problem is the bottleneck at the junction between the M5 and M6. If there is to be an equitable distribution of money for the improvement of our road and rail networks —I am not against investing public money in that—such distribution must be done in the right place and in the right way.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend tell the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) that the same will happen here as has happened with every other Euro-fund? Britain will pay in more than it gets out, so we shall have less money to spend in Britain. Will my hon. Friend tell the socialists who, strangely, sit on the Conservative Benches that the result will be fewer jobs and transport facilities for the British people, and that all we are doing is implementing another socialist policy over which we shall have no control? We shall be handing over more money to Europe, which is madness, and it will cause more unemployment, even in socialist-held Harrow.

Mr. Cash: I could not agree more. I was most surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) avoided any reference to the impact of the fisheries policy on area 7. He knows perfectly well that his fishing constituents are being wiped out, but he has not spoken up because he is a Euro-fantasist——

The Chairman: Order. Not by this amendment, they are not.

Mr. Cash: In the context of the trans-European network there is considerable interest in the amount of money that goes into the fisheries policy——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must understand the rules of debate. If I say that a certain line of argument is out of order, it is no good the hon. Gentleman's returning to it. I should be grateful if he stuck to these amendments.

Mr. Cash: Does article 129c mean that the Community will pay for the fast passenger rail link from Folkestone to Waterloo?

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend is being frightfully unkind to the Department of Transport. Speaking of roads, is he aware that there is a secret plan to widen the M25 to 14 lanes? Although the Department of Transport has not announced it yet, it is to be a new London airport.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend is another Euro-fantasist. No doubt he will be able to live with that nightmare as well.

I would be grateful if the Minister would tell us whether the Community will help to contribute to the fast rail link. It is a project as defined under the treaty, and it needs to connect with the rest of Europe. The point deserves consideration and a reply. If not, why will the Community not pay for it?

Mr. Freeman: I am glad to respond briefly to my hon. Friend. I assume that my hon. Friend is speaking about the new rail link from Folkestone to King's Cross rather than the one from Folkestone to Waterloo, which will open in a year's time. I have said that it will be financed largely by the private sector, by this country, and that any European fund contribution will be relatively modest.

Mr. Cash: Why should the west coast line to Scotland not receive similar funds? That would lead to interconnection and interoperability. Perhaps the Minister will answer that question.

I shall move on and deal with energy policy. British Gas has done extremely well not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the world. It has entered the world market for the discovery, recovery, distribution and marketing of gas. Under the Maastricht treaty, who will place the contracts for interstate pipelines? Will it be done through Brussels, and who will enter into the contracts? The issue is not merely to assert what we want but to look at the characteristics and provisions of the treaty, relate them to practical examples, and ask where the money will go. Will it go to the other European countries or will we get our fair share? If there is increased distribution of public subsidies, we must get a reasonable slice of the cake.

Massive problems will arise if the entire system is translated to a centralised, Brussels-orientated slush fund. If that happens, national interests will intervene and we shall be outmanoeuvred and outgunned. The Minister said that the Folkestone to King's Cross link will be paid for by private enterprise, and I do not cavil at that, but will there be equitable distribution of the slush funds to which our taxpayers contribute? We must try to understand such matters, because the treaty is not just a few words or paragraphs: it translates into law the prospects for parts of the Community to tap cohesion and slush funds. We need direct answers to our questions.

Article 129c states:

"The Community may decide to co-operate with third countries"—

that is, countries outside the 12 member states. What happens if the Community decides not to do that? How

and to what extent will contracts for British Gas pipelines throughout central and eastern Europe be provided? Siemens has worked its way into Czechoslovakia and is securing a substantial degree of control over the energy grid in that part of central and middle Europe. Under the third-country provision, will Siemens be able to obtain European funds which will enable it to compete for projects with United Kingdom companies?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I can set my hon. Friend's mind at rest on that: no funding flows directly from these articles.

Mr. Cash: We have already touched on the pit closure programme and the fact that under the European Community coal and steel regulations the former Competition Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, recently approved a DM3·3 billion deal between the power generators in Germany and Germany's highly subsidised coal industry. We are given to understand that this exemption was to last for as much as 100 years.

Against that background, the President of the Board of Trade recently went to Brussels, apparently to get clearance for the arrangments that he would like to make to fit in with the White Paper on the pit closure programme that the Government are about to produce. The Government are in a fix over that programme, which includes a pit at Trentham in a constituency neighbouring mine. The trouble is that the RWE—the biggest energy producer in Germany—intends through its subsidiary to sell steam coal to our power generators, in direct competition with British mines which are to be closed by the Government. That cannot make any kind of sense for the future of British energy. It appears—why else would the President of the Board of Trade be going to Brussels to get clearance?—that all that is tied up with European energy policy.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The hon. Gentleman is on to a good point. Another important point is that the Commission will also heavily subsidise the metallurgical coal industry in Germany.

Mr. Cash: That is one of the problems that we are up against. As I put it to the President of the Board of Trade when I had a meeting with him, had the arrangements for dealing with expensive and heavily subsidised coals in Germany been dealt with as part of the Maastricht negotiations, our energy users would not have been put at a competitive disadvantage by the DM3·3 billion deal approved by Sir Leon Brittan under the European energy policy. I heard the Minister say that there is no question of a subsidy under the energy and coal policy, but unfortunately—I imagine that he will be able to address the point—subsidies are made to the German coal industry, if not under Maastricht, certainly under the European Coal and Steel Community regime.

Those matters should have been ironed out in the negotiations. As with the CAP, so with this. One of the points about the treaty to which I object is the fact that there was a lack of proper negotiation, because both the CAP fund and the energy policy should have been sorted out as a quid pro quo for other things. British industry is being penalised, leading to RWE and others making bids for our coal mines. The 31,000 British miners whose jobs are at risk are being thrown out of work while German miners are being subsidised through both German and European subsidies. *[Interruption.]*

It is all very well for the hon. Member for Harrow, East to titter occasionally in a rather irrelevant and trivial way, but those matters are of great concern to many people and many hon. Members, as was shown by the debate on the pit closure programme only a few weeks ago, which is shortly to be repeated. It is important for us to understand why the matters were not solved in the run-up to Maastricht so that we are still saddled with them.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): The hon. Gentleman's argument is paradoxical. For the past 10 years, we have been hearing from the Conservative party that subsidies are profoundly destructive of economic efficiency and competitiveness. Accordingly, the hon. Gentleman should be delighted that the Germans are subsidising their coal industry. It is his argument that that will undermine the German economy. The hon. Gentleman should be asking the Germans to load on subsidies. Has he finally rumbled that public investment promotes economic efficiency and development in Germany and other countries?

1.30 am

Mr. Cash: I take my hat off to the hon. Gentleman for his ingenuity.

It is my argument that the scale of the subsidies and their historical input to the German coal industry is doing enormous damage to our energy users, including those in the consitituency of the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald). Irrespective of the superficial nature of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, it should be borne in mind that unfair competition is costing British industry a great deal and is tending to put people in his constituency, and in others, out of work. He should bear that in mind.

We buy electricity at off-peak times from France via underwater cables. I understand that, under the Maastricht treaty, Brussels will be able to intervene. Under the treaty, those who are opposed to nuclear-generated power, such as the French electricity suppliers, will be able to stop the sale of that power to Britain. Scotland has a surplus of electricity, which it sells to England. Under the Maastricht treaty, Brussels will be able to intervene on that as well. Our arrangements are already set up, and I believe that as much as 10 per cent. of our electricity supplies come from the French nuclear industry.

Under my constituency, there are about 300 million tonnes of coal running from the Trentham pit, yet it is one of the 10 that are to be closed. I and many others would claim that it is viable. We are, however, entering into a system with more dirigisme, interventionism and subsidies, which will do immense damage to our indigenous energy supplies and to those who work in the coal industry, not to mention all the ancillary industries such as the manufacture of coal-mining equipment. To my mind, things will be made worse by the interventionist, dirigiste, slush-fund politics that is contained in the Maastricht treaty.

British Telecom, like British Gas, is a privatised industry. It competes effectively within Europe and worldwide. Telecommunication companies co-operate—it is in their mutual interests to do so—within Europe and in the world as a whole. What benefit would there be to cable and satellite communications if the provisions of the Maastricht treaty were to be implemented? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will respond to my question.

[Mr. Cash]

Can my right hon. Friend give us an assurance or undertaking that, under article 129, air travel throughout Europe will be truly competitive?

Sir Teddy Taylor: Never.

Mr. Cash: Precisely.

The present protectionist policies will no doubt persist. It is cheaper to fly from London to New York than to many of the European capitals. In other words, we are presented with a range of potential advantages, so it is claimed—aspirations to greater degrees of competitiveness—but how realistic is it all?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I wish to be helpful, and to remind my hon. Friend again that no funding flows directly from these articles.

Mr. Cash: I hope that my right hon. Friend is not trying to dodge the issue of cohesion and structural funds. I remember meeting him before the Maastricht treaty was signed, when he said in as many words that there would not be any cohesion fund, or that it was highly improbable that there would be one. He said that there would be a fight against it. It was that sort of language. We now have the cohesion fund—under which, at Edinburgh, a little noticed provision gave a substantial amount of additional funding for eastern Germany. I think that it was about 18 billion ecu.

The Chairman: Order. Was that money for transport, telecommunications or energy?

Mr. Cash: With respect, Mr. Morris, the relationship of the cohesion fund to trans-European networks——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman appears to have some difficulty communicating. It either was or it was not. I suspect that it was not, so I should be grateful if he would return to the amendments.

Mr. Cash: The cohesion fund is not specifically——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman does not have to tell me what the cohesion fund is; I am well aware of that. I also note that that subject comes further down the Order Paper. For the moment, I should like the hon. Gentleman to stay with the subjects of transport, telecommunications and energy.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Is my hon. Friend aware that article 129c states specifically:

"the Community may also contribute, through the Cohesion Fund to be set up no later than 31 January 1993 . . . to the financing of specific projects"?

Quite apart from transport money, the article is specific, clear and concise in its reference to cohesion fund money. Therefore, any suggestion that a great deal of cash is not involved not only misleads the House—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but I ask them to think about the poor people of Britain who are already paying too much and who will now pay more——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) was referring to eastern Germany and the cohesion fund. I asked a simple question—was that related to transport, telecommunications or energy? If it was, his remarks might have been in order; if it was not, they would not have been. We then moved to a debate about the cohesion fund and the poor people of Britain.

Mr. Cash: It is not a question of whether it may or may not be, or whether you, Mr. Morris, may or may not suspect that it is relevant—I am telling you, with respect, that article 129c states:

"the Community may also contribute, through the Cohesion Fund to be set up no later than 31 December 1993 pursuant to Article 130d, to the financing of specific projects in Member States in the area of transport infrastructure."

Mr. Garel-Jones: Perhaps I could help the House. My hon. Friends the Members for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Southend, East (Sir Teddy Taylor) are right about article 129c——

Sir Teddy Taylor: My right hon. Friend said that there was no money.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If my hon. Friend will try to calm down for one moment, I can tell him that under title XII —trans-European networks—no money flows directly from articles 129b, 129c. Those articles lay down the guidelines within which a project might take place and which might then, if approved—this is where my hon. Friend is right—be financed through the cohesion fund. I think that there has been some misunderstanding on that point.

Mr. Cash: Between ourselves and you, Mr. Morris, we have established that my remarks are relevant. Of course I understand that you want us to stay within the framework of the debate. I am doing so, and I have no reason not to pursue my points.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): People in my constituency are excited about article 129c. They are looking forward to the possibility of the cohesion fund making an impact on the electrification of the railway from Crewe to Holyhead, because of the important connection between Ireland and the remainder of the continent of Europe. That is an example of where we hope that, in time, funds may flow directly from article 129c to help people in my constituency, which is why they are so enthusiastic about it.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted to hear that, but I am not sure that right hon. and hon. Members ought to be enthusiastic at the thought that this country will qualify for cohesion funds. The principle to which my hon. Friend referred is based on the assumption that our gross domestic product has sunk to the level of countries such as Portugal and Greece.

Mr. Brandreth: And perhaps Ireland.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend's constituency is so near Ireland that he has no doubt reached the conclusion that, with these provisions, they are almost indivisible.

Mr. Salmond: Looking at the course of the United Kingdom's enconomy, is it not reasonable to assume that the United Kingdom will qualify on the criteria in question?

Mr. Cash: No one can say for sure, because we have not reached the point in 1996 when, if the treaty is enacted, the convergence conditions are likely to be applied. At this moment in time, it is not a happy state of affairs to find

that we are heading towards qualifying for cohesion funds. That is not something that we should greet with much enthusiasm, because it shows the dire economic straits in which our country finds itself. The reason is that we got ourselves locked in to an exchange rate mechanism that led to untold trouble.

However, I will not be tempted down that route, because I am sure that you, Mr. Morris, would be the first to point out that we shall have ample opportunity to discuss that aspect later. Despite your suspicions now and again, I have every intention of staying within the rules of order.

Sir Teddy Taylor: So that the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) are not disappointed, will my hon. Friend make it abundantly clear that, sadly, Britain will pay a lot of money into the cohesion fund but is unlikely to get anything out of it? Regrettably, therefore, there will be even less money available to help the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester. Should they not be warned of that sad situation?

Mr. Cash: I am sure that they will take on board my hon. Friend's remarks. It is a sad situation, and it is directly related to Britain being locked into the exchange rate mechanism. It was a disaster, but, thank God, we managed to get out of it—although I noted with great concern that that may not necessarily be for more than one year. I found that very worrying.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Perhaps I may try to be helpful again. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is right. When my hon. Friend meant to talk about the structural fund—I have done this myself—he referred to the cohesion fund. The cohesion fund is for poorer countries, but my hon. Friend will be relieved to learn, as I was, that, once any framework decision is taken under the articles in question, any decision to spend under the cohesion fund would be by unanimity, whereas spending under the structural fund would be by qualified majority voting.

Mr. Cash: As my right hon. Friend knows, the structural fund has substantially increased over the past few years. That is yet another example of the social engineering that is under way in Europe. One difficulty is that there is neither the will, the capacity, not the ability to pay over many of the funds.

Promises were made—of the kind that will no doubt arise in relation to transport policy, and of the kind found in article 109c—in relation to Ireland. They might well be found wanting. Ireland was promised 6 billion ecu, if not more, in a deal—if not as a bribe—to go along with the Maastricht arrangements. There must be significant doubts in the minds of many people in Eire today about whether it will get that money.

At the same time, in relation to transport and trans-European networks, a question arises in respect of cohesion fund moneys being pumped into the eastern part of Germany under the Edinburgh agreement. In my view, Chancellor Kohl emerged victorious from the Edinburgh summit, on all counts.

Germany is now investing massively in eastern Europe. About 85 per cent. of all foreign investment in such countries as Czechoslovakia and Hungary is derived from moneys made payable for transport, energy grids and so forth. However, it has not invested in eastern Germany on the scale required to deal with its problems. There is a clear imbalance. Owing to the complete failure of the one-for-one policy pursued by Chancellor Kohl—against the advice of Karl Otto Pöhl, the president of the Bundesbank at the time of reunification—our taxpayers are now paying the price of the increased investment, along with the additional cohesion funds for eastern Germany.

1.45 am

Meanwhile, German bankers and industrialists investing in transport, energy and all the trans-European networks are feeding into the new economic hegemony —which is well known to Ministers in such countries as Czechoslovakia, even if it is not known to Ministers in this country. Under the ERM and the introduction of high interest rates in Germany, our taxpayers and mortgage holders are effectively subsidising arrangements in eastern Europe, whose profits will go back to German companies.

Let me now turn to the markets in road, rail, air, telephones, gas, electricity and so forth.

Mr. Macdonald: It may not be a one-way transfer. Contrary to what the Minister blandly said, the cohesion funds are not simply for the poorer members of the Community. According to the protocol on economic and social cohesion,

"financial contributions to projects in the fields of ... trans-European networks in Member States will be paid to those States with a per capita GNP of less than 90 per cent. of the Community average".

On present economic trends, and with the devaluation of the pound, we might well qualify in the mid-1990s.

Mr. Cash: The other day the hon. Gentlemen put up a strong defence of the Maastricht treaty, to which he is plainly dedicated. None the less, a number of questions, which present a number of difficulties, remain unanswered. It is all very well to draft provisions that look good on paper; the question is whether the practical will, the ability and the capacity exist to deliver those provisions.

One of the dangers is that some of the poorer countries' expectations are being raised. They are being shown a vision of magnificent road and telecommunications systems; they are being led to believe that they will be uplifted and turned into modern economies like the northern industrial countries. The truth is that they will not; furthermore, the dashing of their expectations may well lead to greater instability within Europe than many people have predicted. There is nothing worse than giving —through promises and assurances on a piece of paper —an impression that will not be delivered in practice, particularly if the nations involved are already at a low threshold.

Sir Teddy Taylor: In fairness to the people of Skye, the Hebrides and the island of Arran, would it not be very unwise—perhaps even misleading—to give the impression that all their problems involving ferries and bridges will be solved by this wonderful new slush fund, when it is clear that—sadly—nothing will come out of it unless by some remote chance the economy goes down to such a degree that we might qualify for the cohesion funds? Would it not be better for the Government to warn the people of Benbecula, the Hebrides and the island of Arran that

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

cohesion fund money will mean less, not more, money for Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom? Would that not be more careful, honest and appropriate?

Mr. Cash: I very much agree. There are people in the Hebrides who have been promised money for infrastructure projects, a promise that may turn out to be unjustified. The provisions give the impression, subject to the point that I made about project viability, that money will be given for these projects. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) made a lot of play of the people in the north of Scotland, but I hope that he will have the honesty to admit that it by no means follows that they will be able to get the money for infrastructure projects that is implied in the language that is used. It may not be followed through in policies.

Mr. Wilson: It is becoming a caricature of what went before to suggest that anyone made any such promises. What I suggested was that there are no grounds for assumptions, but nor are there grounds for the paranoia that the hon. Gentleman so ably epitomises. People know that the policies of the United Kingdom Government have left them with the unwanted high-toll Skye bridge, and that European structural funds have provided them with financial support for improved communications and ferry services. People are well able to evaluate the relative trust that should be placed in the Government, compared with the European Community's interest in peripheral areas.

Mr. Cash: There is a problem with setting out on a piece of paper what could or might be done. The question is whether it is practicable, whether it will be delivered, who will pay for it and who will benefit? Who will be the gainers and losers? A practical analysis, an audit of the manner in which it will be done, would have been preferable, before these pieces of paper were prepared, with the draftsman sitting down and writing it out.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Cash: I see that I am exciting some interest on the Opposition Benches, so I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

Mr. Spearing: Politically that is not so, Mr. Morris. Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that the real position is that, although Scotland and the Highlands and Islands have been dealt with disgracefully by the Government——

Mr. Harris: Disgracefully?

Mr. Spearing: Yes, disgracefully. They may have been dealt with, for the time being, with some liberality by the Council of Ministers, but if the British people feel at the end of this Parliament that the Conservative Government should be turned out and the EC's liberality ceases, the people of the Highlands and Islands and the rest of Britain will have no power to do anything about the people in Brussels, will they?

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The setting up of a new competence in this area means that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) is advocating personal responsibility for the decisions that he takes in the House with respect to the competences that are to be handed over to the European Community. There will be anger in his part of the world if there is no delivery. How on earth will he be able to deliver those policies within the centralised arrangements that are to be set up?

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend realise that we are now moving into an area where Opposition Members will blame this Parliament and this Government for failures that were never intended but which can be used to discredit this Parliament and the Conservative Government and cause a political reaction in Scotland that is in their interests and not in the United Kingdom's?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. At the heart of these provisions is pessimism, economic defeatism and an abdication of responsibility, whereby powers are handed to people who are so remote that there will be no compensation from any member of the European Parliament. Maastricht is not merely raising people's expectations with an utterly misleading prospectus but, even worse, it is an abdication of responsibility. Ministers know perfectly well that they will not be able effectively to influence many policies.

Some hon. Members tell us that we shall be better able to influence on the inside than on the outside, but I should be interested to see their reaction when they are out-voted and do not get what they were expecting or had promised their constituents.

Mr. Salmond: On the question where anger will be directed, does the hon. Gentleman believe that the 25,000 people who rallied in Edinburgh on 12 December showed the extent of the concern about the lack of Democracy in Scotland? Will he contrast that with the 1,000 people who rallied in Trafalgar square at the weekend? Does he accept that, on a rough calculation, the people of Scotland are 250 times more concerned about the lack of democracy in Scotland than the people who rallied in Trafalgar square about the Maastricht Bill?

Mr. Cash: I was in Scotland at that time, and was thoroughly impressed by the 25,000 people who turned out. That was an arrangement that the hon. Gentleman and his friends had been working towards for many years, whereas the issue whether there should be a vote on a referendum in the House arose only a few days ago. I believe that recent opinion polls showing that 75 per cent. of the public want a referendum will be translated into action.

There are markets for road, rail, air, telephones, gas, electricity and so on, but some countries have open and competitive markets, whereas others do not. In some countries, the market is distorted by Governments with protectionist regulations, subsidies and unfair competition. Far from removing that distortion and creating a level playing field, Maastricht promotes further unfair regulation and subsidy.

The European Community's proposal for a pan-European telecommunications market, presented in the Green Paper on the development of the common market in telecommunications services and equipment, is aimed at reducing the influence of national, public, postal and telecommunications bureaucracies on certification; but it is not working. I should be delighted if the Minister could tell me that the vastly inflated, subsidised, bloated nationalised telecommunications industries in Germany

and elsewhere are operating under those putative arrangements. The plain fact is that they are not, and the Government know it, but we are being taken in on a promise of what might be regarded as a dream or an aspiration that things will change.

That brings me to the issue of public procurement and publicly subsidised industries. Will there be a change in the 2 per cent. subsidy for trans-boundary contracts in the public sector? Will the countries that apparently will provide us with this wonderful new market recognise reality? Will these great aspirations work? The evidence is extremely thin and, at the moment, I know of nothing to suggest that the telecommunications industry will be opened up as promised. This part of the Maastricht treaty is based on a figment of the imagination, but it is on paper, and I shall be interested to know whether many of the proposals will come to fruition.

There is nothing inherently good about networks being interconnected and interoperable, whether at the European or any other level. There may be circumstances in which, for reasons of security of supply, efficiency or cost, such interconnection should exist, but it does not follow as an axiomatic principle. There may be practical reasons for it in some cases, but there is a world of difference between that and prescribing it as a rule of law in all circumstances. It is that socialist engineering, that dirigisme, to which I profoundly object.

2 am

Mr. Wilson: I am fascinated by that concept. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the only people who do not think that it is a good idea to have interconnections between systems are those who do not wish to be connected to the systems? If he regards it as a term of abuse to say that socialists wish to be connected to other people by all means at our disposal, it is an affront with which we are easily able to live.

Mr. Cash: I should be much more impressed by the hon. Gentleman's argument if we were not having to pay for that great panoramic view, the three-dimensional transport infrastructure policy of which he is so fond.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I have been having great difficulty —not for the first time—in following my hon. Friend's logic. He says that he is against public subsidy to industry and against public protectionism in procurement for nationalised industries. We are all against such things, but they have existed for a long time, long before the single market and Maastricht. They have long been a distortion of trade and an obstacle to our sales abroad.

Now, for the first time, things are changing: there has been a public procurement directive, and Sir Leon Brittan has been successful in reducing public subsidies—he has got back billions of pounds from Renault. My hon. Friend is incorrect about telecommunications monopolies. The Bundespost has been broken up and Deutsche Telekom has been set up—they are real improvements. Is it not more than a little perverse to spend a long time complaining about a range of evils but then to reject, without comment, all the tremendous attempts that have been made in the treaty and as part of the single market to do something about them for the first time?

Mr. Cash: The problem with what my hon. Friend is saying—he was not in the Chamber at the time, so I shall not hold it against him—is that the ex-Commissioner for competition, Sir Leon Brittan, has just agreed a DM3·3 million deal between the power generators and the German coal industry. There is a tremendous problem with subsidies and public procurement, which is not working as well as my hon. Friend suggests. We are still at a very low threshold.

Sir Teddy Taylor: In case my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) gets too excited, will my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) remind us that the Prime Ministers of countries such as Spain, the Republic of Ireland and many others returned from Edinburgh saying that they had billions of pounds more in subsidies? If he considers the EC's current expenditure, agreed before the Edinburgh agreement, he will find that increases in spending are planned, most of which will go on subsidies of more than one third between now and 1999. Does he agree that any Conservative Member of Parliament who thinks that Maastricht will mean less subsidy is kidding himself. He should look at the figures and at what all the leaders said when they went back from Edinburgh.

Mr. Cash: It is slightly depressing to find my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) advocating the policy of subsidisation on such a scale, which is effectively what he is saying. He is giving comfort to those who will milk the British taxpayer. We are the second greatest contributor to the EC.

There are circumstance, on a selective basis, in which some of the arrangements may be justified. However, the scale envisaged by the arrangements is vast and the extent of fraud that goes with it is dramatic. The figure is estimated to be £6 billion a year by the Court of Auditors. I recommend my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding to read the reports by the Court of Auditors, because I doubt whether he has. The amount being thrown away is staggering——

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Mr. Cash: Much of the money—*[Interruption.]* I notice that the Minister is threatening my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding in his typical way. I think that he has forgotten that he is about to be no longer Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, by his own wish. He is certainly no longer the Deputy Chief Whip. It is slightly depressing to find that my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding is such a strong advocate of policies that I should have expected more to come from the Opposition.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): My hon. Friend the member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) talks about the importance of the Court of Auditors and of proper financial controls. Would he take this occasion to welcome the arrangements elsewhere in the treaty which strengthen the Court of Auditors, strengthen parliamentary control, and make it more likely that British taxpayers' money will be well spent by the Community?

Mr. Cash: I should certainly be far more enthusiastic about the idea of the Court of Auditors having greater supervision if I did not know that the chairman of the Court of Auditors, Mr. Carey—as the hon. Member for Newham, South knows—has very grave reservations about the direction in which all this is going. He has

[Mr. Cash]

expressed himself in a letter, and I believe that the hon. Member for Newham, South has a copy, because it has been circulated to me as well.

One must not be too starry-eyed about the way in which the Court of Auditors has gone or is going. The fraud is on a massive scale. The £6 billion hole to which I referred is a significant underestimate, as we were told by members of the Court of Auditors when we went to see them. That money is British taxpayers' money which is going down the drain.

Mr. Salmond: I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman for more than an hour, and very entertaining it has been. I am getting rather worried, because there is no doubt that he is cracking up—that is, his voice is cracking up, because of a cold, perhaps. Might not it be a good idea at this stage for the hon. Gentleman to save his strength for some of the big debates to come? Perhaps he could pass on the torch to some of his hon. Friends. If he is not able to do that, perhaps he could give me an ETA on his speech.

Mr. Cash: I should be glad to do so. I am looking in the direction of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) in the hope that he will be able to take over in a minute.

There is no need for Community involvement in the pan-European transport projects, however big. The three prime examples would be the airbus programme, the European fighter aircraft programme and, in many respects, the channel tunnel. All are intergovernmental and intercompany ventures in which Community involvement is marginal. If trans-European networks are desirable, it does not follow that the Community should necessarily have any role in their development. These provisions are just socialist aspirations flowing out of the paperwork without regard to the realities and necessities of the EC as it has been for many years.

The main brake on the development of intra-European transport networks is national protection and subsidy. Hon. Members should look at Air France and at Iberia International. Contributing to the development of transport infrastructures, whatever that means, would involve further subsidy and interference, with an associated distortion of competition.

With our privatisation programmes, our insistence on value for money, practical considerations and choices that are relevant to the marketplace, the Conservative party is supposed to have eschewed all those ideas. We are going through the Maastricht treaty backwards. We are adopting a range of proposals that I thought that we had eschewed and given up. I did not think that we were going in that direction. Effectively, we are being taken down a route that I thought had been discarded in the mid-1970s.

Mr. Bill Walker: With regard to subsidies and competition in respect of airlines, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the Committee will be interested to learn that, at a recent Brussels conference on open skies, the new Commissioner was unwilling to answer any questions and the representative from the Commission would not answer direct questions on subsidies to Iberia and competition with British airlines. It was noticeable that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North had some difficulty dealing with that point.

Mr. Cash: National flag carriers are notoriously nationalistic. There are serious problems, and I hope that our Ministers will be able to break them down in negotiations. However, I doubt whether they will be able to do that because there are massive vested interests involved. The proposals and the new competencies will simply make the problems worse. Worse than that, they will encapsulate them into a legal framework that will not work. It is improper and wrong to expect judges to take decisions in relation to such matters.

The telecommunications operators and equipment suppliers are well managed, capitalised and profitable. Why, for heaven's sake, should the British taxpayer be involved in subsidising France Telecom, Deutsche Telecom, Telefonica, GEC, Seimens and Co. as they have moved into the new arena prescribed under the new trans-European telecommunications proposals?

Mr. Quentin Davies: My hon. Friend has not done his homework tonight as well has he often does it. He has just recounted a list which is a complete mix-up of telecommunications utilities and manufacturers of telecommunications equipment. Telefonica is a subsidiary, while Siemens is a manufacturer of equipment. There is no question of supplying any kind of support, even in the form of feasibility studies and so forth, for manufacturers of equipment.

I want to raise an essential point that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has missed. The treaty provides for a small increase—0.1 per cent.—in the own resources of the Community. However, a much greater reduction in national subsidies to industry has been brought about by the single market programme and other initiatives in connection with Maastricht. On a net basis, there are far fewer subsidies and distortions to trade as a result of subsidies than was the case. This initiative is the first time that we have been able to make real inroads into Europe and the protectionist procurement policies which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford is right to say have caused us great economic damage in the past. I hope that my hon. Friend recognises the hopeful way forward.

Mr. Cash: Following on from the point made by my hon. Friend, I would be more than happy to check what he has just said about those companies. However, most merchant banks would be more than happy to underwrite rights issues of those organisations. It has yet to be shown that those issues have been less than satisfactory in respect of the proposals in the treaty.

At the end of the day, we want highly profitable, well organised, privately owned companies to provide the best possible arrangements for the consumer. Drawing them into highly directed, centralised telecommunications competence of the kind that is contained in the treaty bodes very ill for the future of telecommunications. The matter is based on the concept of Euro-champions—that somehow or other we will effectively improve the quality of R and D, or whatever, by aggregating on a Euro-champion basis the facilities that are made available on a European continental basis. It is not ncessarily such a good idea in theory, and I am quite sure that it is not going to work in practice.

2.15 am

Sir Teddy Taylor: Surely my hon. Friend will say something about the astonishing statement by our hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) that the Bill adds only 0·1 per cent. to the expenditure of the EC. What on earth were the Government of the Republic of Ireland, for example, doing during the referendum, telling the people that the money from Europe was going to double because of Maastricht? What was the Prime Minister of Spain doing when he came back from Edinburgh, saying that there would be an increase of billions of pounds? Sadly, time and again, people say something about the EC, and, when it actually happens, it turns out to be horrible, nasty, costly and expensive. Has not that happened time and again, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding should know?

Mr. Cash: Vicariously, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir Teddy Taylor) has dealt extremely well with the point that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding. I sincerely hope that the Maastricht treaty, or at any rate its aspirations, will be nasty, brutish and short.

On energy, we must remember that there is no national grid in the United States. There is nothing necessarily good or inherently desirable about having one in Europe. It is all to do with creating one country. Some months ago, I went to the Berlaymont and saw placards saying, "Europe, my country". That is the trans-European network that they are seeking to establish.

There are those who hope and believe—it might be honestly, and it might not be honestly, because there has been much misleading over the provisions—that we are not heading towards a unitary state. Hon. Members can go elsewhere in the Community and be under no misapprehension. There they talk a totally different language from the language that we have to endure sometimes in this country and in the pamphlets that are put out—all that talk that, somehow or other, they are going to prevent the federal tendencies or the unitary tendencies from getting a grip on this country.

In all fairness, there are hon. Members, who are honest people, who genuinely want to see a federal Europe, and who genuinely would be very happy to have one country. The transfer of powers—transport, energy, telecommunications—is part of the network that is thought to be desirable to deliver the infrastructure of that federal arrangement of that one country. I am not going to hold it against people who honestly and genuinely believe that that is a good way to go: I am just going to beg to differ. It will lead to collapse. The ERM has collapsed and interest rates rocketed up, causing immense damage to the British economy, which is leading even now to further recession and bankruptcy.

If we have emasculated the powers of the House of Commons in relation to those competences—in relation to those powers—which we cannot reclaim, if we have raised people's expectations which cannot be fulfilled, and if people in other countries have been bribed into believing that they are going to get all those glorious projects paid for and they are unfulfilled, it will simply add to the sense of anger and anguish when the collapse comes. If and when it comes, and we have committed political voluntary euthanasia, we will get rid of the framework of consent and the framework of democracy, as Jeremy Leaman pointed out in *The Guardian* today. It is well worth reading that article. When *The Guardian* contains articles stating that the proposals for monetary union and other aims are fundamentally undemocratic, Opposition Members may want to have a good look at them.

The bottom line is that an impossible dream is being created. The projects will not be fulfilled, except in the minds of Utopians. The history of Utopia is that it does not work. When it collapses, the rule of law will collapse with it. There will be no democracy to put in its place. When that happens, the political and business instability will be so great that there will be massive disorder throughout Europe. There is already evidence of that in Italy, not to mention Yugoslavia. The creation of that network and intercommunications is based on theory, not practice. The provisions should not be allowed to proceed.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am tempted to spend the next hour and 22 minutes giving a point-by-point rebuttal of what the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has just said, but I shall resist that temptation. The apocalyptic—I can still say that word at 2.20 am—conclusion that he drew will not ring true in many ears in the Committee. Many of us do not identify with the sort of democratic structures of the House that the hon. Member was extolling. Some of us find this place profoundly undemocratic in the means by which its Members are elected. At least one nation of the United Kingdom is very undemocratically treated. Therefore, we do not admire the set-up that the hon. Member has spent so much time this evening and on previous occasions trying to defend.

One of the most extraordinary phrases in the hon. Gentleman's address was that he did not believe in networks. He really meant that he does not believe in networks that link us to anything the other side of the English channel. I cannot believe that the hon. Member would not wish the produce from the good people of Stafford, their manufacturing industry and the coal mined at the threatened mine in his constituency to be stuck in Stafford. No doubt the hon. Gentleman welcomes the fact that Stafford is so close to hundreds of miles of motorways and main rail lines that can take goods from Stafford to many parts of the United Kingdom. I am sure that his constituents will be only too pleased that, with the single market, they will have the advantage of being able to export their goods to other parts of the European Community.

When the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) opened the debate, he said that the articles under discussion give those of us representing districts that are not in the heart of the networks in the United Kingdom the opportunity to be linked up to receive some of the advantages that will flow from the creation of the single European market.

Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Stafford dismissed those opportunities early in his speech. If hon. Members have long enough memories, they will recall that he said that the proposals would not be viable. The hon. Gentleman wants to preserve not just a United Kingdom, but his vision of a narrow little England. I received the impression that, whether it be Cornwall in the south or the highlands and islands in the north, such regions were not of great concern to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Spearing: I have some sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says. Does he agree that the importance of networks at any level relates to how they are created, who creates and controls them and their purpose? While I agree that many of the networks in this country, including motorways and the grid—particularly in the least populated districts—serve a purpose of mutual support, the purpose of the networks that we are discussing is eternal and destructive competition.

Mr. Wallace: I agree with some of the hon. Gentleman's generalities, but I disagree with what he says about purpose. If, as many of us want, the peoples of Europe are to come together more closely and to work together, the networks of transport and telecommunications are of fundamental importance to facilitating the working of a single market.

Mr. Macdonald: I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Is it not odd that Conservative Members should be arguing against greater European integration, for the sake of preserving what they see as something unique about Britain, when Britain itself is a multinational state and a creation of a political union between four different countries?

Mr. Wallace: Absolutely right. It has been a successful Union in many ways, and although we identify some of its deficiencies and want to correct them, some things cannot be measured in terms of gross domestic product. For instance, intermarriage between people from the four countries happens without anyone thinking anything of it—a real achievement. Various networks have been built up to facilitate this Union.

Article 129b states:

"Within the framework of a system of open and competitive markets, action by the Community shall aim at promoting the interconnection and inter-operability of national networks as well as access to such networks. It shall take account in particular of the need to link island, landlocked and peripheral regions with the central regions of the Community."

Those of us who represent peripheral areas of the United Kingdom and of the Community would like to home in on that.

As for the cohesion funds, I hope that the Minister of State will confirm that, under article 129c, it is not just a question of the Community contributing to funds for specific projects. That part also states that the Community "may support the financial efforts made by the Member States for projects of common interest financed by Member States, which are identified in the framework of the guidelines referred to in the first indent, particularly through feasibility studies, loan guarantees or interest rate subsidies".

In other words, there are categories of project in member states that will not be covered by cohesion funds but in respect of which guidelines can be drawn up with, one hopes, the objective of linking islands, landlocked and peripheral regions with the mainstream of Community life.

Twice a year, figures are published showing the cost of living in various parts of Scotland. Lerwick almost invariably has the highest cost of living. It is followed by Kirkwall and Stornoway—not surprisingly, these are small island areas. Whatever the issue in constituencies such as mine or that of the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), it always seems to come down to a matter of transport costs and transport facilities. The cost of bringing in goods has a profound impact on the cost of living; and the costs of exporting to the rest of Scotland, Great Britain and the Community are also very high. Every effort should therefore be made to reduce these costs.

I acknowledge that there are subsidies—in the case of my constituency, particularly to P and O and one or two other shipping lines that operate services to and from Orkney and Shetland, but in the past two or three years P and O in particular has faced a problem when it came to renewing its vessels—that is, with capital projects. When the Government renounced their commitment to an equivalent tariff in 1984, the then Secretary of State for Scotland, now Lord Younger of Prestwick, said that one of the reasons was that they had identified some capital projects in the pipeline. At that time, the Government were reluctant to support projects for a major refit or the purchase of a new vessel. Many people felt badly let down by that.

2.30 am

Caledonian MacBrayne is in the public sector and has been able to obtain some European assistance for vessel replacement. Because shipping services to Orkney and Shetland are in the private sector, it has not been possible to attract such European assistance. That link is like the M74, the A9 or the M6. It is the main thoroughfare linking the islands to the Scottish mainland, and it is used for the import and export of our goods. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to expect it to receive some public assistance. I hope that provisions such as the article will make it possible to formulate guidelines that will allow access to European funding for some necessary and important investments.

Last month, the Minister for Public Transport met a deputation from the four island areas which are members of the islands commission of the Committee of Peripheral and Maritime Regions in the Community. They are Orkney, Shetland, the Western Isles and the Isle of Wight. The Minister gave us a good hearing and felt that we could probably extract more if we argued on a national basis and distributed to the islands rather than proceeding to allow the islands to argue their own case. Perhaps we can debate that.

As the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North said, there is a feeling in the isles and other parts of the north of Scotland, possibly because by its nature the Community has more island and peripheral areas than the United Kingdom, that the Community is often better able to identify some of the needs. Examples of that are the integrated development programme for the Western Isles and the agricultural development programme for the other Scottish islands, which is about to end. The Community took the lead and the Government fell in behind it. A more controversial issue is decommissioning, which is important to the fishing industry in many of Scotland's peripheral areas. The Community identified the need for decommissioning and the Government took a long time to catch up. We often feel that the Community has a better idea of what is needed and articles such as the one we are debating are encouraging.

Amendment No. 130, tabled by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), relates to article 75. In that article, the Council, after consultations, lays down a number of measures about transport, including measures to improve transport safety. Transport safety is of particular interest in view of the events in my constituency in the past fortnight arising from the grounding of the

tanker Braer in Shetland. I understand that the paper on the future development of a common transport policy says that the Community should, within and in support of the International Maritime Organisation, ensure that ships trading in Community waters respect common standards for the effective guarantee of safe operation. That is a worthy objective, and many of us would like to see much emphasis and urgency being placed on fulfilling it.

The United Kingdom Government take a number of measures unilaterally, such as the installation of radar at strategic points around the coast, while others need to be taken on an international basis. The Community should have the clout, particularly in matters affecting its own waters, to drive through some measures. Many of us who have been talking about shipping safety for some time are worried about the snail's pace at which the International Maritime Organisation moves at times.

For example, transponders could be fitted to vessels, allowing them to be tracked by satellite, as happens with international aircraft. Two years ago, when I took the matter up with the Department of Transport, I was told that this had been under discussion for some time in the IMO. Such measures should be given a push. The Community could act within the IMO to give some of them greater impetus.

Mr. Spearing: I share many of the hon. Gentleman's aspirations, but it is a matter of practicality. Does he agree that the problem with the IMO is that it is dominated by the owners and by the countries in which ships are notionally registered, whose standards we know all about? Would it not be possible for the United Kingdom Government, inside or free of the European Community, to make a multinational agreement on standards of ships that they allow into their ports, and get the north American states of Canada and the United States, and perhaps Japan as well, to agree to help to prevent problems? That would short-circuit the problem caused by the IMO, and would not confine the solution to the Community.

Mr. Wallace: I share many of the hon. Gentleman's reservations about the IMO. Its pace appears to be slowed by those who have an interest in not going forward as fast as that body should in promoting standards on the structure of vessels, the routing of vessels, navigational aids, and crewing arrangements. Those matters are best and most effectively sorted out internationally.

The European Community can carry clout that Britain acting alone would not necessarily have, not least because of the decline of our merchant fleet. If the IMO is taking too long, the Community should be prepared to introduce measures on Community waters. That would be far more effective than dealing with solely British waters. In the aftermath of Exxon Valdez, the American Government were able to introduce measures for ships on US waters, including a stringent safety regime. The Community can do that on its own if it cannot get the wider international application.

The Community also has a role within the IMO and other international organisations to push the case for safety. I am pleased that article 75 gives a specific remit to promote measures to improve transport safety. I hope that, when the treaty is passed, as I am confident that it will be, the Government will be willing to activate other measures.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) for telling the Committee that the amendment is a probing amendment tabled to allow the Committee a chance to debate important matters.

The networks articles 129b and 129c are new articles. Action could have taken under the transport articles of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act. The new text circumscribes the actions in question—for example, to ensure interoperability. No funding flows—that was the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) rightly drew to our attention—directly from the articles, and no specific decision-making procedures are provided in them. If projects are to be funded by the cohesion fund, as they can be, such projects would be by unanimity.

That raised the question—it was taken up by the hon. Members for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace)—of the exclusion or otherwise of the outer regions and islands of the United Kingdom from the cohesion fund. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East was right to remind the Committee that the new cohesion fund is limited to the four cohesion countries. That limitation does not apply to structural funds, and the Government have been able to protect Northern Ireland as an objective 1 region for structural funds. We actively support the claim that is being advanced by the highlands and islands for objective 1 status.

The future financing deal provides for increases in central funds both to objective 1 regions and elsewhere as well as the new cohesion fund spending. The United Kingdom regions will benefit, but under an overall settlement that we believe to be affordable. The United Kingdom received over £1 billion in 1992 from structural funds, the funds for which the constituents of the hon. Member for Western Isles would go.

Mr. Macdonald: How close is the United Kingdom now to qualifying for cohesion funds? How close are we to becoming 90 per cent. of the Community per capita average? Will the Minister of State confirm that, if we qualify according to official EC statistics in future, the Government will apply for the funds for which the United Kingdom has qualified?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hate to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. For some hon. Members it would be a matter of some joy to be able to proclaim that Britain had sunk beneath the per capita average. On purchasing power parity, which is the basis on which these matters are decided, we remain quite a long way away from the level to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I hope that Britain does not qualify for the funds, and that, in the course of the seven-year financial perspective that we are moving into, several countries that currently qualify for cohesion funds, will cease to be cohesion countries.

Mr. Salmond: When was the most recent calculation made of purchasing-power parities on which the Minister of State is basing his remarks?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman that precise information. It was certainly some time in the past six or seven weeks. I have seen figures that lead me to believe—the hon. Gentleman may regret this—that we are a long way from being a cohesion country.

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

The Community already has the power under the treaty of Rome to fund infrastructure projects through the provisions in the transport chapter and by use of structural funds. I was surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said that he could see no place for the Community in transport matters. He will recall that the fourth title of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act, contains no fewer than six or seven articles that relate to this very subject.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend explain the differences that will be experienced because of article 129 in the operation of the principle of additionality? We in the United Kingdom understood that the principle gave decisions on priorities to our Government and not to Brussels, the Council of Ministers or the Commission. It is confusing when almost every Opposition Member gives the impression that Brussels will make decisions now on the construction of roads and bridges. Are we to abandon the principle of additionality because of article 129? It would be helpful to the Committee to know whether decision-making is being transferred from the United Kingdom Government to Brussels.

Mr. Garel Jones: Article 129b and c allows the Council of Minsters to decide the framework within which any action would be taken. Then, if that action is agreed, applications might be made through the cohesion fund for cohesion countries and through the structural fund for other countries.

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

2.45 am

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, I will not. My hon. Friend took one hour and 20 minutes of the time of the House. I want to be brief to allow other hon. Members to speak.

It is useful to clarify the purpose of such projects and the means by which they might be adopted in a clear treaty chapter, as agreed at Maastricht. That explicitly states, for example, that guidelines and projects of common interest that relate to the territory of a member state shall require the approval of the member state concerned. That is a useful safeguard, which the House will welcome. Of course, Community action must take place within the framework of an open, competitive market and must take account of the potential economic viability of any project. It is helpful that, where there is already European co-operation, the matter has been clarified and codified in that way. I am glad that most hon. Members who have spoken, with the exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford have welcomed that provision.

Mr. Spearing: I have a good deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). I am sorry that he is about to leave the Chamber. I wanted to refer to him—*[Interruption.]* I am glad to catch his ear before he leaves. He and his compatriot, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), have an intense and proper regard for local communities. We all do, but the local communities in Scotland are even more distinct than those in some parts of England. As an Englishman and a Londoner, I want firmly to register that fact. However, for reasons that I am about to give, I do not think that the benefits that my hon. Friend, the hon. Gentleman and their constituents want and deserve will, in the end, come from the source that they believe they will.

Of course, during the past 10 years there has been a marked disparity between the resources and the approach of two political centres. That caused the demonstration by 25,000 people in Edinburgh at the time of the summit. I well understand that. I have to say to Conservative Members, some of whom I agree with on the question of the constitution, that the Government have dealt disgracefully with some of our friends in Scotland—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) appears to disagree. He should get up and say so because this House is about debate. The Government have transgressed one of the major features that we prize—paying due regard to the minority.

As I understand it, Scotland is a country of high corporate sensitivities. It is a country with its own distinctive history, tradition and political and civic pride. Those have been trampled underfoot by forces which need not have done what they did. That has caused a great deal of bad feeling, as some of my friends in the TUC may have noticed.

Networks is, I suppose, an abstract word. It is more an adjective than a noun, in the context of this group of amendments. Networks permit exchanges of all sorts—a transfer in one direction or another. That can be a transfer of money, goods or persons, energy, or intelligence.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): The hon. Gentleman suggested that I, as a Scot, have been trampled on in recent times. I submit that Scotland's network systems are second to none. We have very good systems. The hon. Gentleman referred to energy. We have over-provision, with excellent networks which are ready to transfer south. Our road systems are reasonably good, as are our interchanges between cities. I do not feel trampled on. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will expand on that observation.

Mr. Spearing: I was not speaking of network but, as the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members in all parts of the Committee who represent Scottish constituencies make plain from time to time, of the poll tax, for example —on which, in Scotland, the views of the people were clearly made known.

The networks in Scotland of which the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) speaks probably serve many of the people well. I stand to be corrected by hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies and who know Scotland better than I do.

I intervened on the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland to make the point that an electricity network—whether it covers the Scottish highlands, and whether it is based on hydropower, generated power in the lowlands, or is part of a national grid for the United Kingdom—is of general benefit to all.

The electricity network was pioneered by the House 50 or 60 years ago. The idea was that those who benefited from being part of a tightly-knit population would contribute to those living in the peripheral areas. Is that not one of the characteristics of many networks created by the House, which may be permitted—though, I suggest, for another purpose—by the other political body that the treaty sustains and enhances?

Although we are not debating agriculture, I will mention the milk network in passing. The economics of

transporting and distributing milk were poor, and the milk network has worked to the benefit of both the peripheral farmer and the peripheral consumer.

The postal services also are a form of transport—the transport of intelligence, by way of letters, and of parcels. We know how important are the economic activities of certain peripheral areas—I refer in particular to the production of delicacies and high-value goods—and of the reliance that they place on postal services. I am happy that there should be a transfer of resources, which the Post Office often advertises in a romantic way, between those of us who live in the cities, where letters and parcels can be conveyed within a tightly integrated network, and peripheral areas all over the place. I include the south-west peninsula—and I see the hon. Member for St. Ives nodding his head.

Such benign networks are under the control of the community as a whole. They are created for the benefit of the community, and generally they work well. I understand the feelings of the people of the Scottish highlands and islands. In the past hour or so we have heard only one Welsh and one English speaker. All the others were Scottish. I understand why they are so concerned about bridges, ferries, roads, and tolls. In transport terms, geographical distance often coincides with economic distance; but it does not always do so. Economic distance in terms of actual movement, leaving aside the time factor —although that is sometimes an important commodity, within limits—is not necessarily geographical distance.

If market forces are introduced into the equation, geographical distance—say, between London and Paris, or between London and Brussels—will often be reduced in terms of economic time, because of the volume of traffic. The peripheral areas will tend to be at a disadvantage if we allow market forces free rein. It would be possible to run train services from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, but no doubt some areas in the rural regions west of Aberdeen would regard themselves as peripheral. That is true of areas other than Scotland.

I am trying to prove the point that I put to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. It is not a question of networks themselves or even, necessarily, how they are funded; I am talking about the purpose for which they are designed. All the examples that I have given recently are of benign networks, although one has been the subject of some humour in Scotland. There is a very old joke, or rather a paraphrase of a psalm: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, but the Highlands and Islands are MacBrayne's." The network run by that firm and its modern counterpart, Caledonian MacBrayne, which has been mentioned today, could be run at a loss. It could be run with some subsidy, as are some British Rail branch lines. What is the difference, in absolute economic terms, between that and a closed railway or a railway which is given some form of subsidy for its infrastructure, or for viaducts or tunnels—on a national network, that is? I am glad to see that the Minister for Public Transport, the right hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), is here. In economic or network terms, in terms of service to the community—the British community, rather than the European Community—clear principles link all these matters. In terms of infrastructure and the expensive replacement of capital resources, the Caledonian MacBrayne network, for instance, is surely similar to that of a railway.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland cited the Government's parsimony in replacing some capital ships owned by P and O to service Orkney and Shetland. I was thinking of such instances when the hon. Member for Ayr intervened a few moments ago. I will give an extreme example. One of the dependencies still left to this country is St. Helena. Not long ago, a Select Committee of the House had a lengthy discussion about a replacement ship for St. Helena. That is an example of this country's providing a dependency with a capital sum for a super-peripheral area. If a map of the world were drawn, showing how difficult it was to travel to certain places by public means, St. Helena would probably feature prominently: I believe that it takes about a fortnight to get there if the boat connects, and about two months if the connection is missed. I am glad to see that the Foreign Secretary, too, is present. The purpose of the networks, including that for St. Helena, and the shipping which might be subsidised, but probably is not by this Government, is to serve people and communities. Not too much concern is expressed about how to assist the peripheries. We may, however, want to assist them.

3 am

The articles of this treaty and those of the treaty of Rome make it clear that competition, the free movement of capital and people, and maximum protection can be achieved by free market forces. Therefore, the assistance that the networks can give will increase competition and allow the strong to become stronger. The disadvantaged will therefore become weaker. They are often at the peripheries. Those hon. Members who represent peripheral areas are being misled into thinking that the networks will be their salvation.

Article 129c states that the Community

"may support the financial efforts made by the Member States for projects of common interest".

What is the common interest? I hope that the Minister will tell the Committee what that phrase means. Does it mean the common interest of the Community and not the common interest of the member state? If so, it qualifies the purposes for which European Community money can be used.

If no state money is provided for any network project, I understand that the project is ruled out by the European Community. I take it that the phrase "financed by Member States" means some form of public assistance from the Government of the member state concerned.

That brings me to last week's topic: the railways and the Government's proposed link from the United Kingdom to the rest of the Community. In an intervention on the fast channel link, the Minister said that the bulk of the investment for the link will come from private funds. There will be some Government money, no doubt. Without it, there would be no Community contribution. I suppose that there could be some justification for such a contribution, though I do not imagine that the fact that £X million was to be spent improving yet another railway link from Dover to London would be welcomed in the highlands and islands.

Mr. Gallie: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the direct link from the highlands and islands via the south coast to the channel tunnel is just as important to Scotland as it is to other areas of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Spearing: I rather hope that it is. I have taken a great interest in this matter and was in the House when we were discussing it 20 years ago. Is the hon. Member aware that, at least for the time being, day trains will not run north of Waterloo? Apparently, because of market forces, which he supports, the cost of the trains is so high, with all the safety measures necessary for the tunnel, that they will have to be used intensively between Paris and London or Brussels and London. They are much too expensive to go up to Manchester, let alone Scotland. If I have got that wrong, I am sure that I shall be corrected. I think that there may be plans to deal with that later.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) is right. The construction of a new rail link between Folkestone and London will benefit the whole of the country, and trains will run during the day and night north of London on the existing link. The Government expect those trains to be in service in 1995.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister; I wanted to be absolutely accurate. I take it that trains will run from Paris, Brussels or other capitals perhaps to Manchester and, we hope, as far as Glasgow or Edinburgh.

The only advantage of a link for continental freight —I suggested this 20 years ago, but nobody took much notice—would be if it were cheaper or more convenient than road transport. Let us suppose that a toll is charged to travel through the tunnel. If we instituted a standard charge, as we do for parcels, for every tonne of traffic going to a depot in Cardiff, Swansea, York, Manchester, or perhaps Aberdeen, Inverness or Fort William, that would benefit the whole country without overheating the south-east and would provide a lower cost the further north freight travelled. I do not think that anybody has suggested that, but if he had I do not think that the Government would adopt it. It is perhaps looking too far ahead, but that would surely be a benign use of a rail network.

We have been told nothing about a possible tapering of tariffs. The Union Railways line will presumably stop in London and another railway will continue northwards. I remind hon. Members that the tariff for traffic coming in will surely be the same as that for traffic going out. Britain's retail marketing efficiency has been sharply honed by Messrs Tesco, Sainsbury et al, and our retail market would be a much easier way of distributing consumer durables and a wide range of materials than anything going the other way. That is another example of what I described to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North: if one builds a technical link for transport, it allows competition to come in as easily as it goes out unless there is a different tariff for traffic in each direction.

I shall take a little further the question of Union Railways and the link with the continent. I am glad that the Minister for Public Transport is here because he has always dealt objectively with matters as far as he can. I want to express the disappointment of, I am sure, everyone in the country that that particular network railway link which the Government are contemplating will be not a decent but an indecent railway.

I cannot contemplate how anyone looking to the future —as the Government should do, and as they often claim to do—can plan a two-line railway from London to Shorne cliff, which is to be suitable for freight and passengers, international and commuting. The Government plan to reduce the cost by making it a two-line railway with freight loops—the same technique which Victorian railway constructors used and which we thought we had got rid of.

As I understand it—the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—the Government are not even reserving sufficient land in the cuttings and tunnels for acquisition or for later construction and eventual enlargement into a four-track railway. That sometimes happens on roads where one side is dualled at a time or on bypasses where one side is developed before the other.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley)—the Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport—or any rail operator would assure the House that to run an intensive, 24-hour service properly one needs a four-track main line in order to deal reasonably with breakdowns and maintenance. There is ample proof of that on the railways on Saturday nights and Sundays. A two-line main track means less flexibility. Although I concede that it may be economical for the Government to initially lay down a two-line track in this instance, it is bad planning not to provide for later expenditure on enlargement when required.

The Government have not acted efficiently and certainly not speedily. Since Lady Thatcher signed the document in Canterbury in 1985 or 1986—certainly some time ago—there have been so many changes of plan and so much delay that we have already lost any advantages that we might have gained. I say that as one who, as hon. Members will know from the case that I have been advancing, believes that such links will not necessarily be the great boon or blessing that many people believe them to be. They may be a blessing for surface traffic as opposed to air traffic. I hope that some people, including the Ministers, are looking forward to going to Brussels by surface transport instead of experiencing the difficulties of going by air. That is probably a great convenience for people, but whether it will be a great advantage in terms of trade remains to be seen.

I now turn to the whole process of obtaining moneys from the EC not only for the rail network, but for anything to do with the networks generally. I referred earlier to a report by the Select Committee on European Legislation on obtaining money. I shall quote from it more extensively because it sets out the fact that the matter is not so straightforward as people suppose. The projects in Scotland which hon. Members mentioned earlier—I have no doubt that the placards on the projects said, "Contributed to by the EC fund"—do not drop suddenly from heaven, as Ministers and some hon. Members will know. There is quite a lot to be done first.

3.15 am

Paragraph 42 of the bumper report published on 17 June 1992 summarises "Trans-European Networks". The Committee studied a Commission communication with three draft regulations

"introducing declarations of European Interest to facilitate the establishment of trans-European networks."

I referred a few moments ago to the requirement of European interest rather than of local interest. The report says that the Government

"comments that the Commission envisages granting a Declaration only to well-defined initiatives: a project must have passed the design stage and have reached a sufficient

level of maturity for a relatively detailed assessment of its impact to be made, but the implementation stage proper must not yet have started."

If that is the Commission's proposal, there will be many problems.

There must be an assessment of the project's impact, and of whether it is good value for money. We can argue a great deal about the impact of a new bridge, a new ferry, a new bypass or a new ship. It will be difficult to assess projects. The next criterion is that the project must

"have reached a sufficient level of maturity"

for a judgment to be made. I am not sure what that means. Does it mean a level of paper planning, or does it mean initial works? I should have thought that it was a question of paper planning rather than of initial works.

The next criterion is that

"the implementation stage proper must not yet have started."

We then have the proposal, the animal to which I have referred:

"The Commission proposes to allocate the declaration for transport projects following consultation with the existing Transport Infrastructure Committee."

The Minister will have much to reply to, but we should know whether the committee is a committee of Ministers, of officials or of the Commission. I suspect that it may be a combination of all three. No doubt the committee will have its consultants as well.

I quote again from this very important report, which consolidates three or four other documents. It says:

"At this stage, the Government sees the main question as being the roles of the Commission and Member States in awarding Declarations."

If the declaration is being gained, does the money come with it, or is the declaration only a qualifying stage before the funds available are shared out?

What lies behind the articles is a whole group of bureaucratic—perhaps that is a pejorative word—a whole group of processes which will certainly not take place in public. They should not necessarily take place in public, but it should be known that they exist.

I want now to consider the treaty. One of the amendments in the group that we are discussing would delete new article 75, which replaces an existing article in the treaty of Rome. That process involves tracing through the terms of the treaties and I want to do that now for reasons that I will make clear towards the end of my remarks.

Article 75 states:

"For the purpose of implementing Article 74, and taking into account the distinctive features of transport, the Council shall,".

The article 74 referred to is not article 74 of the treaty of European union. It is article 74 of the treaty of Rome, which the union treaty amends. Article 74 of the treaty of Rome, which is not going to change, states:

"The objectives of this Treaty shall, with regard to the subject covered by this Title, be pursued by the Member States within the framework of a common transport policy."

New article 75, and all that follows from it, refers to implementation of a common transport policy. That implies that the networks are to be part of a single policy. One of the lesser known facts of the treaty of Rome is that article 3(e) states:

"The objectives of the treaty shall include the adoption of a common policy in the sphere of transport."

I am suggesting that, contrary to what some people suppose, there is almost unlimited competence in the role of transport.

If new article 75 is to implement a single policy for transport, under the existing treaty of Rome, into what detail and to what specifications can the Commission go? Subject to correction from the Minister, I would guess that most, if not all, the policies will apply by a qualified majority vote. There cannot be anything other than qualified majority vote—there is no unanimity—in respect of transport.

Hon. Members may be surprised to know that not too long ago a series of regulations came before the House about a common transport policy in respect of safety. Safety was referred to earlier and it was felt to be a good thing to have in the treaty. That might be so with regard to a concern for safety, but the safety measures must be harmonised to ensure that there are no rigidities and that one country is not penalised in relation to another.

Hon. Members may also have forgotten that a regulation came before the Select Committee on European Legislation not very long ago about the harmonisation of speed limits based on the single transport policy and on the need for safety without prejudicing the single market. Matters went further than that. There was also a draft regulation, which I believe has now been dropped, for the adoption of common blood alcohol limits. A third rather different regulation, which formed the final part of that tripartite arrangement, dealt with the harmonisation of regulations about the depths of tyre treads. It is very sensible to have regulations about the depth of tyre treads for obvious safety reasons. They were to be harmonised throughout the EC.

The Select Committee on European Legislation felt that there was something to the tyre tread proposal. At that time, we could not understand why speed limits and blood alcohol limits could not be dealt with under subsidiarity. We had some gentlemen along from the Commission to question in public. They stuck to the principle that because, as I have just read, a common transport policy was in article 3e of the treaty of Rome, so anything to do with transport was fair game. The draft recommendation on alcohol and speed limits has almost certainly been dropped. Clearly, as we have pointed out, social matters, social acceptability, the design of roads, changes in the acceptability of limits and enforcement vary from country to country. Even if the directives were introduced, they probably would not work.

If the Commission could introduce matters of relative detail of that nature under the existing treaty of Rome, of course the same could happen under this treaty. I wish to advert to one of the nine networks that I mentioned—the common postal service in which we have an equalisation of costs over parcels. Let us not forget that there is now a proposal for the harmonisation of postal services. The harmonisation of postal rates is very much on tap. No doubt that, too, would come under competition, the single market criteria, or transport.

In matters relating to networks, the purpose of transport networks is not the benign purpose of which I have given some examples, but something which might result in disadvantage to those who are already diadvantaged.

I wanted to concentrate on transport but I shall make a few quick remarks on some other networks because they might not be mentioned by other hon. Members. A common energy policy is in the treaty, is it not? I tabled a question on how that energy network would affect the national grid. The *Official Report* states:

"**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the changes necessary to the national grid for electricity consequent on the current text of the treaty on European union, articles 129 b, c and d.

Mr. Eggar: None."—[*Official Report*, 8 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 207.]

I am not sure whether that is so. If we are to have a common energy policy, if we are to have a European electricity grid, as distinct from a national grid—I am not sure whether that has yet been put forward—if there is to be a common price for energy, and if we could have perfect competition which one assumes might be on the way, how likely is it that there will be a European grid network such as that which we pioneered in this country?

We have already heard about the French link across the channel. What about television? Telecommunication is the communication not only of intelligence but of pictures, noise or codes. Yesterday, the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) referred to an article in Saturday's issue of *The Independent* magazine which drew attention to aspects of freedom of television and television networks and the consequences of certain regulations which were passed in the late 1980s. When I read that article, I thought, "The lady who wrote this article has not realised that anything to do with the single market commercial is by qualified majority." She was blaming Ministers for letting something through at Brussels. I suspect that they would have been outvoted. We have a common network of television programmes and material.

The treaty is extraordinarily complex, and is only an amending treaty. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who is present, has declined on two or three occasions to print the consolidated treaty as it would be were the treaty on European union to be ratified.

3.30 am

None of the volumes that we study constitutes the working constitution of the European Community as it will be if the treaty is ratified. I think that a commercial version may have been produced, but we are using HMSO's version. We would have to try out the treaty for some months and years before we understood how it worked. There are also odd bits of the European single market treaty hanging around. There is a constellation —a library—of treaties that will form the written constitution of the Community if the treaty is ratified.

We have a network not only of various communications, but of articles of fearsome complexity. I understand that people can make out all sorts of cases for money, powers or reference to European Court. The treaties contain something for everyone. They contain hopes, promises, possibilities of grants here, something there, and something else for every region, interest group, development and research. If we search in every nook and cranny, we can find something in the treaty to benefit our own interests, regions or towns, through the use of public funds.

I fear that the motivation for the treaty is not international co-operation and understanding, as many hon. Members would wish, but the creation of a large pork barrel or honey pot into which various interest groups and Governments think that they can dip. When they do so, they come up with a plum and a prize which is well publicised, particularly in peripheral regions. The money for the transport and communications networks and for research is being silently withdrawn from our national economies without the knowledge of the taxpayers who produce it.

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the money that is necessary to implement all the provisions. Who will be paying? Will it be Britain and Germany yet again?

Mr. Spearing: Britain and Germany will probably continue to be net contributors in some measure. The financing of the Community is an extraordinarily complex business. The accounts are not made up until the end of the year—due, in particular, to the British rebate. Even with the British rebate, we receive only about two thirds of what we contribute. If the Fontainebleau arrangement did not exist, we would probably receive only about half of what the taxpayer contributes. The answer to the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) is that it is the taxpayer—someone for whom many Conservative Members have a soft spot—who pays.

One example to quote to inquiring minds is the extent of the contribution supposedly made via VAT. For many years I thought that the VAT-linked contribution to the Community was 1 per cent. That was the ceiling which the erstwhile right hon. Member for Finchley came up against at Fontainebleau. It turns out that that was not the true figure at all. There are three or four main elements in the own-resources budgets, including a GNP element and apart from a common Community tariff, but the VAT one is linked not to the rates in this country but to a notional VAT assessment, rather like the old rates on property. We pay a percentage of that assessment.

When I asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer a few years ago for the equivalent amount as a percentage of the VAT take, I was told that it varied between 10 and 15 per cent., depending on movement in the basket of currencies. Conservative Members know only too well that VAT is a highly effective tax, the more so since it was increased. It works invisibly on the whole, and the squillions of pounds that it raises are beyond our comprehension. The equivalent of about 10 per cent. of it goes to the EC automatically—plus the gross national product increases, plus all the customs duties which accrue to the Exchequer. If the alcohol tax is harmonised and the money that the Exchequer receives decreases, the shortfall will have to be made up by other taxes paid into the British Exchequer.

To pay for all those networks, which I do not think will have the benign effect that we associate with those known to us at home, we shall have to spend large sums of money of a size that we do not yet know.

Mr. Harris: Because I intend to be brief I shall not give way to anyone except my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). I say that in the sure knowledge that he caught a taxi two hours ago, having made a long speech at the start of the debate.

I have always held that an hon. Member's opinion of regional assistance will almost certainly depend on the constituency that he represents. I admit that, as I have the honour to represent one of the most peripheral areas of the United Kingdom, a part of the country which includes a group of islands, my view of support for transport is probably different from what it would be if I represented a constituency in Greater London or the home counties.

I represent the Isles of Scilly, and I notice that article 129b refers not just to peripheral regions but to islands and

the need to link them. There has been much discussion of the benefits, real or imagined, for peripheral areas from the European funds. I can only say that the Isles of Scilly have benefited considerably from the Community's structural funds, and I hope that they will continue to do so under all the relevant parts of the treaty.

The position of the Isles of Scilly improved greatly when the link with mainland electricity was established. The disparity between charges on the islands and the mainland was done away with. It took a lot of campaigning by myself and others to get the funds for the link, which did away with what I regarded as an injustice.

I disagreed with the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) when he seemed to suggest that Scotland had been badly treated by the Government. I was trying to show that in relation to England the Scottish islands and highlands have had a good financial deal from the Government and the European Community. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was good enough to admit that some of the ferries to the Scottish islands receive an operating subsidy by way of road equivalent tariff. Such a subsidy is denied to the islands off the coast of England, including the Isles of Scilly. We have never enjoyed an operating subsidy, although we have pressed for one. However, we have received a loan for the replacement of the Scillonian, the ferry to the islands. I hope that when the present vessel, Scillonian III, is replaced we shall get another loan from the Government or the Community to help with the cost.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland was correct to say that a ferry linking an island to the mainland is equivalent to a road. Such a ferry should be supported in the way that the Government support the building of roads in the United Kingdom and Europe. That is a proper use of public money. I am not among those who argue for limitless subsidies for transport. However, if we wish to reduce the difficulties and disparities in peripheral areas such as the Scottish islands, the north of Scotland, west Cornwall or the Isles of Scilly, it is proper to use public funds. As a good Conservative I have no hesitation in arguing for proper assistance. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) disputes that, but if he still represented Glasgow, Cathcart I suspect that his attitude would be rather different.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Harris: No. I said that I would not give way and I will not, even though my hon. Friend was barracking me, as usual, and I mentioned him.

I welcome the treaty's provisions and hope that they will bring some benefit to the peripheral areas of the United Kingdom.

The Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. Sydney Chapman) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Since the Minister spoke there have been other speeches and questions have been asked. Will the Minister reply to those questions?

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): The hon. Gentleman has been here for a long time and is familiar with our procedures. He has just heard me put the Question.

Mr. Knapman: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Those of us who are sometimes called sceptics represent about 70 per cent. of the British people. Apparently there was no more time to debate the amendments, which are vastly important. Will there be time to debate other amendments? Some of my hon. Friends have worked to prepare speeches on other groups of amendments and would like to deliver them.

The First Deputy Chairman: If the hon. Gentleman had not raised a point of order, I should have called the next group of amendments.

3.45 am

Mr. Wilson: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert
'(except Article 129 on page 33 of Cm 1934)'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 15, in page 1, line 9, after 'II' insert
'(except Title XVI on page 39 of Cm 1934)'.

No. 31, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert
'(except Article 130r on page 39 of Cm 1934 relating to environmental policy)'.

No. 188, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(k)'.

No. 192, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(o)'.

No. 238, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130s(2)'.

No. 239, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130s(4)'.

No. 240, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130s(5)'.

No. 246, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130r(1)'.

No. 247, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 130r(2)'.

No. 388, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert
'except Article 130t as referred to in Article G on page 40 of Command Paper Number 1934'.

No. 54, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert
'but not Article 129 in Title II thereof'.

Mr. Wilson: I shall shortly—I hope very shortly—be succeeded by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). I am sure that we are all anxious to continue——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sure that the Committee is grateful to the hon. Gentleman for moving amendment No. 4 to article 129 on the public health provisions. I presume that he will also speak to amendments Nos. 15 and 31 on the environment. I dare say that, when the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) joins us, he will be able to tell the Committee whether those are probing amendments, as I suspect they may be. The Committee can then have a debate on the public health and environment provisions of the treaty.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister is right. As I made clear about the previous amendment when I moved it, the amendments in the group are probing amendments. As the

[Mr. Wilson]

Minister said, they deal with public health issues and related matters. I hope that he accepts that we should have a debate on those important matters. I am, however, in some difficulty.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. Why does he not just read out the brief that he had for the previous debate, and that was used in the debate before that? He can say that, although he is speaking to the amendments with great vigour, he disagrees with them all the way along the line. That is what has happened in the past three debates, and we understand will happen in the next 17 debates, and he could quietly get on with doing that. The position of the Labour party is becoming absurd.

Mr. Wilson: I am pleased to say that I do not need a brief to read out what the hon. Gentleman has suggested I say. I could make it up. However, he does us an injustice. I made it clear at the start of the previous debate that the amendments were probing ones. If one removes that absurdities from the debate on those amendments—I shall be fair at this hour of the morning, and say that at least as many came from Opposition Benches as came from Tory Benches, and my speech was concerned entirely with real issues—we had a sensible debate. It is reasonable that, under the headings, we should debate the issues properly.

There are procedural manoeuvrings going on, and some procrastination, as everyone knows. I assure the hon. Gentleman that procrastinations are not in my interest —quite the contrary.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sure that the Committee appreciates the difficulty that the hon. Gentleman is in. I know that several of my hon. Friends are anxious to discuss health and the environment. After the hon. Gentleman has made some general remarks, I would wish to respond, if that is for the convenience of the Committee. Having done that, the Committee can go forward and debate these matters.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister has made a helpful suggestion.

I shall deal now with the substance of the amendment. Under article 1, we are dealing with Community policy on the environment and how it should contribute to

"pursuit of the following objectives:

—preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment;

—protecting human health;

—prudent and rational utilization of natural resources;

—promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems."

I am sure that no one on either side of the Chamber could dissent from these blameless objectives.

Community policy on the environment is dealt with in title 16. The aim is a "high level of protection". I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury is with us. I was just getting into my stride. With your consent, Mr. Lofthouse, I will hand over——

Mr. Michael Spicer: No, carry on.

Mr. Wilson: I shall continue.

Community policy on the environment is aimed at achieving

"a high level of protection taking into account the diversity of situations in the various regions of the Community. It shall be based on the precautionary principle"—

I am sure that we all agree that that is a sound one.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sure that the Committee is grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having so effectively moved the amendment——

Mr. Spicer: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. As a matter of information, is it right that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) was reading a Government brief? Are we taking collusion to that extent? Is that what is going on? It certainly looked as if that was happening.

The First Deputy Chairman: I do not know what the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) was reading.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is fairly well known to the Committee where collusion exists, and it is not between the two Front Benches.

Mr. Wilson: I would not wish the record to go uncorrected. I do not think that the "Treaty on European Union including the Protocols and Final Act with Declarations" is a Government brief.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sure that the Committee is grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having made it clear that the Opposition's purpose in moving the amendment is to allow the Committee to have a debate on health and the environment. I shall make some brief introductory remarks to set the debate in context and thereafter listen to what hon. Members have to say.

The chapter on public health is helpful in defining the scope of Community action, and will be of considerable benefit. Britain needs a sound legal basis for Community action in this area, and that is something for which we fought. The chapter on public health in the Maastricht treaty accomplishes that, laying out clearly the legitimate areas for Community action. The chapter reflects the principle of subsidiarity both in general and in specific exclusion of any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of member states. The chapter gives the Community a role in disease prevention, not in the provision of health care, through the encouragement and promotion of research, information and education. It hence provides the basis for the Community to support member states in the area of public health. Closer European co-operation is clearly beneficial both to the United Kingdom and to the other member states. I would find it difficult to believe that anyone in the Chamber wouuld wish to question the objective.

I would say the same of the changes introduced into the existing environmental provisions of the Maastricht treaty. Environmental policy has become an essential part of Community action since the environment title was incorporated in the treaty by the Single European Act. The environment is a prime example of an area in which Community action makes sense. Environmental problems are not respecters of international boundaries. There is widespread support for Community action on the environment in this country and other countries.

Maastricht represents a significant strengthening of the Community's environmental policies and I am sure that every member of the Committee welcomes that. It is beneficial not only to Britain but to Europe. We believe

that there is a role for the Community in protecting the environment, because many of the problems can be tackled only through international co-operation. Maastricht strikes the right balance on Community action in that sphere, upholding the principle of subsidiarity while placing environmental concerns at the heart of Community decision making.

I think that I have said enough to put the debate in context, and I now want to listen to what hon. Members have to say.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I support the remarks so ably made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). As he explained, these are purely probing amendments. We strongly support the two relevant titles in the Maastricht treaty, but we tabled the amendments to draw attention to them and to provide an opportunity to discuss them and some of the issues they raise.

Title X deals with public health. It is worth saying that it is purely permissive. It deals with the encouragement of co-operation, with the lending of support to individual member states by the Community, with research, with information and with education. It does not require any member state to carry out anything, and it does not give the Commission undue power to interfere in the workings of any member state. It casts the Community in a supportive role in public health, which I am sure the Committee welcomes.

One of the main public health issues across the Community is the spread of HIV and AIDS, and that is directly addressed by title X. In being able to pick up examples of best practice across the Community, the Commission can use the permissive powers of title X to encourage the spreading of the best practices in treatment, care and education across the member states.

In facing new public health challenges such as HIV, it is important that we learn by example. Britain has done an enormous amount with public education about the threat of HIV. That example can be followed by other member states. I am sure that, in many respects, they too have things that they can teach us. The provisions of the public health title in the treaty are entirely praiseworthy. They open scope for improved provision across the Community, and they provide an opportunity for it to support the individual actions of member states.

I want to dwell at greater length on title XVI, which relates to the environment. It is one of the most important titles in the treaty. As the Minister rightly observed, the environment is no respecter of national boundaries. It is a truism that pollution crosses continents. That the air that passes over Chernobyl will eventually pass over the hillsides of Wales and that the sea that washes the coast of East Anglia is the same as that which washes the coast of Germany is so obvious that it does not need restating—but it is vital in constructing environmental policy.

4 am

In protecting our environment, we must understand that is a common environment—common to many nations and not the property of a single nation. That makes title XVI especially important. Article 130r(1) sets out important environmental principles, but I note that amendments in the name of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) seek to delete both that and article 130r(2). I hope that the hon. Gentleman—who, remarkably, is not in his place, though I am sure for good reasons—does not demur from the principles that both paragraphs enshrine.

Mr. Harris: I am reliably informed—if I am wrong, I will apologise tomorrow—that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who normally takes a great interest in such matters and whose speeches have detained the Committee for a long time, went home some time ago, even though an amendment in his name is before the Committee tonight.

Mr. Smith: I bow to the hon. Gentleman's better knowledge.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Before the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) bows to that better knowledge, does he accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford has attended consistently throughout our debates; has almost lost his voice; and has a cold or flu? For one hon. Member to attack another for going home at 2 o'clock in the morning because he is unwell and has lost his voice is one of the most sickening examples of hypocrisy that I have encountered in 28 years.

Mr. Smith: I hesitate to enter into a debate between two Conservative Members. I hope that the hon. Member for Stafford did not table his amendments to delete article 130r(1) and (2) by way of contesting the basic principles that they enshrine, because they are extremely important.

Sir Russell Johnston: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that caring for the environment knows no boundaries. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that tension will be created between that excellent principle and the principle of subsidiarity, of which much is made?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman touches on an important point. It is conceivable—I cast no aspersions—that a Government wanting to diminish environmental protection might seek the cloak of subsidiarity as an argument for drawing attention away from the need to protect the environment, and to allow the level of that protection to fall from the high European standards to lower national standards. I must confess, however, that some months ago I feared for a time that the Government might indeed embark on such a course. The Secretary of State for the Environment, for instance, said on television that some aspects of environmental protection might be dealt with more appropriately at national level.

On the whole, the European Community's environmental protection record is considerably better than the British Government's. Any attempt to draw power away from the Community and back into the hands of the Secretary of State is likely to diminish environmental protection rather than enhancing it. I hope that the Government do not intend to do that; but the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) has raised an important point, and it is a pity that the Secretary of State for the Environment is not here to deal with it.

I was dealing with the important principles enshrined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of article 130r. Paragraph 1 sets out four basic reasons why environmental protection is important. First, there is the quality of the environment—the quality of the water we drink and the air we breathe. Secondly, there is the protection of human health. Thirdly, there is the prudent and rational utilisation of natural resources—the husbanding of the raw materials of the

[Mr. Smith]

earth, which we must not exhaust at the expense of future generations. Fourthly, there is the need to promote measures at international level: this is not just a local or national issue, but a global issue.

Paragraph 2 refers to two particularly important environmental principles which Opposition Members have consistently supported, and which the Government claim to support strongly as well. They were drawn to the attention of the world by the earth summit at Rio. I refer to the precautionary principle and the "polluter pays" principle.

The precautionary principle is very simple: even when we are not certain that a particular environmental consequence will result from a particular course but merely suspect that it might, we must act to prevent any such occurrence. An example that is now at the forefront of our minds is the maritime transport of oil, which may have arisen earlier in the context of transport policy but which also has important environmental implications.

We may know that strengthening the construction of oil tankers will not necessarily guarantee that a tanker that runs aground will not spill large quantities of oil into the marine environment. Even though there is no absolute certainty that it will help, none the less it might, and because it might help, the importance of the precautionary principle needs to be taken into account.

We do not know for certain that to route a tanker to the north of Shetland rather than through the channel between Shetland and Fair Isle will inevitably be a safer route. We do not know for certain that to route large tankers carrying large quantities of oil through the Minch between the Hebrides and Skye will inevitably provide a safer passage. None the less, we know that to take such courses of action may prevent an accident, and because it might do so, the precautionary principle comes into play. In those circumstances, it is important for us to make sure that all tankers go to the west of the Hebrides and that no tankers go through the channel between Shetland and Fair Isle.

These are important issues. Therefore, the precautionary environmental principle adumbrated in the second paragraph of this article of the treaty ought to lead us to take important decisions about the routeing of oil tankers in order to prevent occurrences that might damage the environment. The precautionary principle is a sensible one to adopt when important issues such as these are involved.

About eight years ago, the Select Committee on the Environment studied the destruction caused by acid rain. The European Community published recently a report on forest damage in all the member states of the European Community. Its staggering and awesome conclusion is that forest damage and leaf loss is at its worst in the United Kingdom. About 57 per cent. of all trees in the United Kingdom have suffered damage through acid rain. I should have thought that any Government would want to consider that stark conclusion.

Eight years ago, the Select Committee on the Environment studied the acid rain issue, looked at sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions from our power stations and reached a set of conclusions. It said that the science was not totally proved, that it could not say for certain that sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and hydrocarbons mix in the atmosphere and then come down again in the form of acid rain, but that it thought that that was likely. Therefore, the Select Committee made a series of proposals, including proposals for the retrofitting of power stations in the United Kingdom with——

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the dash for gas, the combined cycle turbines and the nuclear programme are desirable so as to ensure that there are no consequences such as those he describes?

Mr. Smith: No, I am not suggesting that. I am suggesting that the cleaning up of emissions from coal-fired power stations is sensible in order to ensure that we can continue to burn coal cleanly.

Sir Russell Johnston: I want to do something very unusual and ask the hon. Gentleman a genuine question. I was surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman say that our trees suffer far more from the effects of acid rain than those in other member states. However, we have fewer trees than, for example, the Federal Republic of Germany, where I had always understood the worst damage had been experienced. When the hon. Gentleman says that our trees are the worst affected, does he mean as a proportion or in total volume?

Mr. Smith: As a proportion. The hon. Gentleman rightly notes that Britain has less tree cover than some other Community countries. I remember as a member of the Environment Select Committee visiting part of the black forest, where devastation had been acute. The landscape that five years previously had been verdant tree cover had become a devastated wilderness, with a few bare stumps of trees in the middle. That had been caused simply by air pollution. Having witnessed that, many members of the Committee changed their minds fundamentally about the nature and importance of the problem.

4.15 am

Mrs. Gorman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a 10-year study of acid rain in the United States showed that highly acidic water could be poured over trees for that period without causing devastation? Is he aware of the work of Professor Beament at Cambridge, who concluded that the effects are caused by underground and water conditions not related to acid rain? There is plenty of evidence that slightly acidic rain has a helpful effect on the soil. The theory of acid rain that the hon. Gentleman is advancing has been discredited for a number of years.

Mr. Smith: I think that it is the hon. Lady who has been discredited rather than the theory that I am advancing. She advances the common lay fallacy that acid rain is acidic water; it is not. The effect that we call acid rain is a photochemical smog created by a combination of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, hydrocarbons and ozone. It does not come down in the form of water. If the hon. Lady had done a little wider reading on the subject, I suspect that she might have known that.

I do not want to be unfair to the hon. Lady, for whom I have great affection, but she is on record as saying that there is no such thing as global warming, and that carbon dioxide is good for people. If she persists in adopting such attitudes, she is going very much against the grain of the overwhelming bulk of scientific opinion in the world. I am sure that, at some stage, she will come to her senses.

Eight years ago, the Select Committee took the precautionary principle to heart. At that stage, the science was not totally proved, whereas it is now, but none the less it is said that we should start a retrofitting programme for our power stations, because the signs were that damage was caused, and we should take precautions.

Sadly, the Government did not listen. Subsequently, they decided to retrofit three power stations in Britain. Work is in progress on one. It has not started on the other two yet, but none the less the contribution is too little, too late. If, like Germany, we had retrofitted virtually all our power stations in the past 10 or 15 years, we would be in a much better position with regard to sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions. Sulphur dioxide emissions are rising in Britain, despite international agreements which the Government have signed and which are supposed to ensure that we reduce such emissions.

Mr. Gallie: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide, but what about CO_2 emissions in comparison to those of Germany? Germany abandoned its nuclear programmes. That means that our CO_2 emissions are proportionately not as high as Germany's. Surely that is a problem.

Mr. Smith: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is wrong. At the moment, Britain contributes about 3 per cent. of global carbon dioxide emissions although we have only 1 per cent. of the world's population. Per unit of industrial production, Germany generates less carbon dioxide than we do. One of the most dramatic statistics of the global environment is that, per unit of industrial production, Germany and Japan generate half the quantity of carbon dioxide generated by the United States. The hon. Gentleman needs to consider the fact that Germany performs quite well on carbon dioxide.

I remind him that Britain's carbon dioxide emissions have risen by 2 per cent. in the past two years, even in the depths of a recession. Many of us find that extremely worrying, although the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) probably does not. However, she is probably not a progressive thinker on this matter.

Mrs. Gorman: I am very interested in the hon. Gentleman's remarks about my competence or otherwise to pronounce on these matters. I do not know how much science he knows, but he knows an awful lot of fairy stories. Is he aware that less than 2 per cent. of the earth's inhabitable surfaces are industrialised and that the greatest part of the earth's surface is covered with water? The generation of carbon dioxide must be seen in proportion to how much of the earth is industrialised.

Is the hon. Gentleman also aware that historical evidence from ice cores shows that there have been times when life has existed happily on earth when the percentage of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has been eight or 10 times greater than it is now, with no apparent harmful effect on plant or animal life?

Is he further aware that green plants photosynthesise at less than 50 per cent. of their capacity, the limiting factor being carbon dioxide? Therefore, carbon dioxide is a fertiliser in plant terms and does no harm, whether it increases or decreases.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Lady is wrong in a number of respects. First, she is wrong to describe facts as fairy tales. She also claimed that there have been periods of intense carbon dioxide production. There have been occasions, especially in connection with volcanic eruptions, for example, when, in a reasonably localised area, carbon dioxide has increased sharply for a brief period and then decreased.

However, the hon. Lady must realise that we are now experiencing a global increase in carbon dioxide levels in the world's atmosphere as a whole. Far from supporting her argument by pointing to the relatively small area of the world's surface which carries industry, that fact makes the position far more alarming, because as much of the rest of the world becomes industrialised, so the generation of carbon dioxide, which has already increased dramatically, will continue to increase. I fear that the hon. Lady's points, far from supporting her arguments, help to destroy them.

I was distracted down that road by the hon. Member for Billericay. The point that I was trying to establish was the importance of adopting the precautionary principle. Eight years ago, the Select Committee on the Environment adopted the precautionary principle. I wish that the Government had done so at that time in relation to sulphur dioxide emissions. Because they did not do so, we are now too late. Although, I hope, the Government may still see the light, it is eight years behind the time at which they should have done so. The precautionary principle is an extremely important aspect of environmental policy and I am delighted to see it enshrined in the paragraph.

The other important principle that is enshrined is that the polluter pays. The Government have advanced that principle in recent days and the Opposition certainly assent to it. However, let us consider the recent disaster on Shetland. The Government's attitude, quite rightly, is that it is the polluter—the tanker owner—who should pay. International arrangements are in place for compensation to be made available arising out of the liability for the accident.

However, the present compensation arrangements have a limit. There is an international scheme under which compensation will be paid for the costs of the clean-up operation, for the immediate response, and for the long-term loss of livelihood of fishermen, farmers and crofters, but there is a limit on that fund of £50 million.

What happens if that £50 million is found to be insufficient to compensate the people in Shetland, whose livelihoods have been dramatically affected by the grounding of the Braer? At the moment, there is no provision for either the polluter—the tanker owner—the liability fund, the insurers or the Government to pay anything above that £50 million. That limit on liability worries me considerably, and it certainly worries many people in Shetland with whom I was able to talk only a few days ago. If we are serious about enshrining "the polluter pays" as a proper principle in environmental policy, we must ensure that the full liability—not just a limited liability—falls on the polluter in an incident such as the grounding of the Braer.

There is a further issue. Not only is there an overall limit on the amount available for compensation: there are limits on the type of expenditure for which compensation will be available. The cost, for example, of long-term monitoring and research is not met by the compensation fund. Long-term monitoring and research has to take place. Never before have we had oil blowing in such quantities over agricultural land. No one knows what the long-term impact on crops and on grazing land will be.

[Mr. Smith]

It is important, therefore, that detailed research is done consistently over a long period to ensure that we know exactly what is happening to the soil in the parts of Shetland affected. There is no money in any fund or from anywhere to carry out that research work. No liability exists in the international protection fund to ensure that that work can be paid for.

Similarly, we have little knowledge about what happens to light crude oil when it enters the marine environment in the quantities that poured from the Braer. We must ensure that we look intensely at what is happening to the elements at the very beginning of the food chain when they are contaminated by oil and hydrocarbons. That important scientific exercise should be carried out consistently for months to come. Once again, however, there is no specific liability for that work and there should be.

If we are serious about the "polluter pays" principle, we should ensure that when an accident like that involving the Braer occurs the body that causes the pollution should pay for the cleaning up, for the compensation for loss of livelihood and for the long-term research and monitoring work.

Mr. Dickens: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that when Saddam Hussein set fire to the oil wells across Kuwait and polluted the atmosphere for months on end the United Nations should have required him to pay?

4.30 am

Mr. Smith: The short answer is that the United Nations did that. The principle is enshrined in several United Nations resolutions that concluded the ceasefire after the Gulf war.

The first point that I want to make about the title is that it enshrines very important, sound environmental principles. The Opposition strongly support the "precautionary" and "polluter pays" principles. Secondly, the title includes provision for majority voting in relation to the environment and the Opposition support and welcome that.

I note that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) wishes to delete the exceptions from the title. I do not know why he wants to do that. The exceptions are rather strong. They rule out anything to do with taxation, town and country planning, the use and management of water resources, the management of waste and a member state's choice between different energy sources. Those remain issues which must fall within unanimous voting procedures if the Community is to take any steps. Other areas of environmental policy are available for majority voting and we welcome that.

We should be aiming for the highest possible standards of environmental protection and not at the lowest common denominator. When we enable majority voting to take place, member states should not always proceed at the pace of the slowest.

Mr. Denzil Davies: My hon. Friend has rightly said that qualified majority voting decides such issues. He said that we all believe in that and that it is a good thing. If a member state has been outvoted and must then carry out the wishes of the majority, what would happen if it could not afford to do that? Assuming that there is no money in the cohesion fund, how does one surmount that difficulty?

Mr. Smith: The answer to that can be found in paragraph 5 of article 130s which makes provision for contributions from the cohesion fund and for temporary derogations for a member state where financial difficulties are incurred. I believe that it is simple to opt for temporary derogation rather than permanent derogation.

One of the things that we all, including my right hon. Friend, would wish to avoid is environmental dumping, with certain member states seeking, by means of a permanent derogation, to undercut the other member states of the Community in terms of environmental protection standards. My right hon. Friend would not wish to see provisions of that nature in such a treaty.

Mr. Davies: I understand that, but temporary derogation presumably means that the member state, after the temporary period comes to an end—my hon. Friend has not said how long that period will be—has to find the money. That means that there are public expenditure choices and that they are restricted, so other forms of public expenditure in that member state after the period of temporary derogation has come to an end will have to be forsaken and sacrificed as a result.

Mr. Smith: My right hon. Friend makes one mistake in assuming that good environmental practice inevitably means public expenditure being brought into play. It might, of course, mean that the private sector has to improve its standards and find the necessary funds. But even if it is a case of public expenditure being brought into play, I believe that ensuring that high environmental standards are maintained across the Community as a whole is an entirely valid purpose for the Community to insist on those standards.

Mr. Davies: Paragraph 5 refers to disproportionate costs for public authorities and member states, so I was referring to a public cost. If, at the end of the period of temporary derogation, the public authority has to find the money, given the constraints of public expenditure on taxation, that must be at the expense of something else, be it a hospital or a school. In other words, a further restriction is placed by qualified majority voting on the power and authority of a member state to spend its money as it wills.

Mr. Smith: Of course I understand my right hon. Friend's point. I am simply drawing his attention, in my initial response to him, to the fact that environmental protection measures are not necessarily solely taken by sovereign Governments. They can also be required of commercial enterprises. However, taking my right hon. Friend's point that a sovereign Government might be required by a majority vote of other member states to take a certain course of action and might find it difficult to fund that action immediately from its own resources and might secure a temporary derogation—it is of course noteworthy that the treaty is silent on the subject of how long such a temporary period is—we are speaking in entirely hypothetical terms.

If, by the time we get to the end of such a temporary period, and if the cohesion fund does not necessarily apply in those circumstances—there is a big string of ifs, Mr. Lofthouse—my right hon. Friend might be right, but there is an enormous amount of negotiation and discussion to be

had throughout that process, not the least of which involves the length of period for which a derogation would apply.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is very patient with me. Of course the cohesion fund does not apply to the United Kingdom, so that subsection is out. My hon. Friend implied that he did not want the temporary period to be very long or other countries could dump in this country. The reality is that the temporary period would be short, we would have to find the money, and that would be a constraint on public expenditure.

Mr. Smith: I am tempted to observe that, judging by the way the British economy is going at the moment, Britain might soon qualify for the cohesion fund, but I certainly hope that that will not occur.

At present, only four member states qualify for assistance from the cohesion fund. My right hon. Friend must not put words in my mouth and assume that I want an extremely short temporary derogation period. Whether or not a longer derogation period is required depends entirely on the circumstances and is a matter for amicable negotiation between the countries involved. I believe that my right hon. Friend has used an entirely hypothetical example that will not occur and cause problems in reality.

The important principle enshrined in the title is that we should aim at high and consistent environmental protection standards across the Community. What happens to the environment of other Community countries affects us. Therefore, my right hon. Friend should take account of the fact that the environment should not merely be the responsibility of a member state alone. The pollution generated in one member state may well affect the citizens of another. It seems absolutely right that the treaty should aim for the establishment of high environmental standards across the Community.

Mr. Jessel: Does not the hon. Gentleman think that, in order to prevent pollution, it would be better to have a Europe-wide organisation, not merely a European Community or union of 12 countries? For example, the pollution of the Rhine cannot be properly prevented unless Switzerland—which is not a member of the European Community—is included. Prevention of pollution of the Mediterranean cannot be achieved properly unless Turkey is included. Should not the Council of Europe be responsible for such matters, not the European union? If so, why do we need the treaty of Maastricht?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman attributes to the Council of Europe powers and procedures which do not exist and would be difficult to create. Of course, it would be more appropriate to deal with some environmental issues on the basis of ad hoc gatherings of certain nations. The most obvious example is that of the nations that come together for the Oslo and Paris conventions on pollution in the north-east Atlantic. In that case, a number of states that are not members of the European Community are included in the discussions. That fact does not invalidate the argument that strong environmental protection across the European Community—as a community—can benefit the citizens of individual member states.

Mrs. Gorman: Further to the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), if the hon. Member is concerned about the state of the atmosphere, is it not also true that, before lumbering our industries with extremely costly requirements to reduce pollution, we should consider that countries such as China —with a population of more than 1 billion—produce vastly greater amounts of industrial waste and gas into the atmosphere? We can do nothing about such pollution, but we set standards for our industries that will inevitably make the goods and services that they produce more expensive, thus making us less competitive. How does the hon. Gentleman think that such factors will help the citizens of Europe?

Mr. Smith: There are three differences between the hon. Lady and myself. First, I am concerned about the condition of our atmosphere and the hon. Lady is not. Secondly, I realise that, despite its large population and its growth rate of 10 per cent. a year, China still produces considerably less carbon dioxide than the industrialised north. Even at its present rate of industrialisation, it will take China a number of years to catch up. The third is that, although I recognise the potential for pollution generation in the developing world, I believe that the developed countries of the north should provide assistance in the form of technology transfer to ensure that best environmental practices are encouraged, supported and facilitated in the developing countries. That is better than criticising those countries, as some—not, I am sure, the hon. Lady—would do.

Europe's environmental record is rather good, largely because the Commission has taken action in the form of the drinking water directives, the sea bathing directives, the protection of Oxleas Wood and the items in the fifth action programme on the environment, which includes the drawing up of new measurements of economic progress to set beside GDP—throughout the Community and within the next few years. All these important European initiatives have helped to protect the British environment.

4.45 am

The one item which the Commission proposed and which I am sad to say the British Government did not accept was the proposal that an environmental impact assessment should be made of all items of Government policy in member states. Of course, the definitions would have to be well and creatively drawn, but it is unfortunate that the British Government exerted every effort to remove a directive of this nature from the list. In general, however, the record of Europe has been far better than that of the British Government in matters of environmental protection.

It is also important to adopt a regional approach to many of these issues. Of course the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) was correct: for some environmental issues a particular gathering of countries that does not fit neatly into the Community box may be needed. Still, the European Community is a major economic and trading bloc; it is a regional entity. Some environmental matters clearly apply right across the Community, so it makes sense to ensure that many of them are dealt with at Community level.

There is a great task to be done in assisting the countries of central and eastern Europe to clean up their environment, which has been so devastated over the past 40 or 50 years. No country in the EC can undertake that job on its own, but the Community can exercise its strength to help these countries to clean up. That in turn will help to clean up our environment, too.

It is worth noting that article 130t states that if any member state wants to go further to improve its environmental protection even more than the Community proposes, it should be enabled and encouraged to do so. That is an important provision, and I hope soon to see a Government who will push environmental protection further than the rest of Europe rather than lag behind.

Mr. Spearing: Before my hon. Friend completes his comprehensive survey, will he mention the enhanced powers in this area of the European Parliament? Does he agree that, although it is not solely confined to the environment, article 189b is important?

Mr. Smith: I had not intended specifically to address that issue, but as my hon. Friend raises it I shall do so. I strongly believe in the need for a strengthened European Parliament that can monitor and hold to account the European Commission. The record of that Parliament's environment Committee, which is chaired by my Labour colleague the MEP for Strathclyde, is extremely good. It has pursued the Environment Commissioner to make sure that he is accountable and has pushed environmental issues in the Community. I am sure that my hon. Friend welcomes that. I should like to see it further developed.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend and I are keen to see monitoring of the environment. However, I would like to see it monitored even more keenly in this place, in all European nations, and in the Council of Europe. My hon. Friend has still not mentioned article 189b, which states that if there is a disagreement between the Council of Europe and the European Parliament on a proposal that may have been approved by the Council, the proposal goes no further. Such a provision is unlikely to be used in this area, but my hon. Friend will agree that it is a backward step vis-a-vis the European Parliament's powers over the Council.

Mr. Smith: I suspect that my hon. Friend is right to say that that power is unlikely to be used in this area. However, the European Parliament will wish to push it in relation to the environment.

The Opposition welcome the titles on public health and on the environment. We welcome the introduction of qualified majority voting and the attention that the Maastricht treaty pays to the environment. We hope that progress on environmental protection can be made in Britain and in the Community, because wherever we live in Europe the environment belongs to us all. We must insist through Governments, the Community and the European Parliament on the highest possible environmental standards.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I apologise to you, Mr. Lofthouse, and to the Clerk for speaking at all at seven minutes to 5 o'clock. I hope that the Government will consider whether it is fair, reasonable, proper and democratic to ask us to debate important issues affecting the whole of our country when one party has departed from the Committee on the instructions of its Whips. Other hon. Members are sleepy and probably not fit to discuss these matters.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend will be aware that, when progress is reported, we have an hour and a half in which to debate those matters if we wish to.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am well aware of that, and the Government should accept that.

We have just had a long speech from a Labour Front-Bench spokesman. I hope that he realises just how long he has been talking. He was the third such spokesman to tell us that the Opposition supported the measure. They were meant to be probing amendments. Like my hon. Friends, I have been here hour after hour, hearing the shadow Ministers saying that they are moving probing amendments, but then not probing. They never ask questions. It makes me wonder what they are at. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) was asked three specific questions on the clauses, which he did not seem to understand. He talked about the cohesion fund without realising that it did not apply to Britain.

I must move on because I want hon. Members who wish to ask questions to have the opportunity to do so. However, I reiterate those two points. First, it is shameful that the Maastricht treaty, which takes away fundamental powers from the people of Britain and from their children and grandchildren, is being debated by a bunch of sleepyheads at five to five in the morning. Secondly, I do not know what the Opposition are playing at.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Was that the reason why my hon. Friend voted against the suspension of the debate earlier on—so that we could debate the matters at a sensible time when people were awake?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I should like the matters to be debated sensibly, without delay. I am amazed by all this business about precautionary principle. It is a bit like having three roofs in case the rain comes through the top one. It is a load of rubbish and nonsense. Let us get on to facts.

At the end of the long list of amendments grouped together comes my amendment No. 54, in which I propose that we take out the public health clause. I have not tabled it because I am against public health or because I think that money spent on that is wasted but because the whole clause is a load of hypocrisy. Hon. Members should be aware of that, and the Government should think about it.

Apart from some splendid sentiments about how the Governments hope that public health will improve and that all countries will co-operate—we heard how we shall co-operate over HIV and other issues, although why it has to be European countries and not others, I do not know —the treaty does nothing at all except set out nice words, including statements that there will be more health information and education and co-operation on the massive subjects such as drug dependence and tobacco.

I should like the Government to tell us how they can approve that nonsense when they know that the EC is spending more and more every year—this year it will be £1 billion—on growing high-tar tobacco, which is nasty stuff, and dumping that not in Europe, because it is illegal to smoke it here, but in the third world, east Europe and places in Africa where people do not understand language and danger. We keep hearing that something will be done about tobacco growing, but nothing is done. All that happens is that, every year, the expenditure increases. Who is suffering as a result? As with all the other Euro-policies, the poor, the ignorant and those who do not understand suffer.

We are growing high-tar tobacco that we are not allowed to smoke because it is too dangerous. We are giving piles of subsidy—it is subsidised more than anything else in the EC—but the Government have the

cheek to approve a public health policy saying how wonderful it is that we can all work together to improve public health. I just wish that, instead of all those wonderful words about co-operation, getting rid of bad things and everyone working together, they would face up to some of the basic issues. That is never done. We are always told that improvements are around the corner, but we never see any.

The second issue is the environment. What does article 130t on page 40 mean? That brings in something that, as an obsessive reader of Euro-treaties, I have not seen before. It says that the European nations will get together to form their common rules. That means, for example, that the polluter will pay, unless he is a farmer. Many people are facing higher water rates because of nitrate pollution —nitrate pollution is shoved in under subsidy—but farmers do not pay for the pollution that they cause because they are, in effect, a separate category of people.

5 am

We are told that we shall have a lot of new rules and many new ideas and that individual member states can have "more stringent protective measures" if they wish. That is our freedom. We are told for the first time, however, that such additional measures must be compatible with the treaty and that they

"shall be notified to the Commission."

What does that mean? Does it mean that if a British law happens to be tighter or tougher than European law or a European decision for reasons that suit us, we must go to the Commission to be given its assurance, and that of the Council, that our law is compatible with European law? I have never seen such a provision before.

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Gentleman has said more than once that article 130t is new. In fact, it comes from the original treaty. It was added to the treaty by the relevant provisions of the Single European Act. The hon. Gentleman is right to say, however, that the additional phrase in article 130t is the reference to the Commission. He should probe to ascertain why that has been added to the original treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act, which otherwise represents the whole of article 130t.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is right. So much of this stuff is from previous treaties. Indeed, it goes right back to the treaty of Rome. The feature that is new is the requirement to notify the Commission. The Commission's officials are meant to act as our civil servants. Does the provision mean that any new laws that we enact—they might be additional laws—must be reported to the Commission and approved? Does it mean that our existing laws must be reported and approved? The matter is far from clear and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will make a short and simple statement on what is meant by

"shall be notified to the Commission."

Does that mean our existing laws, which might be more European than European laws, or does it mean new laws?

Thirdly, is it wise to give so many additional powers in respect of the environment to the EEC? In the previous debate, I should have liked to ask some important questions—for example, whether the new transport policy would apply to the channel tunnel to bail it out of near bankruptcy and to stop it heading for disaster. I should like the Government to explain the value of all these additional measures with additional expenditure. We know that whenever the EEC has taken new powers and responsibilities there have been additional burdens for the British taxpayer and more damage to the poor people here whom no one seems to bother about.

During the previous debate—my right hon. Friend the Minister of State must have heard this—hon. Members said that the new transport subsidies were wonderful. They seemed to think that the subsidies would bring new ferries, roads and goodness knows what. Most of the money would come from the cohesion fund, which means that nothing would come to us. At the end of the day, however, approval seems to be obtained. Does it make sense to introduce huge additional powers over the environment for the EEC, which will cost a great deal of money and take money from the cohesion fund? That is spelt out clearly at the foot of article 130s. What is the point of it all when it will mean that less money will be available to the Government to do the things that need to be done?

Unfortunately, we get the impression time and again that the Government are hiding things from us. I believe that that is so when it comes to cash. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked time and again recently how much money we were paying in to the EEC. We were given a straight answer—£2·6 billion. That is quite a lot of money. It is £4 per week per family in Britain. Just over a week ago when "Britain in Europe" was published—copies were available in the Vote Office—I found that the sum had changed. Instead of £2·6 billion it had become £1·5 billion. Did other hon. Members notice that? I tabled a question asking why that had happened and I was told that it all depended on how one looked at the sums and added them up.

I have a sneaking feeling that, because Maastricht will cost us a great deal more money, the figures are suddenly being changed. Something very funny is happening. After Edinburgh, the Prime Ministers of all the other countries went back to their people and said, "Look, we are going to be very wealthy because of Edinburgh. We will have lots more money—billions of pounds or dollars". However, both our Government and the German Government told us that it would cost us very little. The sums do not add up.

It would be infinitely better if, instead of introducing silly new provisions that will simply add to expenditure and complexity and will not help the people of Europe or of Britain, the Government tried to persuade the EC to concentrate on solving real problems and on stopping the absurdity of spending £1,000 million of our money this year on growing high-tar tobacco and dumping it in Africa, the third world and eastern Europe.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I wish to speak to the amendments relating to article 130s, which was dealt with ably and comprehensively by our environment spokesman, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). I do not know whether the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) intends to reply to this debate on the environment. The Minister for Public Transport was present throughout our previous debate, but unfortunately the Government Whip moved the closure motion and the Chair accepted it before the Minister could reply. I thought that to be extremely strange behaviour.

With no disrespect to the Foreign Office Minister, I wonder whether the Government intend to have an

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

Environment Minister here during this debate. We are dealing with a fairly specialised article. I do not suggest that I am an expert on the environment; I intend merely to examine the words of the article. Should not an Environment Minister—it does not have to be the Secretary of State—be present to reply to the debate, especially as a Transport Minister was here for the previous debate, even though he was not given the opportunity to reply? If an Environment Minister were here, with the courtesy of the Government Whip he might be allowed to say something. That would do this important debate the justice that it deserves.

The Foreign Office Minister is looking at his notes, no doubt thumbing through the brief from the Department of the Environment with some trepidation. Obviously, he intends to reply to the debate. I hope that he will be given the opportunity to do so. As a former Whip, I do not think that the Government Whips would dare to move the closure and deny the right hon. Gentleman that opportunity. Who knows? As the Bill progresses, that may happen. The Chair has already made some strange decisions, although I will not go into the detail now.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's remark is not acceptable to the Chair. The Chair's position on the acceptance of a closure motion is simply what we might call an emergency power to stop absolutely blatant abuse. It is for the Committee to reach a decision on whether it wishes to curtail debate.

Mr. Davies: I may be wrong, but I have always understood that the Chair has a discretion as to whether to accept a closure motion.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. It is quite true that the Chair has a discretion, but it is of a particular nature and is intended to stop absolutely blatant abuse. It is not intended to indicate when the Committee should end discussion; that is for the Committee to decide.

Mr. Davies: My understanding is that the Chair has a discretion as to whether initially to accept a closure motion. Am I or am I not correct?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Yes, but I tried to describe the circumstances in which the Chair exercises that discretion.

Mr. Davies: But there is discretion and, having sat through these debates, my belief is that it has not been exercised once, in respect of any one of a large cluster of amendments. I do not think that there has been blatant filibustering every time.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The right hon. Gentleman's remarks are bordering on criticism of the Chair, which is unacceptable. I ask him to move on to the substantive part of his speech.

Mr. Davies: I will, Dame Janet. I am sorry that my remarks are unacceptable, but, having listened to this debate, they reflect my point of view.

Article 130s is good in parts. We are all in favour of a sound, proper and clean environment, and one country cannot decide matters without the co-operation of others. Pollution knows no frontiers or boundaries within the EEC, or further east, with Poland, Czechoslovakia and other countries. It obviously makes sense for the countries of Europe which enjoy economic and trade co-operation to collaborate in respect of environmental matters.

I welcome the article's provision for unanimity because I see no reason why Europe should not develop on the basis of co-operation between nations. That is a healthier, better, more sensible and more democratic way. The article recognises that.

I refer to those paragraphs dealing with the establishment of some form of tax or another fiscal measure, the choice of different energy sources by member states, and the general structure of energy supply. I infer from paragraph 2 that such matters must be decided by the Council,

"acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and"—

perfectly properly—

"after consulting the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee".

I have no objection to that sensible way of proceeding.

I cannot understand why we cannot proceed in that way in respect of other parts of the treaty and of co-operation between member states in general. That would provide the Community with the democratic base that it will desperately need over the next few years, as the problems of both eastern and western Europe mount and worsen.

The rest of article 130s—here I differ from my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury—refers to qualified majority voting. It is nothing new and has existed for a long time. The votes are, of course, weighted in favour of the larger countries, but qualified majority voting has been extended over the years.

The Single European Act considerably extended the spheres of qualified majority voting. I am not sure whether article 130s also does so—perhaps they always existed in the treaty of Rome, in respect of the environment. Certainly the article reiterates and re-emphasises qualified majority voting in those areas of Community action described in paragraph (1).

It is all very well to say that we favour qualified majority voting, but, as I tried to emphasise when intervening on my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, it is not only a restriction on sovereignty in theory but imposes a constraint on public expenditure.

Once the Council of Ministers has voted by qualified majority for a course of action, a member state that considered that it was unable to adhere to that course of action but which lost the vote would have to conform. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury valiantly tried to suggest, "It will be all right—back to negotiations: those guys in the Commission are nice chaps—we can ask for a temporary derogation." When such a derogation is requested, it must be shown that the cost is deemed disproportionate for the public authorities of a member state. I do not know who does the deeming, although I am sure that the Minister of State can tell us: he has his brief with him. Governments like to deem: they do it all the time in Finance Bills. They deem black to be white, and male to be female. Will the Government deem the cost disproportionate? Will the judgment be purely subjective, or will the Government have to prove their case to the Council of Ministers, the Commission or some other body?

5.15 am

Let us assume that the cost is shown to be disproportionate. What does "disproportionate" mean? "Proportionality" is one of the vogue words that have recently crept into general policy. It was originally confined to lawyers, and has been used in judicial review cases: if a Minister's action is disproportionate, a court may strike it down. But what does the word mean in its present context? Is 1 per cent. disproportionate? Is 0·5 per cent? Is it, indeed, a question of percentages? Only lawyers like myself would begin to consider such pedantic matters at 5.15 am. Faced with the broad sweep of the treaty, no one bothers about them much; but we scream and shout when faced with a problem about which we can do nothing.

Even if the cost can be shown to be disproportionate, all that will result is a temporary derogation. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury suggested that I had put words in his mouth. I did not do so. He said that he was pleased that the derogation would not be permanent. That, of course, would make no sense: as my hon. Friend himself pointed out, a permanent derogation would allow one country to act as a dumping ground while others had to bear the costs—proportionate costs, presumably—of its heinous polluting action. The derogation cannot be too temporary: it cannot be like income tax, which was apparently supposed to be temporary when Addison introduced it long ago.

If all the countries have voted by qualified majority that a certain action is a heinous polluting action, any derogation is likely to be allowed for only a short period. Ultimately, a public authority will have to pay. It says here that the polluter should pay. That is another of those glib, politically correct phrases that are currently in vogue. What does it mean? It means that the polluter writes the cheque, but not that he pays. The taxpayer—the ultimate consumer of goods—will pay, because the cost is handed down.

I am sorry to criticise my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, but when he says from the Dispatch Box, "We are in favour of the polluter paying", he does not seem to realise that "the polluter" is all of us. We pay through taxation and the prices that we pay in the shops. Eventually, the costs of the tragic accident in the Shetland islands will be paid not by the polluter—the person who steered the ship—but by those who purchase petroleum or use it in the manufacture or distribution of products.

Mr. Chris Smith: I sympathise with my right hon. Friend's point, but he is wrong in one respect. All of us have already paid for the Shetlands event: the cost of compensation, and of covering the tanker's liability, comes out of the international fund to which the tanker owners contribute, and which is levied on the ultimate cost of oil. My right hon. Friend is wrong to attribute future costs to that event.

Mr. Denzil Davies: My point is that eventually a cheque has to be paid by the people who own the tanker. That does not mean, however, that they will bear the cost. It will be handed on, either to an international body or to those who purchase the product. Clarity of language, even in politics, is always useful.

We ought to drop this nonsense phrase. We are all in favour of the polluter pays principle, but the polluter does not pay. We all pay. We shall have to clear up our environment, and that will cost money.

Mr. Rowlands: Earlier my right hon. Friend asked where that phrase came from. It was the Single European Act which introduced that phrase in respect of the environment.

Mr. Davies: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He reads the treaties assiduously.

Qualified majority voting is rather like a charge on the Consolidated Fund. One can do nothing about judges' salaries or payments to the European Community in the public expenditure review, as some of us found out years ago, to our chagrin. One cannot say, "We'll cut judges' pay, or sack a few of them." Years ago it was suggested that we should cut some of the payments to the European Community—that we should stop the cheque, as it were. I see that the Minister of State is aghast at the suggestion. I am obviously breaking the Official Secrets Act by saying that some of us suggested that we should stop the cheque. But we cannot do that, either.

The Treasury always used to frighten junior Ministers with the word "hypothecated." If one made a suggestion of a radical nature, it was hypothecation and therefore not allowed. We find nowadays that more and more public revenue is hypothecated, with 10 per cent. taken out here and 10 per cent. there, with another bit going off to the European Commission and something else going off to NATO. That leaves only a bit to spend on the poor British public—for example, on building schools and hospitals, on social welfare and pensions. The part that is left over grows smaller and smaller.

We are all in favour, so it is said, of qualified majority voting on the environment, but the Government should be allowed to exercise choice. We might decide that we want to put up with some pollution so that a new hospital can be built. A democratically elected Government ought to be allowed to make that choice. They should not be outvoted by other countries, on the basis of qualified majority voting. That is what I believe to be democracy. It is not an old-fashioned desire to cling to the nation state.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is not just a case of making our own decisions about putting up with our own pollution but that the problem with pollution is that, because it spreads across national boundaries, we might end up having to put up with somebody else's pollution that we, as an independent and sovereign nation state, would be unable to do anything about?

Mr. Davies: Indeed, but that is a decision for us to take. The veto should be available so that we can balance the one against the other. My argument is that the unanimity rule should be there to protect the democratic process in this country. Without the unanimity rule, we lose our control. Ministers can hide behind the principle of qualified majority voting. No doubt they have already done so. Ministers of whatever party can say, "We tried very hard at 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock in the morning, but the terrible Germans and French outvoted us; however, we did our best." Then we have to pay for it, unless we obtain a temporary derogation.

[Mr. Davies]

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury was not here for our earlier debate on the cohesion fund, so he can be forgiven for not appreciating immediately that the cohesion fund is restricted to certain countries. Only Spain—the Minister of State is nodding and endorsing this—Portugal, Ireland and Greece can get money from the cohesion fund. GDP figures suggest that, after 10 years of Conservative government, Wales is the poorest region of Britain. It is possible that Wales is poorer than some parts of Spain; I do not know. The Minister of State probably knows that income per head in Spain is approaching 90 per cent. of the United Kingdom average. I imagine that in the major conurbations of Spain income per head is much higher than in parts of Britain, but a clause on the cohesion fund was slotted in to buy Gonzalez off. We in Wales, however, cannot get money to tackle pollution. The Government do not have the money, but my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and I represent constituencies which have experienced considerable pollution.

Mr. Rowlands: My right hon. Friend is making an important point. The GDP of the communities that we represent in mid-Glamorgan is 72 per cent. of the United Kingdom average, which is lower than Northern Ireland. Some parts of wealthy Spain must be better off, whereas we have had a history of pollution and dereliction, which we have been steadily clearing.

Mr. Davies: If we take 72 per cent. of the United Kingdom figure, we get close to the overall Spanish figure, let alone a figure for the wealthier parts of Spain. It is extremely unfair that the article allows only four countries to benefit from the cohesion fund when often the poorer regions suffer most from environmental pollution, as we know to our cost.

The article is good in parts. With the unanimity rule, it offers a better way forward for Europe. Later, we shall deal with articles that limit the deficit on borrowing to 3 per cent. of GDP. The Government will have to make progress in that direction. Yet we are being asked to approve an article which, in effect, imposes higher expenditure on the Government.

Mr. Rowlands: And the article on transport.

Mr. Davies: Yes, indeed.

Quite a few of the articles will impose additional costs on the Government because they lost a vote in the Council of Ministers. That means an increase in public expenditure.

Mr. Spearing: My right hon. Friend is being very practical. Does he agree that the Council rarely has a vote? The inter-European, round-the-table opinions, the work that is done beforehand and the informal and semi-informal discussions usually make the line-ups very clear. If a country or Minister wants to make a stand on something, the others usually give way on something else. The merits of the matter may be the last consideration. Sometimes, it is not a matter of being outvoted but perhaps of giving something away to gain something else.

5.30 am

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I do not know how often what he has outlined happens, but there is presumably a voting procedure which may be followed. My hon. Friend is in fact arguing that the unanimity rule is not perfect because, despite a veto, there is a trade-off. Perhaps even the unanimity rule can be watered down because of the way the bargaining is carried out. However, the unanimity rule is in theory written into the article.

Mr. Spearing: My right hon. Friend is dealing with an important point. Although the former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, was an enthusiast in the end—or so she said—for the Single European Act, does he recall that at the Heads of Government meeting that preceded the treaty, she said that she did not think that one was needed, but her veto was not enough?

Mr. Davies: Clearly, the veto cannot always be exercised.

I conclude by referring to the provisions which are

"primarily of a fiscal nature"

and which, of course, need unanimity. As I understand it, the Commission currently proposes to levy a carbon tax which presumably comes under paragraph 2 as it is a provision

"primarily of a fiscal nature".

I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney is agreeing with me.

I hope that I shall not be out of order if I say that I hope that there will be complete resistance to the nonsense of a carbon tax. We are trying to save our coal mines while the Commission makes such a foolish proposal. Being an irresponsible body—I use the word "irresponsible" in its true sense—the European Parliament will no doubt pass it. However, I hope that the Government—I know that my hon. Friends will support them and I can even speak for the Opposition Front Bench—will be wholly opposed to any suggestion of a carbon tax, which would go against all that we are trying to do to save the coal industry. That reinforces my argument that the unanimity argument, which is in paragraph 2—at least in theory—is sensible because it prevents nonsense such as a carbon tax being imposed on us to the considerable detriment of the mining industry and of our industry in general.

Article 130s is good in parts, but let us have more about unanimity and proper democratic co-operation between states.

Mr. Knapman: I agree with much of what the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said, especially with regard to the notion that the polluter pays; in the end, it is the consumer who pays. He cited the example of the tanker—if there is a claim on the insurance company, the premium is increased, which affects the price of the product. That is eminently sensible, and I am sorry that the Labour Front Bench cannot understand that.

I have been examining the provisional selection of amendments, which cover so many important subjects—industrial, consumer, commercial, agricultural, market, network, transport, telecommunications, energy, health and environmental issues. However, we did not know that that they would all be debated in one day. For those people who read the more serious newspapers, I wonder what the

British public will make of today's business when they see the House of Commons trying to debate all those issues in one day and starting a fresh group of amendments at 4 am.

I draw a few issues to the Minister's attention. One could not accuse our European leaders of thinking small —article 3 states that they wish for

"a policy in the sphere of the environment".

If we add to that article 130r, we have quite a lot on environmental policy and the cost of it.

Paragraph 4 of article 130s says:

"Without prejudice to certain measures of a Community nature, the Member States shall finance and implement the environment policy."

Every time I look at the treaty, I see expense, yet I see no money resolution. Can my right hon. Friend the Minister give us any idea of what the costs of the environmental programme will be? If he cannot give us costs for the whole programme, perhaps he can give us the costs for parts of it that may have been discussed recently.

The proposals go far. Article 130r says:

"Community policy ... shall contribute to ... the following objectives:

—preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment;

—protecting human health;

—prudent and rational utilisation of natural resources"—

whatever that means—

"promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems."

No aspect of human life is left out of the title. Every nook and cranny is invaded.

What will the cost be, especially to the British taxpayer? If it is necessary to put up taxes in a few weeks' time, I shall support it as an unfortunate necessity. But if my constituents think that their taxes will go up to pay for these proposals, there will be a very much more difficult message to sell.

I was totally quiet on the first group of amendments. I presume that the dawn is breaking over the Thames, so it seems a suitable time to discuss the ozone layer. I believe that I am right in saying that under the Maastricht treaty, EC policies for the environment will be decided by qualified majority vote by the Council of Ministers.

I sometimes wonder—my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is right—whether the state of the environment in the Community is rather better than the Commission likes to suggest. I recently read a newspaper article that suggested that just as the biggest nuisances in the 19th century were the Luddites, there is every chance that the biggest nuisances in the 20th century will be the greens.

Already a large volume of environmental law has been passed, which is likely to be added to. The new proposals could prove to be an excuse for protectionism. We have so many environmental projects, especially in the Mediterranean countries. To me and to many of my hon. Friends, many of those projects look like bribes for support through the cohesion fund.

The enforcement of EC environmental policy is geographically uneven and unfair. The policy is both bureaucratic and over-influenced by pressure groups. Most of us can look at our postbags and agree that that is so. The Community does not have a civil service as we do. We find that the vast sums are dominated by the bigotry of centralised planning and control.

Under the Maastricht treaty, environment becomes a sector of policy decided by qualified majority, as we have already decided. That was to be expected because the environment was a natural target for Community action. Pollution knows no frontiers. I was much intrigued by the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) who asked about pollution on the Rhine. The polluter will pay there, although it will be difficult to make Switzerland pay. I gather that there is quite a lot of pollution on the Rhine because pollution apparently does not all occur in the British Isles. If there were pollution on the Rhine, how would the responsibility for that pollution be split up? In any particular case, how would the problem be dealt with? How would the responsibility be split up if Switzerland were not prepared to pay?

The Single European Act assumes that the increased output anticipated as a result of the falling of economic barriers at the end of last year should correspondingly add to pollution. That assumption is not justified on the record of the 1970s and 1980s when the pollution of all market economies fell substantially. The best way to achieve improvements is through market forces.

In respect of unleaded petrol, we have seen that the only way in which one needed to make an environmental improvement was to make unleaded petrol cheaper and leaded petrol dearer. Very shortly afterwards, that did the trick.

Mr. Chris Smith: The hon. Gentleman said that that did the trick. It certainly helped, but it did not achieve the objective of changing people's consumption of petrol to unleaded. It raised the consumption of unleaded to 30 per cent. of the market, but it did not do the trick.

Mr. Knapman: The two choices are to allow market forces to settle the matter or to pass laws. By making unleaded petrol cheaper, a large proportion of demand opted for unleaded. As newer cars come onto the market, even more cars will run on unleaded petrol. I believe that that is a very sensible way to approach matters. However, from the intervention of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), I assume that he does not believe that that is a sensible approach.

Mr. Chris Smith: The hon. Gentleman must not misunderstand me. I simply entered a slight caveat to his apparent implication that there had somehow been a wholesale switch to unleaded petrol as a result of the price differential. The price differential has undoubtedly helped. It is a good thing and something which we have supported consistently. We have urged, and continue to urge, the Chancellor of the Exchequer to widen the differential still further to increase the use of unleaded petrol.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that clear. My colleagues and I are often not sure whether to accept what the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury says from the Opposition Front Bench or to read the amendments in the name of Labour Front-Bench spokesmen. However, I was very glad to hear that the hon. Gentleman has such faith in market forces.

A more telling reason for increased interest in Brussels in the environment is its increased popularity and emotive appeal. That was reflected in an opinion poll in 1988 which showed that three quarters of EEC citizens believed that environmental problems were immediate and urgent and then reaffirmed that view by the election of 30 members of the Green party in 1989.

[Mr. Knapman]

By then, the greener approach to Community policy was already enshrined in an environmental impact directive of 3 July 1988 which called for ecological awareness to be part of the planning and decision-making process in all sectors and notably in agriculture, oil, energy, transport, tourism and regional development. The practical effect of that was that certain categories of project—for example, crude oil refineries and new motorways—were made subject to impact assessments to identify their affects on human beings, fauna and flora, soil, water, air, landscape and the cultural heritage.

European Commission information handouts suggest that its citizens suffer from serious environmental problems. However, I suspect that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay said, some of those warnings should be taken with a large pinch of salt. With the election of the Greens and all the advice, we must be very careful where we go from here if we are not to make some industries totally uncompetitive.

The Commission has a vested interest in exaggerating the problems as justification for extending its own powers. However, an official 10-year inquiry in America concluded that there was no definite causal link between acid rain and dying forests—indeed, the damage to German forests is now thought to have been done by drought—that acid rain has no apparent effect on lakes, buildings, human health or agriculture and that it might even contribute to soil fertility. The impact on rivers of the growing use of nitrogen fertilisers by farmers, though, seems to be genuine enough, but the blame should be placed squarely on the production incentives built into the common agricultural policy.

5.45 am

We need to examine the legal position which perhaps the right hon. Member for Llanelli is better qualified than I to examine. Until 1987, when the Single European Act came into effect, there was no explicit legal provision for Community action. In spite of that, more than 100 directives and other legal instruments were adopted in the 15 preceding years under article 100 of the Rome treaty and the catch-all article 235. The Single European Act spells out the need for the Community to achieve a high level of environmental protection, but its insistence that it must be combined with free trade has a somewhat hypocritical ring and should sound a warning that protecting the environment could become an excuse for restricting trade.

There was a case before the European Court of Justice on 20 September 1988. In this respect, the outcome of the Danish bottle case, as it is known, looks ominous. The court found that the Danish system of requiring returnable containers for beer was indeed a restraint on trade, but that it was justified on the ground of environmental protection. Even to the mildly cynical, that looks more like protection of the bottle industry against competition from aluminium cans than environmental concern. The powers of revision granted to the European Parliament where proposals are submitted under article 100a are likely to favour a radical environmental policy. That has been the record to date.

On finance, I asked my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health to give a few figures to sleep on tonight. I understand that about 1·2 billion ecu was earmarked for environmental projects in 1989-93. Of course, much of that will be channelled through the European regional development fund and the European investment bank. It would be interesting to know the cost of the environmental ranking of the current EEC engineering project in the Missolonghi marshes in Greece, where Byron died. That project is widely considered to be a scandalous devastation of one of the finest wetlands and wildlife sanctuaries in Europe. Numerous other programmes have been designed for the depressed coastal areas of the Community. Although those schemes are claimed to be intended to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants, that aim is perhaps subordinate to the political need to bribe the Governments of those countries to support federalist initiatives.

Nor should we forget the enforcement that we have had to date. In 1989, there was considerable annoyance in Britain at the Commission bringing us before the European Court of Justice for infringing EC standards of purity of drinking water. Britain was not alone in being arraigned. Currently, there is even more concern that although our drinking water is actually purer than bottled water sold in supermarkets, we are required to make it still purer, and that will double water charges to the householder over 10 years. That is largely due to EC regulations.

The worry, as with other directives, is that British officials—in this case, the National Rivers Authority—take compliance much more seriously than their continental counterparts in Europe do. It is difficult for those of us who travel in Italy, Portugal and elsewhere to think that those countries regard such directives in the same serious—not to say pedantic—way. It is absolutely absurd for Britain to be treated as the dirty man of Europe when the local river in Brussels, which takes away untreated sewage from the Commission's headquarters, flows on totally unchecked. Nor is the European Commission free from its own propaganda. It evidently considers it its duty to mobilise public opinion behind a forward policy for the environment. To that end, it organised and financed the European Year of the Environment and provided support for the European Environmental Bureau—a Brussels-based lobby group linking more than 100 organisations in member states.

The Commission also encourages citizens to make complaints. It is the Commission's practice to accept drafts from interested parties helping to frame laws. That is dangerous territory and verges on a conspiracy of bureaucrats, bootleggers and baptists to promote legislation to further their mutual interests and powers at the taxpayers' and consumers' expense.

Those of us who voted against the Ten o'clock motion need make no apology for keeping the Committee up until this time of night. Given the amount of amendments that we had to discuss, we should be being extremely generous were we not to insist on a further hour and a half's debate on the motion to adjourn the consideration of the Bill. We have to rely entirely on your protection, Dame Janet, to ensure the number of hours that the Committee sits. If such a number of amendments come before the Committee again, it should be taken for granted that we shall discuss any adjournment motion on the Bill in detail for 90 minutes, whatever the time of day or night.

Mr. Rowlands: One of the most mundane and wearying, but essential tasks that the Committee has to

conduct is to check what we are passing, and test what we are buying when we buy the Maastricht treaty, rather than the previous treaties. The best evidence to justify that statement has been presented, I am sorry to say, by some Conservative Members who have all but quarrelled among themselves over what they did or did not buy when they agreed to the Single European Act.

If we were honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that, with notable exceptions—I was not one of them—no one suspected the truly radical character of that Act. A large majority of hon. Members did not fully appreciate the coach and horses that would be driven through in the name of that Act, which was mainly presented—I think, by both the Front-Bench teams—as more of a technical measure to stimulate the market and clarify the position. I know that there were exceptions—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) was one of them—but I cannot remember heavy three-line Whips or cases being put as strongly as they have been in our present discussions.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I sat through discussions on both the Bills. As I said earlier, I must have committed a horrible crime to have been landed with dealing with this one. I led from the Front Bench on discussions on the Single European Act, and made it absolutely clear that we were debating a matter of considerable importance—a trail blazer. I made it clear that the decisions that we were taking in relation to the Single European Act would formidably change the Community's nature. I remember speaking in the guillotine debate with my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) when we both made precisely that point. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) should exonerate the Labour Front-Bench team.

Mr. Rowlands: Given my hon. Friend's observations, I exonerate our Front-Bench team. If the Act was trail-blazing, it was obvious that a number of hon. Members—particularly Conservative Members—did not know which trail was being blazed. They are now discovering the trail's destination.

Sir Teddy Taylor: While I accept what the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) says—he was present through the night when we discussed that Bill—and as it was, as he said, a matter of great importance, will he give us an explanation at some time as to why only 46 Labour Members turned up to vote against its Third Reading? I accept that that was more than the number of Conservative Members who voted against it, but I should have thought that as it was such an important Bill, more than 46 Labour Members would have turned up for the vote on the Friday morning after the all-night sitting.

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Gentleman reminds us of an important event. I was only drawing attention to my guilt —and that of others—and to my decision that on no account would I make the same mistake again. One of our tasks in this historic Committee stage is to make sure that we understand the text to which we are agreeing. I want to speak, therefore, not about the general principles of these articles but about the differences between them and the articles in the two previous treaties of the past 30 years.

Mr. Spearing: The Single European Act and the Maastricht Bill are amending treaties. This Bill is short but dense. Amendments tabled to it refer to a treaty that already amends another treaty. Quite properly, the amendments are grouped under subject headings, but they are not easy to follow, the more so since articles in this treaty often refer to articles in other treaties. All in all, it is impossible to know what we are voting for.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend describes the peculiar legislative labyrinth through which we must pick our way. Unlike proceedings on a normal Bill, with this one we cannot see how amendments will alter the text of the main or previous Acts. We must plough our way back through three treaties in the course of considering a three-clause Bill that seeks to incorporate a treaty lock, stock and barrel in our legislation. There is, therefore, a special case for scrutinising the Bill even more closely than we usually would.

For the purposes of this discussion I shall refer for comparisons to Cmd. 455, published in September 1988. it incorporates the treaty of Rome as well as the Single European Act amendments to it—they are helpfully provided in footnotes to each page. I should like to compare the treaty of Maastricht with the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act so as to identify what has been included, what omitted and what added.

Once we let these articles through they will automatically become part of our legislation. Comparing article 130r with the relevant article, as amended by article 25 of the Single European Act—as it, in turn, amended the original treaty—we find that at least the first three listed objectives are exactly the same as those in the Single European Act treaty. But let us immediately note that the fourth objective is an addition. The article refers to,

"promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems."

That is a perfectly desirable additional objective. I hope that the Minister who replies to the debate will provide answers to our questions. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), is carrying the major part of the burden for the Bill.

6 am

In the debate on the article dealing with industry, the Minister did not identify what was new and what was old in the article. We later discovered that the article contained a key element that was different. This time we shall ask specific questions and hope that we get specific answers. My first question is how the fourth objective was included in the Maastricht treaty. Secondly, what is its parentage and who was behind it? Thirdly, was it based on a collective view? It is obviously compatible with the mood of Rio.

Obviously, it is desirable to promote

"measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems."

But what suddenly caused that to enter the Maastricht treaty when it was not in the Single European Act that was passed five or six years ago?

Paragraph 2 of the new article 130r includes half of the relevant section of the Single European Act. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) spoke forcefully last week about the precautionary principle which is additional to the Single European Act. However, the principle of preventive action is not. Article 130r states:

"environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source and . . . the polluter should pay . . .".

My hon. Friend gave the impression that the notion that the polluter should pay was a new doctrine, but it was in the Single European Act. Paragraph 2 of article 130r contains a revised version of what was in the Single European Act. It states:

"Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of other Community policies."

What does that mean? The original text simply said:

"Environmental protection requirements shall be a component of the Community's other policies."

I am sure that, like me, many hon. Members wonder why words are changed. What is the significance of changing a rather simple sentence about environmental protection requirements being a component to,

"Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of other Community policies"?

Was it done for clarification, does it incorporate a supplementary thought or does the wording introduce a slightly different principle? I am not sufficiently qualified to decide, but I should like the Minister to explain the alteration. I am curious about that, but I am much more curious about the remaining part of paragraph 2, because the addition compared with the Single European Act is completely new. It is almost gobbledegook. It states:

"In this context, harmonization measures answering these requirements shall include, where appropriate, a safeguard clause allowing Member States to take provisional measures, for non-economic environmental reasons, subject to a Community inspection procedure."

That is new. May I have illustrations of the type of problem that Ministers or the distinguished Heads of State who put those words in the draft treaty envisaged? May we have an illustration of "non-economic environmental reasons" why member states should undertake measures? What was the driving force behind putting those words into a sombre draft treaty?

What about the tacked-on bit:

"subject to a Community inspection procedure"?

What will be the nature of such an inspection? I cannot find anything in the Single European Act about such inspection powers, let alone a procedure. Where is it laid down? Who describes it? What happens when the Commission turns up to conduct its inspection?

Those questions arise because the wording is completely new, and adds something to the functions and tasks of the Commission. Given that we have been told the treaty as something which will strip down the powers of the Commission through subsidiarity, I am surprised to find, running right through chunks of it, the Commission being given new responsibilities for investigating every nook and cranny, particularly on the economic and monetary side.

Even leaving aside those two paragraphs of article 130r, we have questions to which I do not know the answers. We should not approve the article until we get answers from responsible Ministers who understand the meaning of it, and can explain why the extra provisions had to be made in the treaty in 1992, which will be incorporated into our legislation if we agree to the Bill.

Those are my initial queries on article 130r. There are also amendments to article 130s. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) scrutinised the substance of the article, and I shall deal with the wording and presentation of it. There are huge differences between it and the original article 130s in the Single European Act. That simply says:

"The Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee, shall decide what action is to be taken by the Community.

The Council shall, under the conditions laid down in the preceding subparagraph, define those matters on which decisions are to be taken by a qualified majority."

The huge new article 130s sets out a whole new ball game. My right hon. Friend has already touched on some of its paragraphs. They pave the way for fiscal provisions and for

"measures concerning town and country planning, land use with the exception of waste management and measures of a general nature, and management of water resources".

Has paragraph 2 got a parentage?

Does any part of it come from any other parts of the previous two treaties? I find it difficult to discover from where the provisions come. Are they new provisions? If so, why do we need them? Why should there be introduced into the treaty additional provisions which were deemed not to be necessary four or five years ago? I am not opposing them; I am not suggesting that they are wrong. I merely want to know why we are being asked to adopt them and to identify the true nature and import of the proposed changes that we are being asked to endorse.

The Minister of State is now in his place on the Government Front Bench, but he missed my initial request. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Health took a note of it to pass to the right hon. Gentleman. We need a line-by-line explanation, which we were not given during our consideration of the industry and transport articles. The Minister of State failed to give us a full explanation of why certain articles have been added to and changed since they appeared in the previous two treaties.

Mr. Spearing: Does my hon. Friend agree that the comparative exercise to which he is drawing our attention, which involves articles 130r and 130s, should have been put before us in a White Paper? When we consider domestic Bills in Committee, notes on clauses tell us why a section in earlier legislation is being amended or changed and what the effect of the amendments or changes will be. In other words, they would have provided us with a full commentary, as it were, and set out the comparisons to which my hon. Friend is drawing our attention. I agree that it is right that my hon. Friend should ask the Minister to justify the Government's position, but surely the explanation should have been given to the nation six months ago.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend has introduced an important consideration. Over the years, when considering Bills in Committee, I have found that the quality of notes on clauses varies. Sometimes they are almost repetitions of the clauses themselves. They are of variable quality and value. Their quality varies from Department to Department and from Minister to Minister, but in some instances I have found the notes to be of value. My hon. Friend has made a suggestion which I think we should take up with the Minister, even at this late stage. The production of such assistance might curtail much of the textual analysis to which I have been driven. That might well happen if we have notes on articles that explain why some provisions differ from those that are set out in the Single European Act.

It is far better, however, for the explanation to be in *Hansard* where it belongs, so that it is the property of

everyone. It would promote discussion, however, and possibly expedite it, if the Minister of State took on board the constructive suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). When we draw stumps on this group of amendments, or on later ones the right hon. Gentleman might then endeavour to produce a note on each article to identify the character and nature of the changes that are being made. A modest amount of detail would save the laborious textual analysis that I have had to undertake.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman has been kind enough to suggest that if that information were available it would be quite likely to curtail debate. Perhaps he will discuss the matter with his right hon. and hon. Friends and then take it up with the usual channels. It is not a matter for me, but I dare say that the usual channels would be extremely interested if he were able to deliver a curtailment of debate of the sort that he is talking about.

Mr. Rowlands: I can only speak for myself. I would not have undertaken the exercise in which I have been engaged for some minutes if I had had a note on the article that gave me the information for which I am asking the Minister. Instead, I have to ask the Minister to explain the meaning of and the background to the changes before we can reach a judgment.

6.15 am

Sir Teddy Taylor: As my right hon. Friend the Minister has made a sensible and useful offer, should those of us who have been asking questions—not holding up the Committee—ask him to start with the words in article 130s:

"provisions primarily of a fiscal nature"?

Does the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) agree that that is a good starting point to say to the Minister, "Tell us what that means"? Does it mean a tax on the environment? Should we tell him that we are interested in deals to help to speed up the Bill's passage? In return, he could tell us what those six words actually mean. What is the scope and what is involved? If he can answer that, it will be a great start.

Mr. Rowlands: It would be a good start, but I have a further important request relating to paragraph 2 of article 130s. I am alarmed by the statement:

"measures significantly affecting a Member State's choice between different energy sources and the general structure of its energy supply."

Where did that proposal come from; what is behind it? Is it included in either of the two previous treaties? I cannot find those words in them. What do they really mean? We must remember that they are in the context of a good environment.

Does the proposal mean that the EC is trying to restrict the choices of member states in which energy policies they pursue? Is it suggesting that, for example, there is dirty brown coal in some parts of the Community that should not be mined and used to create power? Has it any nuclear connotation? Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who is so knowledgeable in these matters, will enlighten me.

Mr. Chris Smith: I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises that the paragraph ensures that all the choices about the balance between coal, nuclear and other forms of energy production will remain matters for unanimous voting in the Council of Ministers, rather than simply majority voting. Therefore, an individual member state can preserve its individual decisions in all those matters.

Mr. Rowlands: I had not come to the question of how the choices would be ultimately decided. We have been asked to endorse a power over the way that we exercise our choice. I remind my hon. Friend of the operative words of the paragraph:

"acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission".

Therefore, once again, the Commission is to initiate the member state's choice—not some collective European choice—between different energy sources. It is first to be reported on and recommended by the Commission.

I thought and believed that, if nothing else, until today we had managed to decide ourselves whether we wanted to build coal-fired or nuclear power stations, whether we wanted to continue with the new range of gas licences or whether we wanted to embark on exciting new energy conservation measures and combined heat and power schemes. If I am wrong, perhaps someone will correct me, but I had thought that those had been very much at the heart of the energy argument.

When I served as a Front-Bench energy spokesman for six years, we debated the relative merits of our respective energy resources, but that was never deemed to be anything but a matter of democratic choice. It was not for others to tell us what we should do. Occasionally, Energy Commissioners would produce the odd discussion paper, but no one believed that the choice was anything but our own.

Given the crucial decisions that the Government and Parliament will have to make in the next few weeks and months, which could have a profound effect on jobs in many of our communities and those communities' futures, we are entitled to ask whether this is a new power to be vested in the Council, albeit by unanimous decision, so that it will determine the respective balances of energy requirements and needs within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend is making an extremely good speech, but it will be helped by a dialogue. Surely the answer to his last question is yes. Both Parliament and the public have failed to grasp that a veto and unanimity do not necessary afford the protection that people imagine. Conservative Members and the Government may agree to the balance of energy that they apparently now favour at a meeting of the Council of Ministers subsequent to the passing of the treaty, but if a subsequent Government took a different view—or even if the present Government were converted by experience or persuasion—they could not change that balance back again. Although unanimity is projected as a protection, it only works once, and then it becomes a ratchet.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend is extremely knowledgeable in such matters, and rightly issued a warning. I am deeply concerned about the extent to which it is a new responsibility. I cannot find the same words in the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act. If the Minister tells me that they are not new but are provisions common to the treaty of Rome and to the Single European Act, I shall reconsider.

Given my understanding of the potential import of that wording, and coming as I do from communities that have been deeply involved in the debate, dilemmas and choices of energy supply, I do not believe that we can let those

[Mr. Rowlands]

words, and the additional requirements in article 130s, go through on the nod if they introduce a new aspect to the balance between the environment and energy supply that is not to be found in the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act.

The Minister may say, "You've gone overboard with this argument. This is a common form of wording that we have lived with for the past 30 years." If he does, at least I will be satisfied. However, I will not be satisfied without a proper explanation, and I am not prepared to vote for and support article 130s, if, as I fear, it is a new bridgehead that will infringe or damage in any shape or form the democratic choice and decisions of the Government of the United Kingdom and of other member states in deciding the balance of their energy supplies and their relationship to the environment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Having listened to and enjoyed this debate for more than 14 hours, I am glad to have this opportunity, for the first time, to participate briefly. I do not intend to speak for any length of time. There are rumours going around the Tea Room and other places that it is the fault of my hon. Friends and myself that right hon. and hon. Members are having to stay up all night. The contrary is true. We voted in favour of bringing the debate to a close at a reasonable time, at 10 o'clock—some six and a half hours ago. It is unacceptable that such important debates should be taking place at this late hour. There has been no filibustering, and there have been no over-lengthy speeches on either side of the Committee. I have been here throughout the debate. I do not know why the Government did not report progress earlier, so that we could hold our debate at an appropriate time and allow others to join in.

I should also have liked to vote on amendment No. 4. Imagine my shock when I found that the Opposition not only did not plan to vote, but had been speaking against their own amendment! I should not have been shocked, of course; they did exactly the same on amendments Nos 1 and 2. My shock turned to horror, however, when I observed that Labour Members were to lead debate on the next 15 groups of amendments. In view of the nature of some of those amendments, I suspect that the same thing will happen. It is all a bit of a farce: what is the Labour party up to?

Mr. Chris Smith: What the Labour party is up to is ensuring that we can have good-quality, considered debate on essential parts of the Maastricht treaty. Because of the way in which the procedures of the House operate, the only way in which we can debate parts of the treaty that we support is by tabling amendments that seek to delete them. This is purely a device to ensure that we can debate, for example, important environmental considerations which Labour strongly supports. It is the only way of securing a public airing of such matters where it ought to take place—here in the House of Commons.

Mr. Spicer: I find Labour's whole strategy very mysterious, not only in regard to amendments but in regard to voting. Labour seems to be on a three-line whip, while managing to slip people mysteriously into the night when the going gets rough.

I can understand the position of other parties. For instance, the Liberals' support for a federal Europe is entirely understandable, although I do not agree with it. The position of Conservative Front Benchers saddens me, but I understand it. However, I cannot understand the chicanery that is going on in the Labour party.

I should have liked to vote on the amendment, because I think that removing article 129 is a good idea. I am also opposed to the shift in environmental provisions. As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) pointed out, those provisions are fairly obscure; the hon. Gentleman asked a number of worthwhile questions, which I hope will be answered fully.

For many years, the Community has been experiencing a shift of emphasis. I accept that the amendments do not relate to a black and white change: we are not discussing issues such as, for instance, the single currency, which represents a generic jump forward. I remember going to the Council of Ministers as an Energy Minister. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) made an enlightening speech about his experience as a Minister.

When I was the Minister for Aviation and also when I was the Under-Secretary of State for Energy there were four points on the agenda. The first was the British position: to try to develop a freer trading common market. That was shot down as anti-communautaire. The second point was, typically, either Commission inspired or Franco-German inspired. It related usually to directives concerned with the environment or safety regulations. In the case of energy, it related particularly to environmental matters. That was considered to be pro-communautaire and was readily accepted.

The third point tended to be the press release in which we pointed out that we were shifting the emphasis away from the market-oriented matters towards directives—in this case towards environmental matters—as against trying to obtain a freer flow of energy between countries. The fourth point concerned the bribes or handouts to the Portuguese, the Greeks, the Irish and so on who had supported the Franco-German position. That was the way in which Council of Ministers meetings tended to function.

One could argue about how pure the British position was, and about the genesis of the move towards political union, but for many years the British position was that the trading possibilities within the European Community should be emphasised. For some time, however, others have been shifting the emphasis away from trade, the freer movement of goods and competition, towards an emphasis that has little to do with trade. I could not agree more that co-operation on environmental matters between countries makes sense. I agree wholeheartedly with what my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) said—that we are considering boundaries wider than those of the European Community. The point was made that the former eastern bloc poses a particular environmental problem.

6.30 am

Mr. Jessel: Does my hon. Friend agree that that applies also to the control of drug trafficking, an extremely serious matter which is referred to in article 129 of the treaty? How can we control drug trafficking if we confine it to the countries of the European union? It is nonsense that the European union should be concerned with the prevention of drug trafficking. A much wider international organisation is required to deal with that problem.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend has made two extremely good points. I agree with him completely. It is germane to argue that there should be a new, centralised competence for the environment and for drug trafficking, on the basis that it is ridiculous to exclude boundaries beyond the competence of the European Community, especially in the case of the environment when it comes to the former eastern European countries.

Mr. Chris Smith: I must point out that article 130r specifically does not exclude the interests and needs of other countries. If the hon. Gentleman looks at paragraph 4 he will see that it says:

"Within their respective spheres of competence, the Community and the Member States shall co-operate with third countries".

The provisions of the treaty, as drafted, clearly permit and encourage the Community and its constituent member states to provide the sort of assistance to eastern Europe that the hon. Gentleman has in mind.

Mr. Spicer: That is perfectly true, but one must differentiate, as the hon. Gentleman did, between competence and co-operation. Anybody can agree about co-operation. Most members of the Committee would accept a statement of co-operation, but there is all the difference in the world between increased competence and co-operation. That distinction must be drawn to hon. Members' attention. My concern is that the treaty proposes a further shift of emphasis from market methods to matters that have little to do with the market.

In an intervention at the beginning of the debate, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State accepted that shift of emphasis. He then said that it was balanced by the issue of subsidiarity. That was the point which I thought he was making.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Fortunately, I have my speaking note here. I said not that it was a minor shift but that it represented a significant strengthening of the Community's environmental policies. I did not mention subsidiarity, although article 3b applies across the treaty. I do not want my hon. Friend to be in any doubt about that. It represents a significant strengthening of the Community's environmental policies.

Mr. Spicer: That is fine. At least my right hon. Friend is not making the point that he made in previous debates, when he said that there was no change. On this group of amendments, he is saying that there is significant change. That gives me further cause for concern. His notes may be better than my memory, but I was fairly certain, although *Hansard* will confirm tomorrow, that he went on to say that the shift was countervailed by questions of subsidiarity. If he did not say it, I have heard others argue that we can afford this shift to centralisation of competence on environmental, health and other matters because it is counteracted by subsidiarity.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Was not it unfortunate that the Minister referred to the "strengthening" of environmental powers? Should not he have said the "extension" of environmental powers? Will he be a little more careful with his language? If we are to make further rapid progress, Ministers must say things as they are. We are talking about not the strengthening but the extension of powers, and there is a big difference.

Mr. Spicer: That is a good point, to which my right hon. Friend will reply if he feels it appropriate to do so.

I wish to say two further things about subsidiarity. First, if the Government feel that they developed a new approach to refining subsidiarity at Edinburgh, should not they include the new concepts and refinements in the terms of the treaty, because the article that currently refers to subsidiarity is acknowledged to be inadequate in legal and other terms? Do they not have a duty, if they feel that they made progress on subsidiarity, to include this matter in the terms of the treaty?

Secondly, and more fundamentally in the context of environmental issues, where subsidiarity has been used as a counterpoise to the new trend toward greater centralisation, the Government have a duty to respond more than they have, and to argue carefully why subsidiarity does not mean greater centralisation. Someone will have to explain how or why one view is taken about, for example, the Winchester bypass and another is taken about the EC's involvement in Oxleas wood. It seems that subsidiarity applies differently even within the competence of environmental issues.

The question immediately arises, "Who is to determine how subsidiarity is to be applied?" The answer can be found only in the treaty, and the only people to determine such matters are the institutions of the European Community—the court and the Commission. In that case, subsidiarity compounds the trends towards greater centralisation on environmental issues instead of leading to a devolution of power of a balancing of those trends, and the Government should come clean about it.

I have not heard anything that counteracts my view. Indeed, the Minister confirmed my worst fears of a shift towards centralisation on matters on which, until a few years ago, it was British policy to say that we were not party to the EC's overall objectives. We have moved so far and so fast, and the Minister has confirmed that the treaty merely exacerbates the process. For that reason, I should have liked the Labour party to press its amendments, because it is on the right track. It is extraordinary that the Labour party has tabled such good amendments, against which it then argues.

Mr. George Robertson: It might save time later and save the hon. Gentleman making the same speech again, if I say that there is no possibility of the Labour party pressing the amendments, because they would remove from the treaty the very things that it campaigned hardest to get in, to which the Government were most resistant before copping out when they got to Maastricht. The hon. Gentleman should not be so disingenuous as to pretend that the amendments are anything other than pegs on which to hang debates; he is making careful use of them. We are certainly not going to press amendments which would remove from the treaty what we most sincerely want to keep in it.

Mr. Spicer: That sounds as if the Labour party was rather lazy in drafting its amendments: it was not really interested in trying to improve the treaty but merely sought to table large groups of probing amendments. It is a very easy trick, and I have used it myself. One simply copies a chunk of the Bill and tables an amendment, which can be debated. It is a sloppy way of trying to initiate a debate. I might repeat my speech—it depends on how the

[Mr. Spicer]

Labour party performs in the following 20 or so debates resulting from the strange amendments against which they will now argue. I have said enough, and made my point.

Mr. Garel-Jones: May I say en passant—as they might say in the Community—that I am surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) should be so shocked by the device of the probing amendment. In my brief experience of Committee work, it is a standard practice. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) for having made it clear that these are probing amendments which have given us the opportunity for a debate.

I assume both from the speech by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and from the fact that no hon. Members have dwelt for long on it that the health chapter meets with the acquiescence of the Committee.

In essence, the amendments would dilute the very positive gains that the treaty represents for the environment. Those gains were commended by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and I think that they would be commended by most right hon. and hon. Members. The highest possible level of environmental protection is the very least that our citizens expect. That is what the Maastricht treaty will provide when it is ratified. We would not wish—I am delighted that this is the position of the Opposition, including the Liberal Democrats—to see the important principles established in the treaty removed or compromised.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Minister give way?

6.45 am

Mr. Garel-Jones: Not for the moment.

Maastricht maintains the existing objectives of Community environmental policy, and refers to

"—preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment;

—protecting human health;

—prudent and rational utilization of natural resources".

It adds a new objective:

"promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems."

That recognises the significant contribution that the Community now makes to global environmental issues, such as last summer's conference in Rio.

Community environmental policy hitherto has been based on the principle that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay. Maastricht builds on those principles, providing for

"sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment",

and ensuring that the principle of a high level of protection of the environment is extended from internal market measures to environmental policy generally.

Maastricht has also added—the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury welcomed this—the precautionary principle. That wise step will ensure that measures may be taken to avert a potential environmental threat, although there may be some uncertainty concerning the nature of the threat or its effects. The inclusion of the principle means that there has been a shift of emphasis from whether action should be taken to considerations of which measure should be taken and when.

A particular concern during the British presidency was to promote the idea of the integration of environmental concerns into other areas of Community policy. Maastricht reinforces the existing commitment under the Single European Act so that environmental protection requirements will no longer simply be a component of other Community policies, but must now be integrated into the definition and implementation of other Community policies. That may, from time to time involve difficult decisions in, for example, balancing economic needs with environmental ones.

The treaty represents a major step forward. We are especially keen to see the principle put into practice. We firmly believe that environmental policies must be built into other policies, such as agriculture and transport, if we are to tackle the world's environmental problems effectively. We welcome the extension of qualified majority voting to the majority of items to be adopted under article 130s, as that will allow the European Parliament a greater voice.

Unanimous voting by the Council is, however, retained for fiscal measures, for certain land use, planning and water management issues, and for matters affecting a member state's choice between different energy sources and the general structure of its energy supply. That is as it should be. These issues are predominantly national concerns, so it is appropriate that the unanimous voting should be retained.

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 209, Noes 12.

Division No. 114] **[6.48 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Cormack, Patrick
Alexander, Richard	Couchman, James
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by're)*
Alton, David	Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Amess, David	Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Ancram, Michael	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Day, Stephen
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Deva, Nirj Joseph
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Devlin, Tim
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Dickens, Geoffrey
Baldry, Tony	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*	Dover, Den
Bates, Michael	Duncan, Alan
Batiste, Spencer	Dunn, Bob
Beresford, Sir Paul	Durant, Sir Anthony
Booth, Hartley	Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bowden, Andrew	Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Bowis, John	Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Brandreth, Gyles	Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Brazier, Julian	Evennett, David
Bright, Graham	Faber, David
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Fabricant, Michael
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Browning, Mrs. Angela	Forman, Nigel
Burt, Alistair	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Butler, Peter	Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Carrington, Matthew	Freeman, Roger
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	French, Douglas
Chaplin, Mrs Judith	Gale, Roger
Clappison, James	Gallie, Phil
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*	Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Garnier, Edward
Coe, Sebastian	Gillan, Cheryl
Congdon, David	Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*	Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles

Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nigel Spearing and
Mr. Ted Rowlands.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment negatived.

Committee report progress; to sit again this day.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

Ordered,

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 25th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That in the course of its consideration of the Matter of Local Government Reform in Scotland, the Scottish Grand Committee may meet in Edinburgh on Monday 1st February at half-past Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

CONSOLIDATION &c., BILLS (JOINT COMMITTEE)

Ordered,

That Mr. Peter Ainsworth, Mr. Kevin Hughes, Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. David Lidington, Mr. Peter Luff, Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, Estelle Morris, Mr. Richard Tracey and Mr. John Whittingdale be members of the Joint Committee on Consolidation &c., Bills.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Water Incidents (Lowermoor)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

7.2 am

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I do not think that I have occupied my seat in the Chamber for quite so long as you during the night, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I am delighted to reach this stage, as I am sure you are.

In raising the sad saga of the Lowermoor water treatment works, my purpose is threefold. First, I seek an assurance from the Government—I am delighted to see that the Minister for the Environment and Countryside has arrived, having been summoned by his bleeper—that they will meet their residual responsibility for the actions of what was then a public organisation, the South West water authority. Secondly, I wish to impress on the privatised water company the folly of procrastination when meeting realistic compension claims. Thirdly, I wish to urge immediate attention to a number of lessons of national significance to be learnt from the incident.

I wish to make it clear to the House and anyone who may read our proceedings that the water in north Cornwall is now the best-monitored drinking water in the United Kingdom. Anyone who might have any doubts on that score can rest assured that it is a wonderful place for a holiday and in no way a health risk.

It is a long time since the incident occurred so I hope that I shall be forgiven for briefly reminding the Minister and the House of what happened. On Wednesday 6 July 1988 at about 4.30 pm, 20 tonnes of aluminium sulphate were mistakenly discharged into the wrong tank at the Lowermoor treatment works in north Cornwall by a relief driver. Within a matter of hours, 20,000 people, from Crackington in the north to the Camel estuary further west, were receiving poisoned drinking water.

However, the water company responded with confusion and complacency, partly because of a previous pump failure and partly because of obsessive concern to minimise bad publicity. Hon. Members will recall that this took place during the run-up to privatisation.

I quote an extract from the Lawrence report, commissioned by the authority itself:

"On Friday 8 July it was finally discovered that the incident was the result of the misdelivery of aluminium sulphate. Some of the staff were clearer about the implications but, on the evidence given to me by the public, information given out by different individuals in the Fowey District, in Exeter, and through the media continued to be confusing and contradictory".

Referring to the lack of information, he continues:

"I have observed two reasons why this was not done. No manager took charge in the way implied and there seems to be a culture in which the public are told as little as possible and expected to trust the authority to look after their interests."

These criticisms applied not just to the first two days after the incident but to the next two months. Misleading advice on the extent of the problem and its likely health effects, and on sensible precautions, was given out. During this period residents at the extremities of the network were never even told that they could be affected by the incident or that their supply was part of the system fed by Lowermoor.

Not surprisingly, when those residents began to experience the same inexplicable symptoms, they could not understand what had happened. The symptoms were often exacerbated by the flushing of the mains which continued for many weeks, dislodging both chemicals and metals.

The Lawrence report went on:

"A general statement about the problem having been aluminium sulphate was published by the Authority on 22 July. Amongst the contradictory advice that was given was the opinion that the water was safe. At the time data on toxicity had not been checked. Advice should have been given on what was known on the basis of the monitoring that was by then being done. But it is obvious that for a long time there would be contaminated water in the byways of the system and in such places as the tanks of holiday homes. Precautions should always have been advised."

They were not. It was only on 5 November 1991, three years later, that the then Minister at the Department of Health sent a letter to all households in the whole area of the Lowermoor water distribution system, in which, speaking of the Clayton report, he said:

"The report concludes: 'We do not expect lasting physical harm from the toxicity of the contaminated water itself . . . We still have no doubt that the accident itself and subsequent events have led to real mental and physical suffering in the community."

In my contention the original incident was a terrible failure, but the failure to explain, inform and warn was worse. The confusion, contradictions and cover-up were despicable and deplorable.

We are approaching the fifth anniversary of this regrettable incident and still South West Water has not settled the majority of major claims. It has settled a large number of minor claims with what many regard as derisory sums, but the big claims are still outstanding. The company's claims to have achieved great benefits for the community are belied by the evidence from many of my constituents. Yesterday I received a letter from a couple to whom, for obvious reasons, I shall refer as Mr. and Mrs. M:

"The truth is that they have been settled solely for the reason that the large numbers of persons involved did not have the funds to carry on the very just fight, were not eligible for legal aid by only a slight margin or were so tired, frustrated and worried by the amount of legal bumpf that was being presented to them, a lot of which they were unable to understand, that they decided to take the pittance they were offered and continue to suffer."

From meeting them, I know that that was all too often the experience of those who suffered in the incident. That is confirmed by one of the solicitors who has been acting on behalf of many of the claimants. In the past few days he has written:

"One of the interesting features about the cases is the enormous number of people suffering from anxiety and stress. I have arranged for approximately two thirds of my clients to be examined for anxiety and stress and every report confirms that they are suffering from such symptoms. The general conclusion of the reports is that people have suffered from a threatening event for which no adequate explanation was given at the time nor has any adequate explanation been given since . . . The anxiety and stress of the claimants is being compounded by the litigation itself which is taking a considerable length of time. This is particularly because of what I see as the obstructive attitude of the solicitors acting for South West Water and also because the case itself is unique which means that a considerable amount of additional work needs to be undertaken before the cases can be brought before the court."

The same solicitor demonstrates all too clearly the pettifogging attitude of the water company when he writes:

"in the light of the comments by South West Water that they are anxious to settle cases, it does seem rather odd that their solicitors should appear to be taking the opposite point of

view. As an example, only last week, South West Water's solicitors wrote to say that they were not prepared to accept medical reports from GPs in support of clients' claims and were insisting that there had to be reports from consultants. Obviously while this is not a problem so far as those people who are legally aided are concerned, it does present a problem for people who are not legally aided because then they have to fund the costs of further medical reports."

Another firm of solicitors acting on behalf of 170 plaintiffs—there are upwards of 200 in all—writes:

"Many of the Plaintiffs suffered short term acute symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea, mouth and skin ulcers and nausea. In addition, many of them have developed long term problems such as aching in their joints, poor concentration and lack of judgment. Understandably, many of the Plaintiffs have felt extreme anxiety about the pollution incident itself and their subsequent poor health."

The letter explains the legal process that has taken place and states:

"the Defendants formally admitted that they were liable in damages but only for short term acute symptoms proven to be caused by exposure to the water and in respect of which they accepted damages should be payable. However, the Defendants disputed, and continue to dispute, that the pollution incident could have given rise to any longer term health problems and insist that the Plaintiffs establish the link between the contamination and the alleged long term symptoms."

All that is greatly at variance with repeated assurances in the press and elsewhere by the directors of the company that they are seeking an early settlement of all liabilities. On 16 November 1992, no less a person than the Master of the Rolls said in the Court of Appeal:

"The defendants having admitted liability, the parties wish to settle but cannot do so while they continue to differ on the appropriate measure of damage. It is desirable that they should be guided on the appropriate measure to facilitate the negotiation of early settlements . . . Both cost and delay are better avoided."

I say, "Hear, hear" to that.

I shall give a tiny sample from the shoal of letters, notes and interviews that I have had. Mr. A, a salesman, who used to drive 50,000 miles a year on business, found that because of memory loss he simply could not do that. He found himself driving on the wrong side of the road, he could not remember whether he had stopped at traffic lights, he cannot remember where he is and he sometimes forgot to charge his customers.

Ms C was off work for 18 months and, after many hospital tests, including two bone biopsies, has had so much time off work that her employment is now under review.

Perhaps the most significant example is Mr. G whose personality has completely changed. His business has declined, he has lost his motivation, and the business is now in serious trouble. His grandchildren have gone from calling him Gramps to calling him Grumps. I could refer to others, but I wish to make progress and allow the Minister as much time as possible.

The interesting point about so many of the examples is that the sufferers are able to quantify the effect of health deterioration in terms of employment, their businesses or direct financial consequences. However, the company still says that it is not prepared to entertain what it calls "pure economic loss." The legal adviser says that this is not recoverable as a matter of law.

There are a number of questions. First and foremost, the Government having refused a public inquiry, despite requests from all parties and a huge number of residents, when they could have dissolved uncertainty and suspicion once and for all, we must ask what they are doing now to ensure that their citizens are receiving redress. There does not seem to be a citizens charter for those who are poisoned by the public water supply.

Secondly, given the sorry saga of lack of information, and the fact that the Departments of the Environment and of Health never explained what had happened, what steps have been taken to prevent a repetition?

Thirdly, the drinking water inspectorate, which, in the Conan Doyle phrase, was the dog that did not bark in the night, is shown up by the incident to be a toothless watchdog. The fish in the river are better protected by the National Rivers Authority than we poor human consumers.

Fourthly, what about compensation claims? The whole legal process—the gladiatorial contest; the adversarial system—is inadequate in such circumstances. Wealthy institutions can grind down the individual citizen over years of expensive litigation. There must be a better way. Would not payment into court of an agreed minimum amount at the outset be more acceptable? Perhaps something along the lines of the industrial tribunal would be a better forum for such discussions. Does the Minister believe that this could ever have happened while the water industry was still publicly accountable, and could it happen again now? Now that it is in private hands, such an incident would be even worse. It is alarming that there is even less control of the industry than there was when the accident happened.

Those of us who lived through the incident and now see the way in which the company is wriggling believes that its lawyers, insurers and directors are as slippery as eels. It is time that the Government pinned them down.

7.17 am

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): The incident that occurred at the Lowermoor water treatment works on 6 July 1988 has given rise to a great deal of public concern, and attracted considerable media attention. It continues to do so four and a half years after it took place. It is noticeable that as well as the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) is here.

Initially, concern centred on how the mistake could have been allowed to happen, and the speed and accuracy with which information was communicated to the public. I think that all agreed—and indeed the then South West water authority accepted—that the incident should not have occurred. However when it did, it would have been sensible to provide the best information to the public as quickly as possible. Following any such incident, consumers must know that the problem is being rectified and that their interests and safety are considered paramount. Such information will help to restore that vital ingredient—confidence—in the quality of their water supply. This was one of the lessons of Lowermoor, to which I will return.

I start by saying a few words about responsibilities, and how they have changed considerably following Lowermoor and privatisation. Before privatisation and the Water Act 1989, the regional water authorities in England and Wales were the main bodies responsible for water supply. Local authorities ascertained the sufficiency and wholesomeness of that water, but it was not a criminal

[Mr. David Maclean]

offence to supply water unfit for consumption and any dispute about the insufficiency or unwholesomeness of supplies was determined by the Secretary of State.

The Lowermoor incident occurred in 1988, but the case against the South West water authority did not come to court until December 1990, after privatisation. Thus it was the residuary water authority which was charged with the common law offence of causing nuisance by supplying, without warning, water liable to endanger public health or comfort, and also for causing poisonous matter to enter the River Camel. The prosecution was undertaken by the Director of Public Prosecutions after investigation by the Devon and Cornwall constabulary. The residuary water authority was found guilty of causing nuisance, but not guilty of causing poisonous matters to enter controlled waters. The judge made it clear that the authority was not answerable for the act of putting aluminium sulphate into the wrong tank.

Responsibilities are different today. There is a parallel in that the Water Act 1989 put a duty on the Secretary of State to take enforcement action against a water company that fails to supply wholesome water. And local authorities are still required to keep themselves informed about the supply situation in their area and liaise with the water company if they suspect something is wrong. But for the first time, the 1989 Act made it a criminal offence to supply water that is unfit for humans to drink. Regulations made under the Act set strict standards for drinking water quality and a new and active drinking water inspectorate has been created. That dog did not bark, as it was not even conceived in 1988.

The inspectorate has since been created. It ensures that companies are complying with regulatory requirements and checks that they have proper procedures in place for dealing with all types of incident or emergency.

If a water contamination incident should occur now, the enforcement bodies that would undertake any prosecution would be either the drinking water inspectorate, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, or the National Rivers Authority. But I consider that, following the steps that the water companies and Government have taken, which I shall be describing, an incident like the one in 1988 at Lowermoor is most unlikely to recur.

If, nevertheless, a similar type of incident were to occur now, the water company concerned would be under an obligation to inform the Secretary of State as soon as possible, and in writing within 72 hours, of any significant drinking water health risks or matters of national importance or consumer concern. When the Secretary of State is notified of an incident, the company is required to include details of the event and its cause, an assessment of the effect, the action taken, the persons notified and any press notice. Within one month a full report must be provided, giving details of the results of water sampling and an assessment of action already taken or proposed. The company must provide copies of reports and advice in support, for example from its medical advisers.

Acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, the drinking water inspectorate would consider whether a breach of the water quality regulations had occurred and in particular whether it appeared that water unfit for human consumption had been supplied. The inspectorate would take into account the quality of the water supplied, whether any illness resulted and whether the company had acted with due diligence and taken all reasonable steps to prevent the supply of unfit water. It would then advise the Secretary of State whether to prosecute the company.

The drinking water inspectorate may also decide to disseminate information about the lessons learnt, so that all water companies—not only those directly concerned—can make the changes that seem to be necessary in the light of experience.

Of course, the companies have duties and responsibilities immediately an incident happens. These have been set out clearly in the regulations and in guidance published by my Department and the Welsh Office. Water companies must take all reasonable steps to restore the supply of wholesome water, and they must advise customers quickly and appropriately if water is unsuitable for consumption, or whether it should be boiled if that would make it safe, or whatever. If necessary, action must be taken to supply potable water by tanker or other means, paying particular attention to the needs of special groups such as kidney dialysis patients and bottle-fed babies.

I started by mentioning that one effect of the Lowermoor incident was to highlight the importance of good communications between those responsible for supply and the local and district health authorities. So now, under our current regulations, companies must notify local authorities and district health authorities as soon as possible of any event that gives rise, or is likely to give rise, to a significant health risk to the community in those authorities' areas. That is an important provision which is now enforceable by the Secretary of State.

Various inquiries and investigations have taken place since the Lowermoor incident. They are well known, so I shall refer to them only briefly. First, the South West water authority commissioned Dr. John Lawrence, director of ICI's Brixham laboratory and non-executive director of the water authority, to investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident. Dr. Lawrence identified a number of management and systems failures and his criticisms were accepted by the water authority. His report was published a month after the incident in August 1988.

In the light of the Lawrence report, the then Secretary of State asked all water utilities to carry out a thorough review of their management and operating procedures at water treatment works, especially unmanned installations. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), then Minister of State, reported to the House in April 1989 that a number of improvements had been made to procedures in the water industry following the Lowermoor incident. Those improvements covered such matters as waterworks site security, procedures for receiving chemicals at works, remote monitoring of the final treated water, internal reporting arrangements for incidents, and emergency procedures including liaison with all those concerned with public health issues.

Following continuing public concern, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health established the Lowermoor incident heath advisory committee, headed by Dame Barbara Clayton, to inquire into the public health implications of the incident and to advise the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly district health authority. That group was staffed by acknowledged and independent experts in the areas of pathology, the health effects of aluminium, epidemiology and water quality.

The group has produced two reports. In July 1989, it found that it was not possible to attribute the very real health complaints to the toxic effect of the incident, except as a consequence of people's anxiety. It concluded that much of that anxiety was attributable to the press prominence given to alarmist statements for which there was no scientific evidence.

The group made a number of recommendations regarding management and communications to the public in the event of any such incidents. Those have been taken on board by the companies as standard procedures and, where appropriate, incorporated into regulations.

A further important recommendation was to set up an expert organisation to provide directors of public health with authoritative medical and toxicological advice. As a result, the formation of the independent health advisory group on chemical contamination incidents, under the chairmanship of Professor Sir Eric Stroud, was announced in October 1990.

The second report of the reconvened Clayton group in November 1991 followed up on complaints by residents of the Lowermoor area that their health had suffered as a result of the incident. The group concluded:

"The research reported to us does not provide convincing evidence that harmful accumulation of aluminium has occurred, nor that there is a greater prevalence of ill-health due to toxic effects of the water in the exposed population". It continued:

"We still have no doubt that the accident itself and subsequent events have led to real mental and physical suffering in the community. We emphasise that we do not believe that people in the Lowermoor area are imagining symptoms. The physical problems associated with all the worry and concern and the psychological harm could last for a long time for some people. Such a situation is well recognised following major accidents".

As a result of that concern, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly district health authority will continue to monitor the general health of people in the area.

The Government welcomed the second report of the Lowermoor incident health advisory group and everyone with an interest in the consequences of the incident has reason to be grateful to Professor Dame Barbara Clayton and the members of the group for producing such a thorough and authoritative report.

As a result of the Lowermoor incident, civil claims have been made by some 700 people. The Water Act 1989 made the privatised water companies responsible for any residual civil liabilities of the old regional water authorities. In consequence, those claims are against South West Water. I was pleased to learn that the majority of them have been settled, but about 170 are left outstanding.

In respect of the outstanding claims, I understand that South West Water has made payments into court calculated on the basis of short-term symptoms that have been substantiated. However, there are those who claim damages for not only short-term symptoms but long-term symptoms such as loss of memory and for aggravated and exemplary damages. They are pursuing their claims together, through their solicitors, as a class action. I feel sure that the hon. Member shares South West Water's concern that those outstanding claims should be resolved as soon as possible—although he has been sceptical about its claims in that regard. However, I stress that those matters are for the parties and the courts to decide. A legal case is in progress, and neither the Government nor I have any locus in those matters.

In summary and conclusion, the investigations, reviews and reports that I described amply demonstrate that both the South West water authority and the Government treated the incident very seriously indeed. My Department, including the drinking water inspectorate, and the Department of Health are satisfied that appropriate action has been taken in the light of the independent reports of experts to ensure that the lessons of Lowermoor have been learnt. Moreover, legislation has been framed to ensure that if incidents nevertheless occur, all parties are in a position to react quickly and effectively.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 19 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Royal Assent

Madam Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Gas (Exempt Supplies) Act 1993
2. British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Act 1993.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

1. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further representations she has received about her proposals to abolish wages councils; and if she will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): My right hon. Friend has continued to receive representations for and against the proposals.

Mr. Canavan: Why do the Government persist in the absurd claim that the abolition of wages councils will create jobs? That claim is clearly refuted by the research done by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Institute of Personnel Management, the London school of economics and the Low Pay Unit.

Instead of abolishing wages councils, will the Minister take steps to give more protection to the 2·5 million people, mostly women, who are covered or supposed to be covered by wages council agreements? If the Government are serious about law and order, will they employ more inspectors to stop unscrupulous employers breaking the law by employing people at less than wages council agreements?

Mr. Forsyth: When the hon. Gentleman represented part of my constituency he supported a Labour Government in abolishing 11 wages councils, taking half a million people out of the so-called wages councils. I am sure that he did so because he recognised the arguments for employment. It is the height of hypocrisy for him to come to the House and complain about this Government following the very measures which they——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman used a word which is unparliamentary.

Mr. Forsyth: I am happy to withdraw the accusation of hypocrisy. I note that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) acepts that the Labour Government abolished 11 wages councils, just as this Conservative Government will do.

As to the hon. Gentleman's point about the effect on employment, only a socialist would believe that one would get more jobs by increasing the price of labour.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend's history is disputable. One of the wages councils which was abolished was in the road transport industry, where collective negotiation was putting up pay.

If my hon. Friend believes that putting pay up is the best action to take, is not the fastest way to do it to have higher rates for the minimum wage for wages councils? Does he prefer to consider the question whether abolition of the wages councils is a sensible idea in a year in which we are likely to abolish the out-of-date restrictions on Sunday trading, which will affect retail workers?

Mr. Forsyth: I favour deregulation of the labour market in relation to Sunday trading because I believe that it will create more jobs. I assume from my hon. Friend's question that he has the same view. I am therefore a little puzzled as to why he does not see a deregulatory measure —the abolition of wages councils—as being in the interests of the labour market as a whole. It was certainly a view which he accepted in answers that he gave when he was a Minister. Then he accepted the principle that there was a relationship between the creation of jobs and the fixing of wage levels by statutory bodies such as wages councils.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister confirm that the Secretary of State received a letter in November from Cyril Stein, the boss of Ladbrokes, who pays himself £584,000 a year? In the letter Mr. Stein welcomed the abolition of wages councils and said that the wages council award which gave his employees £2·92 an hour was causing difficulties for his company.

Mr. Forsyth: The wage of the chairman of Ladbrokes is a matter for the board of directors and the shareholders. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members who are cheering might like to know that the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment is one of those directors.

48-hour Week

2. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will refer to the European Court the decision of the Council of Ministers to consider the 48-hour week directive on the basis of the Single European Act; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A challenge cannot be made unless the directive is adopted. We are continuing to argue strongly against its adoption. We have already made it clear that we will challenge the legal base of the directive should it be adopted in its present form.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does the Minister agree that as the Government failed to challenge the directive on the first reading, which they could have done by not allowing a unanimous decision, they have shown that most of the phoney row between the two Front-Bench teams about the social chapter is basically artificial? Will he at least give me the simple assurance that there is no way in which the

Government will allow the vital social chapter amendment to be considered halfway through the night by a bunch of sleepy-heads when the rest of the world is asleep?

Mr. Forsyth: The timing of consideration of business in the House is not a matter for me, I am pleased to say. My hon. Friend is wrong to imply that it would have been possible for the Government to challenge the legal base of the working time directive before it was agreed. A challenge can be made only after a directive is agreed and my right hon. Friend has had considerable success in ensuring that that has not happened. The Government remain opposed to the working time directive and we shall continue to oppose it. I give my hon. Friend an absolute assurance that if the directive is agreed in its present form, we shall challenge its legal base.

Mr. Grocott: Is not it a fact that after 14 years of having a Conservative Government in power, workers in Britain work for longer hours each week and have lower annual leave entitlements and fewer statutory bank holidays than almost any of our European competitors? Does not that represent a further savage indictment of the Government's economic incompetence?

Mr. Forsyth: What is a fact is that we have a far higher proportion of our population in work than almost any other European country. If we took the hon. Gentleman's advice employment opportunities in Britain would be reduced at a time of high unemployment. The Government, who are committed to reducing unemployment, would not be so foolish as to put socialism before the jobs of our fellow citizens.

Mr. Sykes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the social chapter and the 48-hour week would have a devastating impact on jobs and prospects at a time when Britain is about to emerge from the recession?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I find it amazing that anyone could believe that it is a proper role for the Government to say how long people should work in the workplace. That is for agreement between employees and employers. Only very foolish politicians on the Opposition Benches would go along with the proposition that someone should be prevented from working overtime by decisions taken in the House, the European Commission or the Council of Ministers.

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest official figures for the numbers unemployed and the percentage of unemployed; and what the corresponding figures were for May 1979.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): On a seasonally adjusted basis, claimant unemployment in the United Kingdom stood at 2,908,900 or 10·3 per cent. of the work force, in November 1992; compared with 1,087,000, or 4·1 per cent. of the work force, in May 1979.

Mr. Winnick: The increase since 1979 should shame every member of the Cabinet, not least the Secretary of State herself. Is not it clear that unemployment will substantially increase even further shortly—to well over the 3 million mark—even on the official figures? Do not the Government recognise that they are playing with fire by allowing such high unemployment, with all the resulting misery, poverty and devastation which it causes for our fellow citizens? If the Secretary of State had any pride, she would resign.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that I share his concern about unemployed people. But I am not inclined to take any lessons from him or his hon. Friends on how to deal with unemployment, given the extraordinary proposals emanating from the Labour Front Bench in the so-called shadow budget for jobs. He and his colleagues should recall that the last shadow budget cost Labour the election. This one shows that they have learnt no lessons in economics. Their policy would damage investment and training and cut jobs, yet they call it a budget for jobs. It is ridiculous.

Sir Michael Neubert: Does my right hon. Friend, like me, find the suggestion that high unemployment is unique to this country a touch unconvincing? Can she say how many people are out of work in Europe today and how that compares with 14 years ago?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is right—we share the difficult problems of unemployment and the recession that causes it with other member states in Europe and countries further afield in the industrialised world. Only the policies of this Government can possibly cope with unemployment. The ridiculous shadow budget for jobs shows the Opposition's cynisism, when they deliberately seek to tax out of existence industries that provide 350,000 jobs.

Ms. Quin: The House would welcome some information from the Secretary of State about how she proposes to prevent unemployment from rising to more than 3 million. Would she like to comment on the figures that she supplied to me yesterday in a written reply showing the extent of adult male unemployment, which has rocketed not only in the north, where it is 16·4 per cent., but in the south-east, where it is 13·2 per cent? Do not those figures show the savage decline in our manufacturing? What will the Government do to ensure that employment in manufacturing increases?

Mrs. Shephard: The first thing that we would not do would be to tax manufacturing out of existence, which is the intention of the Labour party. We need policies of low inflation, low interest rates, a competitive exchange rate, low wage claims and the largest-ever range of help and opportunities for unemployed people, which we have in place.

Mr. Evennett: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that measures in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement will create new jobs in this country and that, with the low inflation announced last week, there is a tremendous opportunity for new job creation in the economy during the next few months?

Mrs. Shephard: That is precisely why the autumn statement was so widely welcomed by business interests. The increase in capital allowances, extra help to boost exports, the cut in car tax and help for the construction industry were all welcomed by business, which creates jobs. Those measures will help to combat the difficult problem that all of us face.

Employment Training

4. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those leaving employment training in Yorkshire and Humberside achieved vocational qualifications in the last six months for which figures are available.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): In the six months to March 1992, 30 per cent. of all people leaving employment training in Yorkshire and Humberside gained a qualification or a credit towards one. That is significantly higher than during the same period a year ago.

Mr. Enright: Is the Minister aware that the President of the Board of Trade is hell-bent on throwing miners on the scrap heap? Does he consider that that answer will be of any assistance to them? Do not many people who go on such courses find them an insult to their intelligence and therefore leave early and do not get work at the end of the course? Indeed, many people have to go back for two or even three courses. Will he examine the quality of training, which is very low?

Mr. McLoughlin: As the hon. Gentleman will know, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will publish a White Paper on the energy question. On quality, I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. We are concerned about getting quality from our employment training scheme, which is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced changes as a result of the very good settlement that she achieved in the autumn statement. It would be refreshing to hear the Labour party and Opposition Members talking about supporting training schemes, instead of opposing every scheme that the Government have introduced.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend accept that it would be wholly unacceptable to throw people out of work in the nuclear industry in Lancashire and Cumbria simply to provide jobs in Yorkshire?

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend will draw equal comfort from the question that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) asked me at the previous employment questions. She rightly shows that that is one of the questions that my right hon. Friend must take into account when drawing up the White Paper.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that, when the coal board was flourishing, the Yorkshire and Humberside coalfields—indeed, every coalfield in Britain—used to run a training scheme? They trained miners not only to dig coal, but to become electricians, fitters and carpenters: they trained them to do almost every job that had to be done down the pit. Literally scores of industries used those workers when they left the mines. Now there is no worthwhile training scheme; all that the Government do is run slave labour schemes, taking 500,000 young men and women off the unemployment register at the same time.

Mr. McLoughlin: I do remember that. I also remember that most parents would prefer anything to sending their children down the coal mines.

Industrial Action

5. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost to industrial action in the last 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: There were 504,000 working days lost to strikes in the 12 months to October 1992. That is the lowest 12-month total ever recorded.

Mr. Duncan: Given that foreign-owned firms have a high regard for our industrial relations record and given that pressure on employment prospects will continue until well after the end of the recession, does my hon. Friend agree that a healthy no-strike record is of the utmost importance to attracting inward investment and is equally important to reducing unemployment in general?

Mr. McLoughlin: I entirely agree. Because of our current low strike record—which is due to the industrial relations changes introduced by the Government—the United Kingdom is now receiving more inward investment than any other European country.

Mr. Burden: Will the Minister reflect on evidence provided by the *Employment Gazette*, which pointed out that the number of strikes was falling across Europe, even in countries with far more extensive rights to strike than Britain? Will he also reflect on the evidence given to him by, for instance, the chambers of commerce and the Institute of Personnel Management, which have drawn attention to the foolhardiness of the Government's further trade union reforms? Does he accept that those reforms have much more to do with having another bash at the unions and appeasing the Conservative right wing than with promoting industrial relations?

Mr. McLoughlin: The one thing that Conservative Members will not take is being lectured by the Opposition about industrial relations. As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), in the past 12 months 504,000 working days were lost through industrial disputes. In January 1979, when another party was in government, 3 million days were lost—3 million days in that month alone. We will take no lectures from the Labour party about how to improve industrial relations and reduce strike action.

Union Members

6. **Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the effect of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill on the rights of individual union members.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Bill gives union members important new rights, including greater freedom to decide which union they join and the right to a full postal ballot before a strike. It also introduces important new rights for individual employees.

Mr. Trend: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the legislation is another positive step towards establishing individual rights for trade union members and that it is in the best traditions of the Conservative party since 1979? Will he also confirm that every extension of trade union democracy has been opposed by the TUC and the Labour party?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree, with one qualification: Labour Members have opposed such legislation and then—before a general election—have turned round and said that they have experienced a sudden conversion on the road to Damascus. Where we have progressed forward step by step, the Opposition have progressed backwards step by step. Our action has benefited the economy as a whole and is undoubtedly the reason for the current high levels of inward investment in Britain.

Mr. Eastham: Why do not the Government act more evenhandedly when it comes to the rights of trade unionists? Is not it a fact that some employers will not recognise trade unions in their companies? What protection will the Government give to workers?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is confused. He is confusing the interests of workers with those of trade unions—and that is why he and his hon. Friends sit on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my hon. Friend remind the House that the conversion to which he referred is not total? Does he recall that for the first time in its history there is now a proposition from the Labour party that it should be illegal to sack strikers? Is not it remarkable that Opposition Members take that position, which goes further than any Labour Government have in history?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend has great experience in these matters and I agree with him. The Labour party has always been the striker's friend and the Conservative party has always been the trade union member's friend. The Conservative party has given the trade unions back to their members and has enhanced the rights of those members in the teeth of opposition from the Labour party.

Part-time Workers

7. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures she intends to take to provide employment protection for part-time workers employed by their existing employer for less than five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill gives part-time workers new rights, including maternity leave and protection against exclusion or expulsion from a trade union. It will also give employees the right to receive a written statement of terms and conditions of employment provided that they work eight or more hours a week.

Mr. Mackinlay: Does the Minister consider it fair and consistent with the rules of natural justice that part-time workers—millions of them women—should have no protection from unfair or arbitrary dismissal? Is not it a fact that many part-time workers are dismissed or have their contracts arbitrarily altered as though they were chattels rather than people?

Mr. Forsyth: What an astonishing question. The hon. Gentleman is criticising the provisions in respect of the rights of part-time workers which were introduced by the last Labour Government in 1975.

Mrs. Browning: Does my hon. Friend agree that the more strictly regulated economies such as France or Germany do not produce the part-time work opportunities that we have in Britain?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Labour Members have not yet discovered that the more they add to the cost of employing people and the greater the burdens they put on employers in taking on labour, the more people will become unemployed and the fewer job opportunities there will be in the economy. We have the highest level of employment among part-time women workers, as well as among women in the economy as a whole, as a result of having a free labour market. If the Opposition had their way, there would be fewer opportunities for people to get jobs and I am sure that that is not what they want.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister confirm that it has been the case since records were kept that more British people, including women, are in employment than in any country in Europe except Denmark? At the same time, thousands of loyal, long-term staff, including those at Burtons and Forte, have been thrown out of full-time jobs which many of them have had for years and forced to go part time? Is not it utterly unfair that they should then be deprived of employment rights and entitlement to benefit just to suit the need and the greed of their employers?

Mr. Forsyth: Their employment rights reflect the position that was thought appropriate by the last Labour Government. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that he cannot continue adding to the burden on employers and expect employment opportunities to be created in the economy. The reason why we have far more people in work—that has been the pattern for some time—is that, unlike many of our European partners, we have had a longer period of Governments committed to free enterprise and policies that create wealth and employment.

Mrs. Chaplin: Does my hon. Friend agree that many women wish to work part time because it fits in with their family commitments? Will he ensure that nothing is done to endanger part-time jobs in Britain?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend. She is absolutely right that many women work part time because they wish to do so. Only the Opposition, with their interest in the trade union movement, would wish to deny millions of people that opportunity.

Child Care

8. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has for the provision of after-school child care.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government are providing £45 million through training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies over the next three financial years to help employers, schools, parents, local authorities, voluntary organisations and partnerships of all these to create some 50,000 additional out-of-school places for children.

Mr. Chisholm: Given that the United Kingdom is bottom of the European child care league, any initiative is welcome, but is the £15 million a year ring-fenced, and is this additional money, or does it come from an already inadequate Department of Employment budget? What proportion will go to Scotland, and why is the money available only for start-up costs when continuing funding is necessary for low-income parents?

Mrs. Shephard: I refute the hon. Gentleman's basic premise. He should know that more than 90 per cent. of all three and four-year-olds already receive some kind of day care, and that the statutory school starting age is lower here than in the countries of many of our European counterparts.

This is new money. Scotland will receive 9 per cent. of it, based on the children of primary school age formula. The hon. Gentleman should be a little more welcoming, given the welcome that the project has had from kids club networks, play groups, the Working Mothers Association, the Day Care Trust and so on.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the recent circular from her colleague in the Department of Health making it easier for small providers of child care to avoid some of the bureaucratic burdens piled on them by people such as health and safety inspectors? Will she promise to work closely not only with the Department of Health but with the deregulation unit in the Department of Trade and Industry to ensure that a proper path is trodden between protection of children and the capacity of respectable individuals and voluntary organisations to provide this necessary form of care?

Mrs. Shephard: Given the entirely welcome increase in the numbers of child minders and registered day nurseries, I agree with my hon. Friend. The extra guidance from the Department of Health to what are perhaps over-zealous local authorities which might have discouraged the setting up of yet more facilities for young children is entirely to be welcomed.

Training Levy

9. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has for a compulsory training levy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have no such plans.

Mr. Mullin: May I put it to the Secretary of State that no amount of exhortation to the myopic and greedy people in charge of so much of British industry will persuade them to invest in long-term training? Our only hope of finding training for future generations of a sort that will enable us to hold our heads high in Europe will be to compel these employers to pay a training levy. Failing that, we are doomed.

Mrs. Shephard: I find the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm —and that of his party—for yet more burdens on employers disappointing but predictable. Opposition Members obviously have not noticed, because they are stuck in the past, that policies of compulsion were tried in the 1960s and 1970s, and they failed. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues try listening to employers instead of vilifying them as they tend to do. The commitment of employers to training remains undiminished by the difficulties of recession. This year they committed a record £20 billion to training—an excellent record representing a great commitment.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Is it not quite extraordinary at a time of cyclically high unemployment which is disturbing us all—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Give the hon. Gentleman an opportunity.

Mr. Davies: I am glad to see that I still have my fan club among the Opposition. Is it not extraordinary that some people can think of nothing better than dreaming up new ideas to add to the costs of taking on more employees, thereby destroying the prospects for new jobs?

Mrs. Shephard: It is enough to name a burden for business to be certain that Opposition Members will support it in principle. What are more damaging for business—after all, it creates jobs—are a minimum wage, a payroll tax, a training levy, and support for a social action programme. Labour supports all those; all of them threaten jobs, as my hon. Friend is right to point out.

Training and Enterprise Councils

10. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about the level of funding for training and enterprise councils in 1993-94.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In 1993-94 we will make £2·2 billion available for TEC-delivered programmes.

Mr. Hutton: Is the Minister aware that many training and enterprise councils, including Cumbria's, are bracing themselves for substantial cuts in the volume of adult training resources being made available by the Government? Is she further aware that unemployment in south and west Cumbria is increasing dramatically and that unemployment has doubled in my constituency in the last two years? Will she give an assurance to my constituents that the Cumbria training and enterprise council will continue to have sufficient resources to provide its current quality training profile and so offer my constituents living under the shattering blow of unemployment the prospect of secure alternative jobs in new industries in the future?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman should know that the sum of £2·2 billion is broadly the same as last year, despite the fact that TECs have fewer young people with whom to deal on youth training because of the longer staying on at school rate. The recent deal in the autumn statement was greatly welcomed by the TECs. The hon. Gentleman must be aware that Cumbria TEC is an active member of the action team set up by the Government in response to redundances at Sellafield and VSEL. Any question of additional resources for the TEC, should there be further problems in Cumbria, would have to be considered in the light of what could be managed at the time.

Mr. Dickens: Why, during Question Time, are we always on the defensive? Why do we not tell people that Britain is the only country in Europe that guarantees a training place to every 16 and 17-year-old who is without a job or is not in further education? The reason is simply that we recognise that, with mechanisation and automation, skills must be changed and new skills learned. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is the party— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I look sympathetically on the hon. Member, but I do not allow him to make speeches at Question Time.

Mrs. Shephard: It is difficult to imagine anybody less defensive than my hon. Friend. He is right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that during the last 12

months, about 225,000 young people entered youth training. Of those, about 10 per cent. have benefited from credit schemes and three quarters of them are satisfied with the outcome of YT. It is indeed a good record, and the Government are pledged to maintain it.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Secretary of State explain to her hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) that the Conservatives are always on the defensive because they have an appalling record, in particular in the funding of TECs, where the budget has been cut in real terms? Is the right hon. Lady aware that many, including a large number of Conservative Members, are concerned about special needs training? She will be aware of the recent report from the Spastics Society showing that people with special needs are not being given the training they require. She will also be aware that Members in all parts of the House have written to her on that subject. Will she meet a delegation of hon. Members on an all-party basis so that the issue may be thrashed out?

Mrs. Shephard: I am always happy to meet delegations of hon. Members, in particular to discuss important matters such as the way in which TECs are equipped to deal with special needs. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to talk about records, perhaps I should ask if it is not a matter of concern to him that under the last Labour Government only 7,000 youngsters were on Government training programmes.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Despite the high levels of unemployment in the south-east, may I ask my right hon. Friend to pay tribute to the TECs working in and around the county of Surrey for the work they are doing, particularly with young people? At a time when industry is having difficulties, we should commend companies that have fully participated in those training schemes.

Mrs. Shephard: I agree that in recession some TECs have found it difficult to provide industrial places for people on youth training. TECs have employed a variety of imaginative and successful initiatives such as marketing campaigns, new workshops and initial training provision of exactly the kind described by my hon. Friend in Surrey.

Employment Statistics

11. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes she plans to improve the accuracy of employment statistics.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department has already taken steps to improve the reliability of employment statistics and additional work, including the first full census of employers since 1981, is in hand.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Minister aware that a woman who works as a cleaner in the House in the early hours of the morning, who has a similar job in a London hospital in the afternoon, and who works as a barmaid at the weekend is treated by the Government as three people? Why do the Government persist in including 750,000 people who have double jobs twice and sometimes three times in the unemployment statistics? Why do they include 1 million non-existent self-employed people in the statistics and insist on counting at least 2 million part timers as though they were full timers? They should stop blaming the last Labour Government for all their problems, stop creating fiction and start creating jobs.

Mr. McLoughlin: The employees in employment series is the count of the number of jobs in the economy and follows the practice of the previous Administration. *[Interruption.]* We have made no secret of that. I am not sure from the hon. Gentleman's question whether he wants us to count the three Labour Members who are also Members of the European Parliament as doing one or two jobs.

Mr. Alexander: Is it not the case that every time the Government arrange to improve the accuracy of the statistics Labour accuses us of distorting them?

Mr. McLoughlin: That is correct. My hon. Friend points to the picture that the Opposition always paint. As I have said, the method used to count those who are in employment is no different from that used by the previous Administration.

Labour Statistics

12. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the number of people unemployed in the Liverpool travel-to-work area.

Mr. McLoughlin: In November 1992 unadjusted claimant unemployment in the Liverpool travel-to-work area stood at 72,704.

Mrs. Kennedy: In view of those appalling figures what advice would the Minister give to the 27-year-old man who came to see me recently in Liverpool and who in 1983 at the age of 17 took Lord Tebbit's advice and went looking for work? He travelled throughout the south of England from job to job without finding anywhere permanent to settle. He returned to Liverpool in 1991 when the work dried up and has been unemployed for two years. What is the appropriate advice for him?

Mr. McLoughlin: The appropriate advice to give that gentleman is to contact the Employment Service which has been very effective in placing a number of people in work. I am rather surprised that the hon. Lady did not quote the figures showing that between 1986 and November 1992 unemployment in her constituency fell by 2,232, which is 26 per cent. lower than in 1986.

Mr. John Marshall: Has my hon. Friend estimated the impact on unemployment in Liverpool of the introduction of a national minimum wage? Would not that destroy jobs whereas the abolition of wages councils will create jobs?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who rightly points out that Labour has not changed its mind about a national minimum wage, although some Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), have accepted that it would reduce people's employment prospects. That is a strange way to try to increase employment.

Mr. Loyden: When will the Minister and his Secretary of State stop fudging about unemployment and stop giving ridiculous and silly answers to questions on a matter that affects millions of families? I note, and it would be significant for others to note, that the Secretary of State

constantly refers to the burden on employers. At no time did she mention the burden on the unemployed and their families. When will the Government face their responsibility for the present economic climate that brought about such unemployment?

Mr. McLoughlin: We take the plight of those people who are unemployed very seriously. That is why we shall not take easy options to try to bring about an unrealistic end to high levels of unemployment. I would say to the hon. Gentleman that in his constituency, unemployment is 33 per cent. lower than it was in 1986. I should have thought that he might welcome that.

Manufacturing Industry

13. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees are employed in manufacturing industry; and what the figure was a year ago.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of employees in employment in manufacturing industries in the United Kingdom was 4,485,000 in September 1992 compared to 4,746,000 in September 1991.

Mr. Hain: Is the Minister aware that of the 21 leading industrialised nations, this country is second from bottom in the amount of manufacturing growth since 1979, and that there is a burning anger among local manufacturers and their workers about the fact that this Government are clueless about the need for policies to revive our manufacturing sector.

Mr. Forsyth: Only today the European Community has estimated that Britain is likely to have a higher growth this year than our European partners and the hon. Member's concern about manufacturing unemployment and employment would be more convincing if he and his party did not support all the measures in the social chapter which would reduce our competitiveness and make us less likely to have inward investment which has provided so many jobs in his constituency, in Wales, in Scotland and in other parts of the United Kingdom.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 January.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Sir John Hannam: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the social chapter, which he skilfully negotiated out of the Maastricht treaty, would destroy investment, business confidence and jobs in this country? Is it not therefore the greatest hypocrisy to support such a damaging measure while at the same time claiming to care for the unemployed?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that. When I negotiated Britain's exemption from the social chapter I seem to recall that I was accused of making Britain a paradise for foreign investment. I hope very much that that proves to be true. The reality is that the Opposition disagree about that. The truth is that they are hostile to industry and do not understand business. Until they drop their commitment to the social chapter they cannot also claim to be seeking lasting jobs.

Mr. John Smith: On that very subject, is the Prime Minister aware that of all the Prime Ministers we have had since the war, he has the worst record for growth, the worst record for investment and the worst record for jobs? Is he not ashamed of such a miserable record?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is a fine one to talk about records. His record as shadow Chancellor lost Labour a record fourth election precisely because he proposed record tax increases.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister not note that he failed completely to deny that he had the worst growth record, the worst investment and the worst employment record? Since there is anger throughout the country *[Interruption]*—I hope that Conservative Members will not treat unemployment flippantly. Since there is growing anger throughout the whole country at rising unemployment why does the Prime Minister not agree to put a windfall profits tax on the excess profits of monopoly privatised companies and use the money to create jobs?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman also forgot to mention another record of mine; the record for bringing down inflation so that we can recreate lasting jobs. The fact is that what we just heard is the old Labour party speaking; the party of the 1960s and 1970s. They hate profits. They would rather have nationalised industries making losses than privatised industries making profits. They cannot stand firms being successful and they do not understand that firms need profits to provide investment, to provide growth, and to provide jobs. That is why their record in government has always been one of complete and record failure.

Mr. Smith: Can the Prime Minister explain to the House and to the country why it was all right for a Conservative Government to introduce an excess profits tax on banks in the first recession but now to oppose an excess profits tax on the privatised utilities? Does not the Prime Minister appreciate that every pound of these excess profits and of managers' fat salaries has come from the British people? Is not it time that they got some of it back to create jobs for them and their families?

The Prime Minister: I am quite happy to educate the right hon. and learned Gentleman about that, since he clearly does not understand. In the early 1980s interest rates were raised sharply to control inflation. At that time, the banks did not pay interest on current accounts. As a result of that, they genuinely made windfall profits. That was why the Government taxed them. The utility tax that the right hon. and learned Gentleman proposes— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. I cannot hear the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: Labour Members do not like understanding reality; they do not like it at all. The fact of the matter is that the utilities are already regulated. If they make excessive profits, the regulator can change their pricing formula, and he has already changed BT's from

RPI minus three to RPI minus 6·25—real price cuts for consumers, which we never saw under a nationalised industry. That is why the appropriate policy is tough regulation, not 1960s artificial control.

Mr. Sims: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister shares the widespread concern about the collapse of criminal proceedings against a couple whose daughter died a violent death because they invoked their right to say nothing. Is he aware that the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has details of 10 similar cases? Whatever the arguments may be for or against the right of silence in cases generally, is not there a strong argument in favour of reviewing its application in cases where children have been cruelly treated or even killed?

The Prime Minister: I cannot, of course, discuss the particular case raised by my hon. Friend, but I understand the concerns that he expresses. Decisions on whether to prosecute are entirely for the Crown prosecution service. My hon. Friend may know that the right to silence is one of the matters being considered by the Royal Commission on criminal justice. I would not wish to anticipate its report.

Q2. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the Prime Minister give the reason for the rising and record levels of unemployment in Essex —a county which includes my constituency of Thurrock and, of course, the betrayed people of Basildon?

The Prime Minister: I will tell the hon. Gentleman one thing that is very clear about unemployment: it will fall as a result of this Government's policies. That is what he had better understand.

Mr. Couchman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is ironic indeed that in the very week when the Leader of the Opposition produces a phoney budget for jobs the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) is seeking to destroy 140,000 Sunday jobs, which are vital to many families in this country?

The Prime Minister: On this and other issues the reality is that Labour policy is inconsistent. It changes not only from election to election but from week to week. Not long ago, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) proposed the biggest tax increases in peace time. Nine months later, he said categorically that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor should not increase taxes in the Budget, but 10 days later he calls for a windfall tax.

Q3. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rooker: Can I ask the Prime Minister if, until unemployment starts to fall, he will make it part of his political strategy to assist the unemployed by easing the rules on socal security benefits so that those unemployed people who have household responsibilities and who are in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s can genuinely take advantage of opportunities to improve their education and training rather than, as at present, be penalised if they study too much or lose their homes if they have household responsibilities? For a very small investment in people, we could have a huge return for the country.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman makes a point which is well worth considering, and in the past we have looked at some matters related to it. This is the sort of matter which we are prepared to examine. The hon. Gentleman will know from his own experience in social security that there is significant help, for example, with mortgages, and he will also know the additional help that is being given to people towards training and studying.

Q4. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning trendy, mixed ability teaching— *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members are products of it —which has so damaged the education of millions of children since the 1960s? *[Interruption.]* I hope they care. Are not moves to return the teaching of children to traditional methods just plain common sense? Is it not now also time to end trendy teacher-training methods?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is a distinguished former head teacher so I particularly welcome his remarks. I agree that the way forward is to return to the basics of education, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education said yesterday that we had plans to strengthen primary education. I am sure that we are right to look carefully also at getting the teaching methods right. Common-sense, practical teaching which puts good teachers in front of good children is undoubtedly the right way to improve our education system.

Mr. Ray Powell: Is it not fair that when an hon. Member is named or mentioned in a Prime Minister's question the Member involved should have the right to reply? I respect and thank you, Madam Speaker, for calling me. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Give the hon. Gentleman a chance to put his question.

Mr. Powell: Obviously, the Prime Minister, as with a lot of the policies that he has presented to the House, is misguided and is misrepresenting facts. The question that he was asked regarding a Bill that I will present on Friday——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must now call the hon. Gentleman to order. I am looking for a very direct question to the Prime Minister, right away.

Mr. Powell: The Bill is an all-party Bill supported by five of the Prime Minister's colleagues. It is not a Labour party Bill and therefore the Prime Minister should correct the answer that he gave just now.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will, no doubt, be a firm advocate of his own Bill in a few days' time. I can tell him that in due course my right hon. and

learned Friend the Home Secretary will bring proposals to the House and will give it a series of alternatives upon which to make up its mind on this thorny issue.

Q5. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Field: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the publication of the highway code today? Will he ensure that copies are made available to Opposition Members, some of whom seem to be stuck on a roundabout, uncertain as to which exit to take, while others seem intent on overtaking their leaders on the inside, while we on the Government side look forward to a major road ahead?

The Prime Minister: I should like, if I may, to try to respond to that testing question. I very much welcome the publication of the new highway code. I am bound to say that it does seem to me extremely important that the Leader of the Opposition perhaps should study it. He might learn, after his proposals this morning, that he should not signal right when he is turning left.

Sir David Steel: Will the Prime Minister clarify the support that the Government give to enforcement action against Saddam Hussein? Is it correct that that support will be given only as long as the action is in accordance with international law in agreement with our coalition partners and involves the minimum necessary use of force?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can confirm to the right hon. Gentleman that that has been the position thus far, and it is our position, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Defence Secretary set out the other day.

Parliamentary Question (Madam Speaker's Ruling)

3.30 pm

Madam Speaker: I have to give a ruling to the House in response to a point of order from the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) last Wednesday. I undertook to examine the circumstances in which a question was tabled in the name of the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

I have established that a parliamentary clerk in the Scottish Office did in fact, as the hon. Member for Dumbarton suggested, send a question to the Table Office, and that the question was written on a question form pre-signed by the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside. Since the form was signed by an hon. Member, the Table Office behaved perfectly properly in accepting it. I hope, however, that any practice that may have grown up of pre-signing forms will now cease.

I must make it absolutely clear that the tabling of a question is a formal parliamentary proceeding which must be undertaken only with the specific approval of an hon. Member, if not by himself or herself personally. What happened was an abuse—*[Interruption.]* Order. I have not finished. I have received apologies from the Secretary of State and from the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside, together with the undertakings that such an occurrence will not be repeated.

In raising this point of order with me, the hon. Member for Dumbarton said that he was referring the matter to the Procedure Committee. It will be for that Committee to decide whether it wishes to consider any wider implications that this incident may have for the rules of tabling questions. For my part, I accept the apologies and the undertakings that have been given, but I make it absolutely clear to the entire House that there must be no recurrence whatsoever of this practice.

Business of the House

3.32 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, I should like to make a short business statement.

The subject for debate on Thursday 21 January will now be "events in the Gulf and the Royal Air Force", on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. I believe that that will be for the general convenience of the House. The House will also wish to know that, as I said last Thursday, the debate will be opened by my right and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and will now be wound up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the Leader of the House for that announcement. He will know that we have been pressing for a meeting of the Security Council and for an opportunity for the House to discuss these matters. I am sure that the Leader of the House will understand, especially in the light of what was said during last week's business questions, that inevitably it is likely that the debate will concentrate on the position in the Gulf. I hope that he will bear it in mind that there may be a further request for a service debate on issues involving the provision of service by the Royal Air Force at a later date.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Lady's point. As I understand it, and subject always to the Chair, it will be in order for hon. Members to raise other points, but I have no doubt that the House will expect—as I do—that the main focus of the debate will be the situation in the Gulf.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the treasured single-day debate on the Royal Air Force will be largely about the Royal Air Force, because it is active in the Gulf?

Mr. Newton: That is a helpful point, and I think that it will command some assent from the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): In view of the answers we have been given, would it not now be intelligent to consider whether the debate on Thursday should concentrate exclusively on events in the Gulf, so that as many hon. Members as possible with an interest in that topic might have an opportunity to contribute, and whether, therefore, a separate and distinct day should be assigned for a debate on the Royal Air Force?

Mr. Newton: We can all agree that it is highly likely that the main focus of the debate will be the Gulf. However, as it is principally the RAF that has been involved in the Gulf, I am not sure that it would be right to rule out reference to other matters affecting the RAF.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the debate on Thursday will deal with issues affecting the lives of British soldiers and of people throughout the middle east, and will therefore be desperately important and will require the total attention of hon. Members, can the Leader of the House give us an assurance that the Government will not seek to make Members tired and harassed by expecting them to debate vital issues, like the social chapter, in the early hours of the morning——

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I can help the House. This is a very narrow business statement, which does not relate to that matter.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the Leader of the House prepared to give an undertaking on behalf of the Government that there will be no final decision to send British troops to Kuwait until Thursday's debate has taken place?

Mr. Newton: As the latest information that I received before coming to the Chamber was that no formal request of this kind had been received, the appropriate thing for me to say is that these are matters for discussion in the debate on Thursday.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Will the motion be drawn sufficiently widely to enable us to consider what happens as we send troops and naval personnel to the Gulf? I am thinking in particular of the use of the flag officer sea training facilities at Portland, which have been used for every deployment to the Gulf and to other theatres of war, and of the quality of the training that is provided there.

Mr. Newton: All this will be subject to your views, Madam Speaker, as to what is in order. As I have said, the debate will take place on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. It could not be drawn more widely than that.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State for Defence will open the debate. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman be in a position to tell us what impact the deployment of troops in the Gulf area would have on the extra battalion in Northern Ireland?

Madam Speaker: Order. That question also is far too wide. The Leader of the House has made a very narrow statement about a simple change of title. He has paid the House the courtesy of informing it of the change and of letting it know which Secretaries of State will handle the debate. I must ask hon. Members to restrict the questions to those matters.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Will my right hon. Friend explain why he did not consider linking this matter with the deployment of British troops in the Yugoslav theatre——

Madam Speaker: Order. I refer the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members to "Erskine May", which, on page 297, makes it very clear that questions arising from a supplementary statement of this nature should be very narrow. I shall take only a few more questions.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Can the Leader of the House give us an assurance, first, that no further military attacks involving British forces will take place before the debate; and, secondly, that it will be possible to move an amendment to the Adjournment motion so that those who are opposed to the use of force will be able to register their opposition?

Mr. Tredinnick: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I take points of order after statements.

Mr. Newton: As you, Madam Speaker, above everyone, know, questions about what would or would not be in order are for you rather than for me. However, my understanding is that amendments to motions for the Adjournment would not normally be in order. As to the earlier part of the right hon. Gentleman's question, I repeat what I said to his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South about not seeking to pre-empt the debate on Thursday.

Points of Order

3.40 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have been trying to follow the ruling that you have just given, and I do not want to transgress in any way, but it occurs to me that perhaps the deployment of forces in the Iraq theatre is related, in that the numbers of troops——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am trying to help the hon. Gentleman and the House. I will read the two lines from "Erskine May" that relate directly to what has just taken place:

"The Speaker has ruled that when a narrow business statement is made,"—

which is exactly what has taken place—

"changing only one item of business, supplementary questions are confined to that item."

The Chair will allow a wide debate. It is a debate on the Adjournment and, as the Leader of the House has said, it could not be much wider than that.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am quite capable of seeing and hearing hon. Members.

The House has been delayed by points of order that are simply points of frustration.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I hope that my point of order is entirely relevant. The debate on Thursday, now merged, means that the detailed consideration of a number of aspects of the problems and conditions of the Royal Air Force will now not be able to attract the attention or be given the time that would otherwise be available; problems such as contractorisation, career prospects and procurement will all be diminished.

I know that you cannot instruct the Government on how they should structure business, Madam Speaker, but my point of order is this. Every year, for so long that a precedent has been established, the House has had the opportunity for regular debates about each of the three armed forces. The abuse of this precedent—that is what it is—means that proper consideration of the service in question will be minimised.

I ask you, Madam Speaker, or, if you cannot give a ruling, the Leader of the House, to give an assurance that there will not be a long delay before the House has an opportunity to have a debate in which the detailed considerations and anxieties of the Royal Air Force can be considered.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I cannot rule on that matter. It seems to me to be the sort of subject that he might put to the Leader of the House during business questions at some time.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday there were a number of points of order arising out of your response to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) when he made a Standing Order No. 20 application about Iraq. I think that it is fair to suggest that your reply left the door ajar. It seems to me—I would like you to respond to this if that is possible—that this business statement today is some recognition of that half-open door, but that a debate has been produced that is unsatisfactory not only to my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who wanted to speak about the Air Force in detail, but also to those of us who would have liked a proper vote in respect of Iraq and the bombing, and the lapdog attitude of the Government to Bush, that man who is drugged to the earholes. We all wanted to take part in a principled debate, but I am afraid that it is like the curate's egg: it is a bit of both and it is not the right answer that you promised yesterday.

Madam Speaker: I promised nothing yesterday, as the hon. Gentleman will know if he looks at *Hansard*. He must draw his own conclusions.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you confirm that an Adjournment motion will not allow substantive amendments to be tabled? This seems unsatisfactory to whole range of opinion in the House, as many hon. Members would have liked to submit amendments on the degree of United Nations sanction for any action that might be taken.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and the House are aware that no amendments can be tabled to an Adjournment motion.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Can you confirm, Madam Speaker, what I think you just said—that it will be possible to have a vote on Thursday evening so that those of us who do not support the Government's policy in the Gulf may have an opportunity to register that dissent, as opposed to the consensus that has been presented to the whole country until now?

Madam Speaker: I did not say that at all. I made the point that it was a motion on the Adjournment. The hon. Gentleman knows what that means as well as I do: there can be no amendments to it.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it possible for you to use your good offices to persuade the Leader of the House to review what he has just told us? A number of hon. Members who have spoken are opposed to what has been happening. Those of us with different points of view, with reservations, nevertheless believe that it is necessary to have a debate on what is happening in Iraq and what should or should not be done. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover and other hon. Friends have made the good point that no one will be absolutely certain about the debate: will it be mainly about Iraq or the situation in Iraq? Why not simply have a debate on Iraq?

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who said that matters relating to the RAF will not be adequately raised, surely there is a case for having a proper debate, as always, on the services including the RAF. Will the Leader of the House consider changing his mind?

Madam Speaker: Such questions must be put to the Leader of the House during business questions. It is not a matter for the Speaker of the House, who has no responsibility whatever for arranging the business programme. It is for the Leader of the House and the usual channels, as the House knows.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I raise a matter of greatest importance

which has come to the attention of the House during the past quarter of an hour, and I seek your advice. Although I do not want to deal with the specific case on which you rule, there is a wider case, which is the politicisation of the civil service. It seems that, over the past 14 years, there is a possibility that the objectivity of the civil service, which is precious, is now in question. How can we have a full examination of that matter by the House?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman can try to achieve that by putting a question to the Government during business questions. He can achieve it either through debate or by questions in the House.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My point is that—this is from the Front Benches—the change of title of Thursday's debate has changed the whole character of the debate. In practice, it will be a debate on Iraq. During the three previous debates on the Gulf in the last Parliament, in a consensus, supporters for the Government, mostly Privy Councillors, were wheeled out on both sides, largely to the exclusion of any significant extent of dissent.

There is a significant extent of dissent among Opposition Members towards the Government's supine support of American policies. I hope that, with your fresh occupation of the Chair, Madam Speaker, bringing a new view to the House, the consensus which prevailed in those three debates on the Gulf will not prevail on Thursday.

Madam Speaker: That is hardly a point of order for me. The debate on Thursday is in the hands of the House itself.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. For the benefit of the House, could you rule whether the previous five points of order put to you were points of order or points of frustration?

Madam Speaker: They were certainly not points of order. I will not attempt to describe what they were, but they certainly were not points of order.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You and the House will know that I am a member of the Select Committee on Defence (HON. MEMBERS: "Very important."] I agree, and if anyone thinks differently, they are fairly stupid.

Arrangements have been made for the Select Committee on Defence to visit Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers Europe on the day of the debate. I do not need to go into great detail except to say that that will mean that many of the members of the Select Committee will be excluded from the debate because they are required —[HON. MEMBERS: "You can choose."] I will continue— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am trying to find out what the point of order is. The hon. Gentleman will undoubtedly come to his point now.

Mr. Cook: I am trying to remove some of the ignorance and short-sightedness which is evident on the Government Benches. If an hon. Member is to fulfil his duty to the Chamber, I must be present on the Select Committee visit. For us to get back from the visit in time will mean that probably only one hon. Member will be able to contribute to the debate. My point of order is whether you, Madam Speaker, can prevail on the usual channels to institute some device that will ensure consultation to include members of a Select Committee on a particular topic, rather than exclude them. It is a perfectly reasonable question, after all.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members who speak in the House must first catch my eye, irrespective of whether they are members of a Select Committee, Standing Committee or whatever.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Would you ask questions in the right places about the abuse of the letter board yesterday by the Secretary of State for Education?

Madam Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will give me more information and come to my office. I always try to help Members on such matters.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): As someone who served in the RAF in Iraq, do I stand a chance of being called on Thursday?

Madam Speaker: That is the most pertinent point of order that has been put to me today.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

LIVERPOOL HOUSING ACTION TRUST

That the draft Liverpool Housing Action Trust (Area and Constitution) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Telephone Entertainment Services (Supervision)

3.51 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish a statutory body for the supervision of telephone entertainment services.

I return again to the issue of filthy phone calls and, most specifically, those which take place in premium-rate services, about which I have spoken to the House many times. Recently, I spoke in the debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill at great length. Therefore, I have no desire to go into the sordid cases again. Instead, I wish to deal with the detail of how such services are regulated at present under the system of self-regulation.

I welcome the concern expressed by the Leader of the House. He is in his place for the debate, as he promised at business questions last week. That gives me an opportunity to clarify my question to him. I mentioned that, like other right hon. and hon. Members, he had daughters. I felt that that would give right hon. and hon. Members a different perspective on the offences against some young ladies which I have raised in the House over the years and the consequences of allowing the services to continue.

The Leader of the House seemed to be under the impression that I was suggesting that the daughters of Members might have been involved in the lines. I was not. I am worried about the safety of women away from the services that we are discussing—on the street and in public places. I want right hon. and hon. Members who are members of the Government and have powers over such matters to think along those lines. It might be educative and informative for them to speak to their wives and daughters about the issue that I have raised, about which there have been mountains of publicity in the past six or seven years.

When I speak of the need to improve regulation, it is obviously a criticism of the existing system of self-regulation under the so-called Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services. I have long believed that the system is inadequate, and have said so on many occasions in the House. Events in recent weeks and months prove the point that I have made.

The committee is compromised, because it is funded by the industry which it is supposed to police. It is compromised because its chairman is on record as saying that he does not see anything wrong with pornographic conversations between two people. He ignored all the other problems of which Members of Parliament will be well aware.

The premium rate services started in 1985. ICSTIS was set up following growing public disquiet in 1986. What has it achieved? It has achieved one or two good things, but has done so always by the back door, picking away at the periphery and never attacking the heart of the problem. ICSTIS did not deal directly with the huge bills that youngsters were running up for their families or that employees were running up for small businesses. It established a fund, made providers of such services put up a bond of £50,000, appointed a retired High Court judge and established a bureaucracy to vet claims.

My view then, as now, is that, if a service being sold in the marketplace is useful and people want to buy it, there is no need for such a fund. Why try to sanitise something before it is delivered to the marketplace? That process should have been attacked, but that did not happen.

All the chatlines that caused problems with high bills have now gone because the providers of such services would not put up the increased bond, and because I and many other hon. Members encouraged people to apply for compensation from the fund, which killed it. Why go through all that trauma? Why punish families with debt? Why let all that continue without attacking the problem?

The only sanction that ICSTIS can apply is—after tortuous procedures—to recommend to British Telecom that the provider of such a service should be disconnected. I and several newspapers have given evidence to ICSTIS and to other people that the system does not work. As soon as the providers are cut off, they set up somewhere else and usually provide even worse services than before.

In her latest investigation, Denna Allen, a national journalist from *The Mail on Sunday*, said:

"British Telecom pulled the plug on Michael Allen's firm EasyBreak last week following revelations that girls were breaking the law by talking dirty.

But wealthy Allen has been advertising a new 'Best Live One-To-One' sex line called Greetland in The Sport newspapers.

So as EasyBreak lines were silenced, Greetland numbers were humming with callers."

Both companies share the same Manchester adddress and Allen, whose wife's firm Comtel was originally cut off, is carrying on in business. Comtel was owned by his wife and was closed down three years ago when I was instrumental in getting a BBC journalist into its offices—I had to get her down via a fire escape because things were getting risky, but that is another story.

ICSTIS can demand tapes which are often doctored—as the providers have admitted—and can cut off the providers, who then go somewhere else and perhaps nominate their spouse as the next owner of the business. Such providers still employ people in Dickensian conditions, and they still corrupt and demean which is against section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Parliament cannot touch the people whom I have been complaining about for so long, and there is something sinister, demeaning and wrong about the whole process. I want to bring the subject back into the public arena, so that Parliament can restore its authority over such matters. The Telecommunications Act is ripe for fresh consideration, as people have been able to skirt around section 43 willy-nilly. ICSTIS cannot help, OFTEL will not help and Parliament should reconsider the whole subject and do something about it. As the list of sponsors shows, I have all-party support for the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. Don Dixon, Ms. Ann Coffey, Mrs. Ann Winterton, Mr. Roy Beggs, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Terry Rooney, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. William Ross and Mr. George Howarth.

TELEPHONE ENTERTAINMENT SERVICES (SUPERVISION)

Mr. Terry Lewis accordingly presented a Bill to establish a statutory body for the supervision of telephone entertainment services: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 February and to be printed. [Bill 115.]

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 18 January]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

3.59 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Is it still a convention of the House for hon. Members to give notice to other hon. Members when they propose to make personal attacks on them in the Chamber? I have in mind column 71 of yesterday's *Hansard*. Is it also a convention for the hon. Member who makes the attack to give way to the recipient? I have in mind column 73.

I do not seek to detain the House for long, Mr. Morris, and I know that you will decide whether the conventions were observed last night. Let me say, however, that I do not think that they were observed; let me say also—as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) repeatedly refused to give way last night—that her assertion was completely untrue.

The Deeside Toyota engine plant formed the centrepiece of my election address. The general managers of Toyota UK and Toyota Deeside wrote separately to thank me, suggesting that my co-operation and support, and my visits to the engine factory, had been much appreciated. It is a magnificent factory, and I feel that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South behaved in a rather shabby manner last night.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising his point of order at the beginning of main business. I have read yesterday's *Hansard*, and I note that my colleague the First Deputy Chairman dealt with the issue at the time. It is, however, worth reminding hon. Members on both sides of the House that, if they intend to refer to other hon. Members, they should do those hon. Members the simple courtesy of dropping them a note, or putting a note on the board. If neither course is possible, they should do their best to contact the hon. Members concerned in their offices.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. If your ruling applies to me, does it also apply to the attack on me that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has just perpetrated?

The Chairman: I have already made it clear that my ruling applies to every hon. Member in the House.

Clause 1

TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 128 on page 33 of Cm 1934)'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 131, in page 1, line 9, after 'II' insert

'(excluding Article G D(18) on page 16 of Cm 1934).'.

No. 213, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 128(1)'.

No. 214, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 128(2)'.

No. 215, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 128(3)'.

No. 216, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 128(4)'.

No. 217, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 128(5)'.

No. 53, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 128 in Title II thereof'.

Mrs. Clwyd: The purpose of amendment No. 5 is to enable the House to discuss article 128 of the treaty, which concerns culture and creates a new legal competence for the Community. Previously, the Community justified its actions on cultural affairs by reference to article 235 of the treaty of Rome.

If the amendment is put to the vote, I shall ask my right hon. and hon. Friends not to support it.

I regard article 128 as one of the most important in the treaty. It relates to the essence of civilised living, and it will lie at the heart of future developments in Europe. When Jean Monnet, the founding father of the European Community, was asked some years later what lessons he had learnt, he replied:

"If we were to do it again, we would start with culture."

I wholeheartedly support the idea of the Community's stimulating intellectual ideas, cultural activities and artistic creation. However, I can see some dangers ahead and I shall discuss them later.

Article 128 calls on the European Community to

"contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity".

Paragraph 1 also talks about.

"bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore."

I am not sure whether I know what a common cultural heritage is, but I suspect that it is grounded in the ideas and values of the Renaissance, in the Enlightenment Project and in liberal political thought. Certainly I believe that to be a better approach than seeing Europe's cultural heritage in terms of what the writer Ken Worpole described in a speech in Vienna last year as a

"spatially bound and historically continuous national cultural past".

Culturally, history seen in those terms is on the one hand romantic and safe, but on the other illusory and dangerous.

I believe that the approach that I have outlined as a basis for European heritage is more likely to be useful and less open to abuse than that which seeks to define it in terms of ethnic origin, racial background or some spuriously defined European identity.

Having said that, it is important that cultural development within the European Community should act to some extent as both challenge and counterpoint to some of the shallower cultural developments in the United States which threaten to engulf the western world. Some of that culture is shallow and tacky. That is perhaps not surprising, as it is the product of commercial and private patronage as well as an expression of triumphalist

[Mrs. Clwyd]

capitalist values. While one may deplore snobbish distinctions between so-called high art and low art, we should not be afraid to contrast good and bad art and seek to build on the European traditions of good art.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Listening to the hon. Lady's somewhat surprising attack on American culture, one is bound to ask whether she has ever heard of jazz. Does she think that that is a product of unbridled American capitalism?

Mrs. Clwyd: There are exceptions to every rule; I consider the hon. Gentleman's point somewhat unnecessary.

Paragraph 2 of article 128 calls for co-operation between member states in four specific areas: first, the improvement of knowledge and dissemination of the cultural history of the European peoples; secondly, conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance; thirdly, non-commercial cultural exchanges; fourthly, artistic and literary creation, including the audio-visual sector.

Paragraph 3 calls on the Community and member states to foster co-operation with third countries as well as with various international organisations. No one should be surprised that Britain was adamant that any proposals under article 128 should have no effect unless they were agreed unanimously.

Returning to the overall aims of article 128, I begin by pointing out to our European partners that the public expenditure settlement for the arts in Britain next year shows that our Government are prepared to renege on both the letter and the spirit of its provisions. If the future of European culture and article 128 depend on the actions of this Secretary of State and this Government, bad times are ahead.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most essential cultural provisions of any civilised country is the ample provision of libraries? Those of us who had the privilege of being educated partly in public libraries—and who make no apology for that—believe that it is deeply regrettable that so many libraries are closing and that existing libraries are open only on certain days. Indeed, it is now almost impossible to find libraries which are open every day from Monday to Saturday, and then only for restricted hours, through no fault of the staff.

Should not one of the first priorities be to reassure people that there will be adequate provision of libraries and books? Apart from all the rhetoric, such provisions have done so much in the past, and hopefully will continue in future, to give people the opportunity to read and to widen their horizons, giving them an understanding of events which otherwise they would not have.

Mrs. Clwyd: That is a good point. There is tremendous concern about the future of British libraries. My hon. Friend is not one of the great supporters of the European Community, but he will notice as I proceed with my speech that I shall state that I hope that, when it comes to maintaining our culture and all that it means, the Community will press member Governments to make adequate provision for libraries, so that people may continue to enjoy what they enjoyed in the past under Labour Governments. They are worried because provision is diminishing under this Government. Perhaps the Minister will offer us assurances on that.

After the 1922 autumn statement the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service decided for the first time ever to question the Chief Secretary to the Treasury about the national heritage budget. It is to be congratulated on so doing. In its report, published on 16 December, the Committee points out that in real terms, using the Treasury GDP deflator, the spending of the Department of National Heritage will fall by no less than 5·4 per cent. in 1993-94 compared with this year. The Committee goes on to say that expenditure by the Government on the performing arts will fall in real terms by more than 10 per cent. over the course of the survey period, compared with 1992-93.

Judging by these figures which, to our European partners, are both shameful and pitiful, the future of music, literature, drama and the fine arts is far from safe in the Secretary of State's hands. It is no wonder that Peter Jones, the outgoing director of English National Opera, has described the figure as

"a killer blow for arts organisations big and small".

He and others have quickly spotted that, at the first opportunity, the Secretary of State has broken the Conservative party's promise in its election manifesto to maintain expenditure on the arts.

It is a pity that successive Prime Ministers and Arts Ministers have not been able to match President Mitterrand and Jack Lang, the former French Minister of Culture, in providing inspirational drive and massive cash resources for the arts and culture. That being so, is it any wonder that, while Paris flourishes and threatens to become the cultural capital of Europe, London becomes ever more polluted and less pleasant to live in, with its culture on the verge of decline?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): The hon. Lady tempts me too much. I noticed that there were no wails of anguish when the arts budget increased by 30 per cent. over two years in the previous two years. I noticed also that she still regards Paris as only a threat—quite rightly, because the artistic talent of this country is second to none in the world and will continue to be so.

I further notice the way in which the hon. Lady endorsed the comments of her hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) about libraries, which were astonishing. His views on public libraries are antediluvian and bear no relation to the excellent library facilities that we have. As a matter of interest, it is Labour libraries that have been closing, notably in Derbyshire, and it fell to me and to this Government to insist that some of them be reopened.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister has not answered the main point of my attack. He has not denied that there will be cuts in expenditure on the arts in the coming year. His answer was a diversionary tactic. Nor does he have much to say about the future of libraries. He can only accept my hon. Friend's valid concept of the worth of the library service to the British people. I hope that the Minister will address the points that I am making rather than try to divert the argument.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It is fair for the hon. Lady to attack the Government's policies. If she were a

member of the Council of Ministers and were considering applications for cultural funds from, say, Windsor castle to pay for repairs there and from the Coliseum in Rome, on what basis would she and her hon. Friends decide which was the more European proposal?

4.15 pm

Mrs. Clwyd: I appreciate the deep-rooted dislike that the hon. Gentleman has for the European Community, but I fail to understand the purpose of his question. One would make decisions as a Minister according to the priorities of the day, so it is impossible to answer his question. I should certainly not promise £60 million of public money to repair Windsor castle without making sure that the money was not available from elsewhere.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Clwyd: I shall give way later, when I have made progress with my speech.

News of the Government's incompetence over the British Library project, which has rightly merited comment from the Treasury Select Committee and the Public Accounts Committee, has long since reached Europe. The management of the project, which compares badly with the way in which, for example, the French manage their great national and international schemes, is making Britain a laughing stock.

Much of the world admires the best of European culture—Italian painting, German music, French literature and British drama—which, for the most part, have been liberating cultural forces in Europe and have helped to develop societies which are liberal, tolerant and civilised, but I am conscious of the fact that, in Europe and elsewhere, art continues to perform many roles. Governments and established institutions in Europe have often encouraged art to express national pride and identity.

Locating art and culture in that way in specific places at specific times may be no bad thing. The problem comes when art and culture are used to create a nationalism which is exclusive and threatening and when art and culture are used emotively to stir up national passions. In the years between the two world wars, Goebbels on behalf of Hitler used many art forms—films, radio, music, dance and sculpture—for such purposes. In that way and at that time, European culture became embroiled in—and debased by—a perversely destructive ideology.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I hesitate to interrupt my hon. Friend lest I bring down upon my head scalding denunciations of my lack of culture, of which I am aware. I do not disagree with much of what my hon. Friend has been saying about a lack of commitment or finance for important aspects of our national artistic development, but will she spell out why she thinks that there should be any commitment in the Community to make that good? I see no indication that the sums of money or commitment about which she has been speaking would be forthcoming from anywhere else.

Mrs. Clwyd: I shall not pour scorn on my hon. Friend, who frequently makes valid points in debate. I am not certain of the point of her intervention, but I will give her one example of how the EC has assisted in providing money for cultural purposes.

When I became a Member of the European Parliament, one of the first actions of the socialist group was to insert a line in the budget to support less-used languages. I am glad to say that that line is still there and that it supports, among other languages, the Welsh language of which I know that my hon. Friend has some knowledge. Many activities in Wales depend on the money provided by that line in the budget. When it was suggested recently that the money might be cut, considerable lobbying ensured that it was sustained.

When I was a Member of the European Parliament, there was real awareness of the need to protect the diversity of culture and language in the European Community. I have no doubt that such sensitivities still exist and that money will be found when the need is established by Members of the European Parliament who, I hope, will be given more power by the treaty to influence the content of the budget.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: I shall give way shortly, but for the moment I should like to proceed.

No one should doubt that, if fascism arose again in Europe, art would once again be contaminated and artists would be tempted to collaborate with evil forces. The recent discovery that Heine R. Müller, one of Germany's finest authors, was an agent of the security police and supplied words for Stasi files, is a grim reminder of how artists can betray values. If such a regime arose, there would, of course, be differences because a modern European dictator would almost certainly concentrate more on controlling pop art and pop culture and would make more use of advertising and communications agencies, which have a curious ability to act without regard to moral values.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I share the hon. Lady's concern about the perverted use of art for ultra-nationalistic purposes. Is she confident that the article that we seek to amend will not be used by European institutions and the Commission in particular as a vehicle for European propaganda for a European state with a European culture? To a certain extent, that would be a perversion of the use of art. Is the hon. Lady not concerned that the article might be used to exert pressure to rewrite European history books? Perhaps we would find out that Waterloo was an honourable draw.

Mrs. Clwyd: The answer is that I am not in the least concerned about that prospect. I was taught no Welsh history in Welsh schools because that became part of the curriculum only comparatively recently. I sometimes wonder how I, as a person of distinctive nationality, could have been denied the history of my country within the United Kingdom. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to address that, rather than speaking about what the Community might do to rewrite history.

Despite worries in Europe about the rise of right-wing forces and an increase in racism, there is yet no sign that fascism is seriously on the march. However, concerns have been expressed, not least in the European Parliament, that the concept of European culture must not become an expression of fortress Europe, creating barriers to immigrants and propelling racist forces within the EC.

[Mrs. Clwyd]

One of the principal reasons for setting up the EC was to prevent central Europe from developing in that way and to ensure that democracies, guided by pluralist principles, would become the norm rather than the exception. Those who would break up the EC and replace it by what President Mitterrand has called "tribal Europe" would risk loosing political and cultural forces which could destroy our democratic values. No one should be in any doubt that, in a tribal Europe based on competing nation states, cultural forces would combine for the worse with the new politics.

There is, of course, another and more hopeful side to what I have been saying. Art does not always serve the needs of Governments. It can be critical, questioning, unnerving, radical, and even revolutionary in intent and content. It can make Governments sweat and even blow them off course, sometimes by the power of simple explanation, sometimes by using irony, ridicule and satire, or it can, as in the case of films and television, embarrass Governments by the sheer power of its imagery combined with explanation. We know that that is true. It is one of the reasons, for example, why the Government have sought to interfere with the broadcasting authorities over programmes such as "Zircon", "Real Lives", "Death on the Rock" and "Tumbledown". Nothing, not even drama, is safe from interference from the Government.

The people of Europe know just how revolutionary art can be. Writers played an important role in helping to create the climate in which the French revolution could take place, a revolution which has been more written about than almost any other event in the history of the world. On the very morning that the revolution broke out, even Wordsworth—a reactionary poet—was forced to make the refreshing comment:

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive".

Two hundred years later, the last Conservative Prime Minister, now Lady Thatcher—for whom notions of liberty, equality and fraternity meant nothing—made it clear to the House of Commons and to the French people that she could not understand what the celebrations were about.

More recent political upheavals, in Russia and Czechoslovakia, were given impetus by the work of writers such as Solzhenitsyn and Havel. Fortunately, oppression sometimes encourages creative art, and art sometimes inspires action through imparting knowledge, raising emotions, creating expectations and giving people courage.

Tomorrow, in the European Parliament, there will be a debate on the priorities identified in article 128. Perhaps I can make some suggestions to enlighten that debate by highlighting the following points. First, the Community laws, which have so far been adopted with a view to creating a single market, do not provide a genuine defence of pluralism. Unless we can act quickly, there will continue to be an alarming decline in the heritage of artefacts, traditions, styles and ideas which underpin Europe's pluralist identity.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I wanted to get in before the hon. Lady went on to discuss the views which may or may not be expressed in the debate tomorrow in the European Parliament. My point relates to the third paragraph of article 128, which refers to responsibility for co-operation with international organisations and specifically refers to the Council of Europe. There has been tacit agreement up to now that the European Community deals with a lot of things but that the Council of Europe has the lead position, as it were, in respect of culture. Does the hon. Lady feel that this article will change that balance?

Mrs. Clwyd: No. I am sure that the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other organisations will have a continuing role to play and that the one will not diminish the other in any way. I am sure that the hon. Member does not need further assurances on that matter: I have no doubt that that will be the case.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I should be most grateful if my hon. Friend would explain to me why the Labour party has taken the position that it has. Essentially, article 128 seems to be about encouraging national diversity. It is all about co-operation between member states and third-world countries. It is not about harmonisation. Why are we discussing this? Is it just because we have put down a probing amendment, or is it about extending the competence of the Community in this way? I should like to know.

Mrs. Clywd: I thought that I had made myself clear at the beginning. I said that it was an opportunity to have a debate on this subject and not to vote at the end of it.

The second point that I should like to make is about language, which is perhaps the most powerful cultural influence. That being so, the EC must seek ways of protecting and promoting languages, including those spoken by minorities. The Minister and I have one thing in common: we speak the oldest living language in Europe —Welsh. He may now speak Spanish better than Welsh, but I know that he can speak the Welsh language, which goes back to the sixth century. Unlike Anglo Saxon, we need no help in understanding language that was written in the sixth century. I shall use a few words, which I shall spell out in detail afterwards:

"Gwyr a aeth Gatraeth oedd ffraeth eu llu"

That is part of a sixth century poem in Welsh, which everybody who speaks Welsh understands. The Minister, no doubt, will want to repeat those words. Unfortunately——

4.30 pm

The Chairman: Order. Despite having a Welsh surname, I regret that the Chair does not know what that means. The House should know what it means.

Mrs. Clwyd: It is difficult to translate poetry, as every hon. Member will know. It is a battle-cry about men going into battle at Catterick camp in Yorkshire. It does not sound quite as good in English as it does in Welsh. If Conservative Members press me, I will happily recite the whole poem in Welsh.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: I should like to complete the point before giving way.

Unfortunately, less than a quarter of Welsh people now speak the Welsh language, but I have no hesitation in prophesying that the language will never die. It has lived next to a very strong culture and, despite the centuries of

living shoulder to shoulder with that culture, has managed to survive. I am sure that the new Welsh language Bill will ensure that it will survive and that the European Community will recognise the importance of other languages and cultures and help to sustain languages such as Welsh. Special attention must be paid to translation, publishing, book distribution, promotion, reading, inter-library co-operation and, of course, broadcasting.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: "a'r mwyaf o'r rhai hyn yw cariad".

I trust that the hon. Lady can translate that for hon. Members who cannot do so.

The Chairman: Order. I repeat that I cannot translate it. I had some difficulty passing O-level Latin, if that was Latin. It is important, and I hope that hon. Members will not abuse it, that we must know exactly what everybody is communicating. I must ask the hon. and learned Gentleman to be kind enough to translate it for the record.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: It is slightly biblical. It is to do with charity:

"faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity"—

in Welsh.

Mrs. Clwyd: I understood the odd word, although the hon. and learned Gentleman may need some help with his pronunciation. One or two words were quite clear.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): The hon. Lady mentioned with great and justifiable pride the traditions of the Welsh language, but we are talking about the European dimension, and Hebrew is a much older language which has been in continuous use. Surely Hebrew is part of European culture and civilisation as well? It is the particularity of this—the direction of funds, the support of what and for whom, who controls it, and what are the democratically accountable elements—which determines part of this debate, and I hope that the hon. Lady will have regard, first, to Hebrew and, secondly, to who will democratically control these funds.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Member may be interested to know that Hebrew and the method of teaching it very quickly to people have been the foundation for some of the rapid courses in teaching Welsh. I thank him for that observation.

In many ways, the process of the European Community and the European Parliament in deciding priorities and budget lines is more democratic than in the House. When I was a Member of the European Parliament, it was possible to vote a budget line by line—something that is not possible under the procedures of the House. The hon. Gentleman might like to give the European Community and Parliament some credit for that.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is it not also true that, having voted it point by point, the European Parliament may frequently see the whole of the budget overturned in a very short time?

The Chairman: Order. We are not discussing the European budget; we are discussing the deletion of culture, and the reasons why it should or should not happen.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) for making that point, and perhaps I can answer it another time.

The biggest problem facing the Community—and, thus far, the Community has done little to alleviate it—is the scourge of unemployment. It is the Community's biggest challenge. It is clear that the development of cultural industries across Europe could play an important role in both bringing down unemployment and enhancing civilised values. Here is a potential area of enormous growth, particularly where cultural industries link up with developments in information and communications technology. The Community has the ability to set up and maintain cultural networks and to create and strengthen cultural links.

The European Community is the ideal forum to create a European film industry, the creation of which would provide new and exciting prospects for Europe's film buffs. A successful European film industry would have important spin-offs for many art forms, as well as providing a boost for jobs. Britain has every reason to support such a venture because of the collapse of our own film industry. Both here and in respect of the cultural industries to which I have just referred, the EC should be prepared to give grants and loans for imaginative projects.

Mr. Key: I am sure that the hon. Lady would not wish to leave the story half-told. This country has the benefit of some of the greatest film makers in the world. She will acknowledge the way in which, despite the very tight public expenditure round, we have joined Eurimages, the European film agreement, which will have an impact on the British film industry.

Mrs. Clwyd: Despite the rosy picture that the Minister paints for us, I am afraid that not many people would share his view of the British film industry at the moment. Certainly film makers themselves would not do so.

The European Community should consider ways of making member states improve the quality of life by encouraging better standards of design in all areas, including public buildings and spaces. In Paris, Seville, Barcelona and elsewhere, design has been an important driving force behind inner-city regeneration. The EC should seek to ensure that national Governments and cities have coherent planning policies and access to good architects.

Sir Teddy Taylor: How could you do that?

Mrs. Clwyd: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will let me tell him. It would be helpful if the European Community could set up across Europe "percentage for art" schemes through which a small percentage of new building costs is used to enhance the immediate environment with sculpture and other works of art. The European Community could ensure a level playing field in that sphere.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: I am sorry, but I must proceed. I have given way many times.

Similarly, the European Community might draw up regulations on resources for public art projects. The object of such schemes would be to improve the local environment, the design of housing estates, waiting areas in benefit offices and out-patient departments in hospitals.

[Mrs. Clwyd]

Britain should want to support such ideas. Last year, although the Government spent £3 billion on public buildings and works, they failed to use design and architecture to create a good environment. Perhaps the European Community has to set the standards.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: I have given way many times. I understand that some hon. Members may want to prolong the debate, but I wish to conclude.

The European Community should certainly see one of its roles as that of preventing Government interference in the arts and guaranteeing rights of expression and the freedom of the press in Europe. British legislation is notoriously deficient in that respect and, as we all know, the recently published Calcutt report said little that was worth while on the subject. The European Community also needs to prevent national Governments interfering with, or censoring, satellite television.

In times of recession, Governments—especially the British Government—often behave in a particularly philistine fashion and look to the arts for cuts in public spending. Governments secure those cuts not only through the direct control of central Government spending, but often by placing limitations on spending by local authorities. Britain is in precisely that situation now.

One way out of what one might call the philistine's dilemma would be for the European Community to set minimum percentage targets for public spending—national and local—in member states and on cities and regions within member states. That would be one way of ensuring that Britain recognises the crucial importance of the arts to a civilised society and shows that recognition by substantially increasing the resources devoted to arts and culture.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Thank you for calling me, Mr. Morris. I had come to listen to part of the debate, but not to participate, before going to chair a meeting. I had not expected to be provoked to get to my feet. I have the greatest personal regard for the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and I am delighted to welcome her to her new responsibilities—I believe that this is the first time she has spoken in the House since she took her new position—but she made an extraordinary speech, and we should put the record straight on one or two issues.

Although we never have any cause to be complacent, we have cause for quiet pride in the arts in Britain in the past 20 years or so. I do not want to weary the House with innumerable examples, but I shall mention just a few. Let us consider the number of new art galleries which have opened in London in the past decade—the Sainsbury wing at the National gallery, the Clore gallery at the Tate and the Sackler galleries at the Royal Academy.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Capitalists paid for them.

Mr. Cormack: As my right hon. Friend says, capitalists paid for them. I am not citing these examples to heap praise on the Government although I believe that the Government's record stands up fairly well. I am saying that we have cause for pride in this country in what has been achieved, just as we have cause to be proud of the fact that London is without doubt the theatre capital of the world. This very day there are far more theatres open here, with wonderful productions, than in any other capital city, not only in Europe but anywhere in the world.

Let me give a plug—if hon. Members want a wonderful, scintillating evening of marvellous British or English entertainment, let them go to the Globe theatre to see a stunning production of Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband" starring Michael Denison, Dulcie Gray and Hannah Gordon. That is only one example of the richness, diversity and quality of art available.

The Chairman: Order. I have been listening intently to the hon. Gentleman, but he must relate his comments to the Community.

Mr. Cormack: I have every intention of doing so. You must forgive me, Mr. Morris, for being provoked by the unfortunate, snide and denigratory remarks of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley.

Mr. Jessel: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cormack: I hope that my hon. Friend will not be too long.

Mr. Jessel: The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) was, of course, disparaging London as against Paris, which gives a European dimension. Surely London is the musical capital of the world and Paris is not a patch on it. In London there is a great diversity of orchestral concerts and recitals. We have four or five great orchestras and, night after night, London is far superior to Paris.

4.45 pm

Mr. Cormack: In his inimitable style, my hon. Friend has made the very point that I was going to make in answer to your justifiable comments, Mr. Morris.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley has considerable knowledge of Welsh Opera, but she was less than fair to our cultural richness. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) was justified in saying what he said. When we consider Britain in a European context, it is clear that we have every right to hold out heads high—and not only with regard to the performing arts. We have no cause for complacency, but we look after our great buildings far better than most other countries on the continent. Of course, there are things to be learned from other nations and it is right that we should do so. We should work together to enrich our common inheritance.

However, one has only to pass through the villages of France, where the upkeep of churches is vested in the state, to see romanesque church after romanesque church neglected because there is no local pride, feeling or contribution. Rome has already been mentioned in passing. It is a city to which we all look for so many of our common roots, but we can contrast the appalling neglect of some of mankind's greatest monuments with the way in which we in this country try to maintain our heritage. Sometimes it is only right for us not to be complacent or ridiculously proud, but we can take a quiet pride in some of the things that we have and in what we have done to ensure that we keep them.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The hon. Gentleman will recollect that he made it possible for some of us to go

to Czechoslovakia, which was to our great intellectual advantage. That leads to the issue of art theft from which the British art market—and possibly the German and French art markets—benefits but to the detriment of the churches and wood carvings of Bohemia. It is an urgent European problem, even more so in relation to Russian icons. Will the hon. Gentleman endorse the seriousness of the problem, which he, like me, has raised with the Government?

Mr. Cormack: I am glad to give the endorsement that the hon. Gentleman, whom I am glad to call my hon. Friend, seeks.

I strongly support not only our presence in the Community but the general terms of the treaty to which the Bill refers because it gives the Community the opportunity to enlarge. It is in the enlargement and greater enrichment of the Community, by bringing in not only the Scandinavian but the eastern and central European countries in the next decade, that we shall pay our greatest cultural and political service to Europe.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Cormack: I shall just finish what I am saying in response to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) who raised an extremely important issue.

A cultural heritage which is shared and treasured together is more likely to remain intact and to produce reciprocally acknowledged safeguards from the political institutions within the nation states than one which is diverse and scattered. I totally understand and utterly agree with the point that the hon. Gentleman makes.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I simply do not see how the glories of European or cosmopolitan culture have anything to do with the Government. There has been cross-fertilisation for years—the French in Russia, the Russians in Poland, the Swedes in Poland, and the Poles in Sweden. It is absolute nonsense to have governmental interference with culture. As my hon. Friend is a co-author of the most hideous, hippopotamic carbuncle that is to be built in Bridge street—a building which will do everything to harm the record of British architecture and British art—he is hardly in a position to be pompous.

Mr. Cormack: I shall not take any lessons in pomposity from my hon. and learned Friend. Nor do I need any lessons in eccentric and ridiculous utterances. Whether one likes a building is entirely a matter of taste. I should, however, make the point that many people agree with me that, in selecting Michael Hopkins to design the new parliamentary building, the House of Commons made a very wise choice. Mr. Hopkins has produced designs for a building that promises to be one of the most distinguished of the second half of the 20th century—a century not renowned for its great buildings.

However, I shall not allow myself to be led astray any further. Although I have clashed with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) on matters of taste, I totally agree with him about institutional interference in the arts. There is no art that is not diminished and impoverished by governmental interference of the sort that my hon. and learned Friend has in mind. However, it is very important to recognise the contribution that the arts of the continent make to our European identity, and we neglect them at our peril.

I shall never forget an experience that I had in Romania shortly after the revolution there three years ago. I went to talk to a group of young Romanians on the subject of democracy, and it was one of the most deeply moving experiences of my life. I met a great many young people who had never had an opportunity to travel—the opportunity to experience Britain or France or Italy or the bad manners of my hon. and learned Friend in his eccentric garb.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I hope that this is a matter for the Chair. There seems to be a certain amount of revelry in the Committee.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Is it proper for my hon. Friend, whose manners are always appalling and whose dress is worse, to comment on the dress of other hon. Members? I understood that that was something one just did not do. I am properly dressed, nationally dressed and tastefully dressed. The fact that he is a squit is no justification for such comments.

The Chairman: Hon. Members are taking this matter much too far. Let us get back to the debate on the Commission and the Community. There must be no further insults. I ask hon. Members throughout the Committee to remember that.

Mr. Cormack: I completely agree. In any case, any insult directed from that quarter I take as a compliment.

The young people I met in Romania had spent their whole lives under the most appalling of regimes, yet many of them spoke faultless English. When they were asked where their inspiration came from, almost all of them said that it had been derived from literature and music and through the maintenance of their part in a common European culture.

The Community has a role—much less intrusive than has been suggested by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley—to play in ensuring that the incomparable riches of European literature, music, drama and art are not only kept alive but promoted, and it is proper that Governments should inject funds to sustain them. I was provoked by the hon. Lady's critical comments about this country. We have reason to be proud. It is important that these points be made and acknowledged by those who care about such things.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), in introducing this debate, which has taken a highly entertaining turn—a turn hardly to be expected after her speech—said that she had some difficulty in recognising European culture when she saw it. She seemed to have some difficulty in recognising culture at all. It seems to me that she was curiously blind to the culture that has emanated from the new world, which has so greatly enriched the old world and, at least in so far as it uses the English language, is now probably among the more lively components of our culture. For instance, many of the great English language playwrights of the 20th century are from the United States. Arthur Miller is perhaps the greatest living writer of plays in the English language. The hon. Lady's remarks were cheap.

This debate seeks to focus on the role of the European Community and on the expanding part—even if the expansion is limited and gradual—that it is anticipated the

[Mr. Maclennan]

Community might properly play. There are many ways of responding to the question, "What is European culture?" In the minds of some, European culture may be the glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome, and all that stems therefrom. It may be a common awareness of the cultural framework which, regardless of national boundaries within Europe, enables us to adopt cultural references. Tilting at windmills may be a Spanish metaphor drawn from *Don Quixote*, but it is one that springs to the lips of politicians in this country not infrequently. At times I was inclined to think that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley, in attacking the Government, was behaving rather like Don Quixote with regard to the subject of the arts.

Similarly, only the most purblind cultural nationalist seeks to appropriate to himself a particular genius within Europe. How many people beyond those who happen to live in the small country of Austria, where Mozart spent most of his life, claim to appreciate his work? It is not because Mozart happened to spend a number of months in London composing his early symphonies that we share the Europeanness of his music; rather, it is because we appreciate his music as an integral part of the heritage to which we all belong and with which we have grown up.

Likewise, it would be absurd for the German people to appropriate Schiller as peculiarly theirs as so much of his material was drawn from other histories, other sources. I am thinking of his horrific play "Maria Stuart", which depends upon the history of my country, Scotland, and which formed the basis of an Italian opera by Donizetti.

These cultural influences are now so interwoven that the kind of cultural nationalism which we have seen sometimes advocated by junior Ministers from the Department of Education in promoting the reading of particular books in the common curriculum seems to me to be extraordinarily misplaced at the end of the 20th century. To suggest that all children under the age of 12 in this country should become word perfect in the St. Crispin's day speech in "Henry V" seems to me to be a peculiarly narrow view of the dramatic purpose of Shakespeare's play, and to seek to appropriate Shakespeare to this country in a way that is somewhat laughable.

5 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I accept the hon. Gentleman's point, as a person not quite of his high culture, but surely there is also a danger of a kind of universal culture, a mish-mash. Is there not a danger that it all gets confused, like a kind of mid-Atlantic television; like Muzak, a kind of culture-zak, which is rootless and meaningless? If we are to avoid that, people have to be grounded in the art, literature, culture and music of their own country as a starting point for going out and absorbing the culture of the world.

Mr. Maclennan: I give way to none in seeking to promote the culture of my own country, but, if we have to start off with "Greensleeves" in our appreciation of music and elevate it in importance ahead of Mozart because it happens to be of great antiquity and a much loved piece of English music, we are getting things slightly out of proportion.

To revert to the question of what is European culture, I accept that, in describing some of the high points of European art as the common heritage of all European citizens, there may be some risk that we fall into the trap of promoting some sort of mish-mash. But I must say to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that there is not a common framework of reference for ourselves and the Chinese, for example. There is undoubtedly a very highly developed culture in China, but it is largely foreign to people living in Europe. It may be that gradually that will break down and that gradually there will be a much greater awareness of these things, but that may take centuries; it will certainly not take less than many decades.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am listening very carefully, but in this country in the 1700s very large numbers of artists were busy copying Chinese patterns, furniture and lacquer. It may certainly be true that the number of British people who read Confucius every day is limited, but the idea that somehow or other the gap between Britain and China is unbridgeable is not correct. We have shown the sincerest form of flattery, which is imitation, for some centuries.

Mr. Maclennan: Obviously, Europeans are aware of Chinese culture, and the Chinese were aware of European culture when they produced goods for export in the 18th century modelled on European designs for the English, and even the American, market. But there is not the same degree of comprehension of these discrete cultures as there is of the European culture. This is not to rank or rate cultures; it is simply to recognise that we grow up with the language of European culture, as we do not yet with other cultures, although no doubt, as communications improve and as the influence of our ethnic minorities grows within our own community and makes us more aware of some of these cultures which are not yet appreciated in the same way, this will change.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the way in which the English and the Scots acquired this European culture, in the course, particularly, of the 18th and 19th centuries, is extraordinary? We all know that it is only possible to acquire culture with the assistance of state grants. The way in which gentlemen went on the grand tour to try to acquire European culture was quite extraordinary. There was no Minister of Arts, no grants and no European policy for this. One might even say that it is impertinent of individuals to take upon themselves an activity which ought properly to be exclusively that of the state.

Mr. Maclennan: I was coming on to the central point of the interventionary speech of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) about funding. This influence goes back a lot further than the 18th century. The university of Glasgow, the city in which I was brought up, was founded 500 years and more ago on the model of the university of Bologna. The patronage that made that possible was not that of the state; it was that of the Church and Bishop Turnbull.

There has always been patronage of the arts. In earlier centuries, it may not have been the state as currently organised, but it has certainly been as a result of the specific and deliberate fostering of what very often was a minority interest by those in authority. If one looks back to the Athens of Pericles, or the Florence of the Medici,

one sees that those people were not only wealthy, they were also rulers. That, in effect, was the state funding of its day. The fact that we have somewhat different constitutional arrangements today in no way diminishes the importance of recognising the role of the state in fostering the arts.

The Community, in proposing to adopt article 128, in title 9, on culture, is taking quite modest steps forward in the development of this process. They are entirely desirable steps, for hitherto, although the European Community has been able to expend a modest amount of money on the arts—I believe some £5 million per annum, approximately—it has done so in the margins of other expenditure upon commerce, inter-state relations and promotion of the concept of the European identity, in a rather narrow, public relations manner. It has not been able to devote funds strictly to the fostering of the arts for their own value as such.

The provisions of the treaty which we are now debating —there is more than one provision linked together—enable the Community to develop with greater deliberation its cultural function and identity and to take into account its cultural needs in promoting other valued activity on a Community basis. I am thinking, for example, of the importance of taking into account cultural interests in the development of competition policy. It is important that it be recognised that the national heritage should be a consideration which may be taken into account in justifying expenditure which might otherwise be struck out under the provisions of article 92, but which is explicitly safeguarded by the proposed amendments to this treaty.

It seems to me that the European Community can help to promote the sense of citizenship, the virtue of citizenship, of this wider organisation by promoting the cultural identity of Europe and giving itself a competence which it has hitherto not enjoyed.

As I said, it is a modest step, partly because article 128 permits only unanimous action to be taken. It does not involve a great encroachment of national authority; it merely allows steps to be taken when there is agreement. I doubt whether that will prove to be an obstacle to the development of community funding and a common approach to the arts because such matters, as opposed to other areas of public policy, tend to be less controversial between nations. Therefore, I strongly welcome the changes made to the community law as they relate to culture. They recognise the common history, inheritance, and interest in the promotion of art in Europe.

Mr. Jessel: Some 35 years ago, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) played I believe, a violin in the Oxford university ensemble club in which I played a double bass. That is the only time that I have been in harmony with him, as I have not agreed with a single word or action of his since.

This debate is about culture, which is a wide concept. It is about what people are. It is not simply about their language, religion, art or heritage; it is also about their loyalties and to whom they feel they belong.

Paragraph 1 in article 128 of the treaty says:

"The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member State, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore."

I do not know what the "common cultural heritage" is, but I am sure that it should not be brought to the fore. I believe that it is the national and regional diversity which should be kept to the fore. So I disagree with the basic attitude which article 128 seeks to project. The hon. Gentleman said that article 128 was modest, but attitudes matter.

May I first refer to national cooking and cuisine, as that is an aspect of culture? I will be brief. The three greatest European cuisines are French, Turkish and Italian. French cooking is, of course, the glory of France and its identity perhaps taken with its language. It must not be blurred by some common European cultural heritage. It would be utter nonsense to expect the French to blur their cooking with fast foods, supermarket frozen foods, McDonalds and so on. We must uphold the national and regional diversity in France, Turkey, Italy, Scandinavia and the other sources of European identity as expressed in national cuisine.

Mr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that perhaps the European Parliament or the national Government should ban McDonalds from entering their national heritage?

Mr. Jessel: Yes; I think that those countries might seek to encourage that, because they want to put to the fore the idea of a European cultural identity. They should not do that; they should foster national differences and put them first and foremost. That seems to be what life is all about.

We all need to feel that we are part of something bigger than we each are. Life consists of interlocking circles. We are all part of our country, political party, village, firm, religion or whatever. Those are all natural units to which it is a reasonable human instinct to want to belong. However, it is not a natural human instinct to want to belong to a continent or to feel some sort of European identity. Attempts to bring that about artificially are doomed to failure. I hope that they are doomed to failure especially in the gastronomic field.

5.15 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Is it possible to have different loyalties at different levels? Can people be loyal to a continentwide culture as well as to their own country? They can be loyal to the countries within the United Kingdom, their regions, towns and villages. Why do they have to be exclusive, one from the other?

Mr. Jessel: We all feel loyalty to more than one of those units or circles which comprise the life in which we all participate. Some of those units, such as the family and the nation, are more natural instincts than others. If one tries to foster a cultural identity for a continent which is not natural, it will not stick, and something will give.

Sir Russell Johnston: I have no objection to the hon. Gentleman feeling the loyalty which he has expressed so well, but I take exception to being told that I am in some way expressing something which he must define as unnatural if I feel a loyalty to Europe.

Mr. Jessel: It is unnatural. Hardly anyone feels it. If institutions and people try to foster an unnatural instinct, it will crash and will not work. All over the world, there are groupings of nations, federations, unions, communities and so on. We have seen federations collapse in the Soviet Union, in Yugoslavia and in Czechoslovakia. There is friction in Kashmir and in Quebec. In Europe, the Ottoman empire crashed. The Austro-Hungarian empire

[Mr. Jessel]

crashed. If one forces nations together against instinct, it will not stick; it will crash in violence and blood, and it will end in tears.

Mr. Maclennan: I know that the hon. Gentleman is making an extremely serious point about federations and so on, and he used gastronomic examples to illustrate his point. Does he accept that he is on a hiding to nothing if he forces British or English people to eat toad-in-the-hole in preference to poulet à l'estragon?

Mr. Jessel: Of course we all want to taste foreign cooking. I am proud of the fact that I am the chairman of the all-party Indo-British Parliamentary Group. I believe that there are more Indian restaurants in Britain than in India. That is a most remarkable thing, if it is true. I am delighted that there is an increasing consumption of Indian food in Britain, but that does not mean that we should govern India, or that the Indians should govern us.

The Chairman: Order. That subject does not come under this amendment. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will relate his point to the Community rather than to India.

Mr. Jessel: Absolutely, Mr. Morris. I accept your rebuke. You are right; I was trying not to dodge the question of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland.

I turn to the question of the arts in Europe. After 17 years' service, I have just resigned from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which is the 25-nation body on which you, Mr. Morris, have also served. You will be familiar with what I am saying. I was the rapporteur for the introduction of European Music Year 1985, which was the tercentenary of the births of Bach, Handel and Scarlatti who were all born in 1685. European Music Year, on which we did three years' work, was an instance of co-operation between the Council of Europe countries and the European Community. It would have been inconceivable to hold European Music Year without involving Austria—the country of Mozart—Norway—the country of Grieg—or Spain, which, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will know, was not then a member of the European Community.

At the outset of European Music Year, I arranged for the great Belgian violinist, the late Artur Grumiaux, to play an unaccompanied Bach partita in the hemicycle of the Palace of Europe. Incidentally, that building belongs to the Council of Europe and is rented part-time to the European Parliament, which sometimes pretends that it owns the building.

If there is a common cultural heritage within the wider Europe, it does not spring from the fact that it is European. The mainspring of the cultural tradition which is called European is either religion—mainly Christian, or it could be widened to Judaeo-Christian—or national patriotism and loyalty. The common heritage springs from those two factors. In no way does it spring from some European continental instinct.

Let us take the great movements in European art—for example, in painting. They include Italian religious paintings, Dutch interiors, the great Spanish school and English paintings such as those by Reynolds, Gainsborough, Constable and Stubbs. The latter are English. They are British. Their inspiration is English. In the context of the treaty and the debate, there is a bogus argument, with bogus logic. It is that England is in Europe; therefore, those English paintings are European paintings; therefore, they are part of a European cultural heritage; therefore, we shall bring a European cultural heritage to the fore. Yet there is no such thing. They are English paintings, and their inspiration is English.

Dr. Howells: Surely the hon. Gentleman realises that painting cannot be defined simply by its subject matter. The practice of oil painting spread from Europe. Our lack of awareness that technology, technique and ways of doing things are cross-frontier and universal has informed the whole debate so far. It is facile to describe such concepts as national. Paintings are as much about Europe as about Britain.

Mr. Jessel: Usually a painting is of a person, an event or a scene. The context is a country and a school of painting. The inspiration of a particular painting is generally much more national than European, even if techniques have travelled across boundaries. [AN HON. MEMBER: "That is total rubbish."] It is not rubbish. Let us take Italian opera, German orchestral and instrumental music or the British choral tradition—there are three choral societies in my constituency—or the work of Elgar, which is purely English and British. The "Pomp and Circumstance" marches or "Land of Hope and Glory" are clearly patriotic music which evokes patriotic feeling about Britain, not Europe.

British people want to keep institutions such as the last night of the Proms, which are a British, not a European, tradition. British people certainly want to keep our tremendous tradition of British military bands, which are the finest in the world and are trained at the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall in Twickenham and are the envy of the world.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: As a painter, may I say that nothing that goes on in Europe is likely to alter my style of painting or influence it. I do not regard it as European but as Fairbairnian. Dutch paintings, for example, is as it is because the light in Holland is different from that in France, Germany, Italy, Spain or Portugal. That is why painters from those countries all paint differently. God help us if we all try to make them paint the same.

Mr. Jessel: Of course we must all accept that. No one would suggest that my hon. Friend is in any way the same as other people. Long may he remain that way. I hope that we shall continue to enjoy seeing his paintings in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): Perhaps my hon. Friend could help me. Some time ago, I bought a painting by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). It is of an Italian harbour scene. Is it an Italian painting, a Scottish painting, a Fairbairnian painting or a European painting?

Mr. Jessel: Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend knew that my hon. Friend was a keen European and would be likely to buy the painting. *[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. Do I understand that the hon. Gentleman has finished his speech, or is he giving way?

Mr. Jessel: I have not finished my speech. I thought that my right hon. Friend the Minister intended to intervene.

There are several aspects of European culture which we do not want here. One of them is pornographic films, as broadcast on cable television. They are broadcast in increasing quantity. People are worried about the effect on the well-being of their children. Nothing is being done to stop the broadcasting of such films. Everyone has seen and perhaps enjoyed rude things of one sort or another from time to time, but people do not want this stuff to come into their houses by cable television. The European Commission seems entirely lacking in determination to stop it. The Commission is not carrying out the will of the people of Britain in that matter.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does my hon. Friend accept that even all Members of Parliament together can do nothing to stop Europorn coming into Britain, because of the European broadcasting directive, which was referred to briefly at two o'clock in the morning one day in 1989? That is a fact. Even if 650 Members of Parliament said that we wanted to stop European porn such as "Red Hot Dutch" coming into Britain and being sold in Harrow and elsewhere, there is nothing that we could do about it. It is not the fault of the Commission but that of the directive, which was approved by the Council of Ministers *[Laughter.]* It is not a matter for Foreign Office Ministers to laugh about. Some of us care deeply about porn being sold in Britain as a result of a European broadcasting directive.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend is right. I am sure that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench heard what he said. I hope that they will say something about it when they reply.

Mr. Marlow: I realise that my hon. Friend is about to start on another part of his speech, which I am sure is important. Before he does so, may I ask him a question? He will be aware that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who moved the amendment, said at the end of her speech that she hoped that, under article 128, the great panjandrums of Europe such as Mr. Delors and his friends would be able to set a target for spending on culture of a certain percentage of Government expenditure for all European countries, including Britain. Is it my hon. Friend's understanding that the article is pregnant with such potential atrocities?

Mr. Jessel: Yes. It is all part of the European Community institutions trying to tell us more and more what to do. It is all part of the concept of pooling the government of Britain with that of continental countries. The people of Britain do not want that in the arts, in culture or in any other field. Most of us have nothing against, for example, Spaniards or Italians, but the British people do not want to share in ruling Spain or Italy. They certainly do not want the Spaniards and the Italians to have a share in ruling us.

We want friendship and co-operation. In cultural matters there is already a tremendous amount going on by way of exchanges. Our great orchestras, singers, operas and ballets frequently travel on the continent. There is enormous international movement not only of the live arts but of exhibitions of the work of creative artists—so much so that some people have begun to worry.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow) *rose——*

Mr. Jessel: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I must conclude.

Paintings are moved so often that some people are worried that they may be damaged as they are flown around the continent in aeroplanes. Many exhibitions are paid for by the British Council. I am all in favour of bilateral sponsorship, and some exhibitions are sponsored by American and Japanese interests.

The system is going extremely well. It does not need to be tampered with. We do not need bits of paper from the European Commission. We should remember that sound and sensible American doctrine: "If it ain't bust, don't fix it." Let us concentrate on diversity and cut out all the nonsense about bringing a common cultural heritage to the fore. We do not want it, we do not need it, we ought to have nothing to do with it, and we ought to throw out this terrible treaty.

5.30 pm

Dr. Kim Howells: As someone who considers the definitions of what constitutes good, or high art, and bad, or low art, to be problematic at best and irrelevant most of the time, it grieves me to have to beg to differ with my esteemed colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). I suspect that the lyrics of Cole Porter and Bob Dylan explored and reflected the experience of contemporary life with at least as much veracity and insight as the very best librettist of a 20th century opera, and probably a lot better. It is not helpful to talk about the influence of culture in that way, nor is it possible to describe what is a great culture and what is bad.

So-called high or great art has appropriated modes of dance and speech which were—and are—developed in popular dance halls and on the streets, which are not necessarily recognised as the seedbed of great art by the people who are paid excellent salaries to tell us what does or does not constitute great art. I hope that article 128 will not result in a proliferation of salaried positions throughout Europe for culture vultures who, I am afraid, expropriate far too much of the money that is made available to artists, writers and musicians in Europe, and which should end up in their pockets, rather than with quangos from Dublin to Berlin.

The interesting aspect of article 128 is that it may make possible co-operation in film production throughout Europe. This country has a great, but aging reputation in film. We have watched our film industry decline rapidly during the past 20 years. Although we must be careful not to romanticise the French and Italian film industries, we have a good deal to learn from them about the way in which we fund films. It is important to emphasise that the British film industry—I say British because I want to differentiate between English and Welsh films——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): What about Scottish films?

Dr. Howells: I shall discuss Scottish films in a different way.

We must understand the relationship between film making in this country, which is mainly English-speaking, and in America, as that is important if we are to understand our relationship with Europe. There has been a great flowering of European film making, especially after

[Dr. Howells]

the second world war, and a parallel decline in British film making. Perhaps that has as much to do with the direct competition that we face from English-speaking film makers in America as it has to do with any decline in cultural talent and creativity in this country. I believe that it has much more to do with that competition.

During the past five years, the Welsh language channel S4C has been one of the great cradles of film making, albeit on a modest scale, and large sums of money have been made available to it. I understand that they run to about £45 million a year at the moment. Knowing the Government, it is a mystery to some of us why that generosity continues. I am glad it does, because it is an interesting and worthwhile experiment, which shows that it is possible to fund film, or at least to create a seedbed of talent and hope that it will develop.

Mr. Key: That illustrates exactly what we mean by subsidiarity. The great benefit of article 128 in the treaty of Maastricht is precisely that it concentrates on what national Governments should do and does not seek to establish a grand European design. In the same breath, I must draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to what is happening in Scotland with the Gaelic language and the fact that, when talking about less-used European languages, it is important to understand exactly what we mean. We are not merely talking about languages spoken by a few score thousand people. The Danes are very sensitive about Danish being a less-used European language, as are the Germans in the context of publishing.

Dr. Howells: I thank the Minister for that intervention. I think that that is one of the easier examples of subsidiarity to understand. However, it must constantly be tested in this Parliament. We cannot take it for granted that next year's grant for Welsh or Scottish language film making will be automatic. I assume that it will not be, and that we shall have to fight that battle next year as we have done in the past.

Dr. Godman: May I point out to my hon. Friend that there is no hint of any application of the principle of subsidiarity in article 128?

Dr. Howells: Thank you. I understand that the article comes under the heading of those governed by subsidiarity —[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] It is in the first sentence.

On the funding of film making in Europe, I do not for a moment believe that the future lies with some sort of Euro-film culture. Some examples of joint film production in Europe are excellent, but I am afraid that some are the filmic equivalent of the Eurovision song contest. As a fan of cowboy films, I think some of the awful spaghetti westerns that have been made on the prairies of Spain and at Cinecitta in Rome are an example. However, we should not be put off by that—and nor should we see it as the model for the future.

The interesting aspect of article 128 is the possibility that it offers for the movement of capital and the joint funding of films. For whatever reason, there have been many heroic attempts to raise large amounts of money to make films in Britain. One thinks of the successes of people such as David Puttnam in doing so.

Film making is a phenomenally expensive industry, if the films are to compete in an international market. I understand that the latest Steven Spielberg film cost about $55 million, and that the lead character—a dinosaur—cost more than it cost to make the film Casablanca. We must come to terms with how we can raise that amount of money. Whether because of Government policy or the backwardness of banks and financiers and their unimaginative policies, the money has not been forthcoming and our best talents have had to move across the Atlantic to try to find it. I hope that the opportunities presented by article 128 will make the Government take notice of the possibilities, and take a lead in seeking funds.

Mrs. Dunwoody: My hon. Friend mentioned the provision by the Community of money for the making of Welsh language films. Small amounts may be specifically allowable for what are patronisingly called "less-used languages"; but if the British film industry made a determined attempt to secure the fiscal and other support that other European countries give to their film industries, we should immediately be told that that would distort the pattern of trade. It simply would not be acceptable.

Dr. Howells: I cannot agree. This may sound like heresy, coming from an Opposition Member, but I do not believe that the future of films depends on state subsidy. The state cannot fund the film industry, regardless of who governs the state concerned. We cannot ask the taxpayer to put up $50 million, or the sterling equivalent. The role of the state is to create the seedbed for film talent—and, so far as I can see, nothing in article 128 will preclude that happening in this or any other European country. Indeed, we may be able to learn from the European example.

None the less, my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has raised an important point. What will happen, for example, if free competition across European frontiers requires the fair competition office in Brussels to investigate the £45 million given by the British Government to S4C, the Welsh language channel? Will it be seen as unfair competition, on the ground that it promotes the British film industry? I fear that this may spell trouble for many of our finest institutions which currently receive state funds.

I have hopes for article 128. I think that it may advance the film industry—not through the idea that we shall come up with a European image of film, which I consider hopeless nonsense, but perhaps through the idea that the individual creative talent which exists in each European region and nation can be helped by receiving funds.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): I call the Minister of State.

Hon. Members: Why?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hope that it will be convenient if I speak briefly—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. It is for the Chair to select speakers, and I have selected the Minister of State.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Thank you, Dame Janet. Like other hon. Members, I am extremely anxious to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) has to say.

The Committee will be grateful to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) for making it clear that her purpose was to provide the Committee with an opportunity for debate. So far, we have engaged in an amusing and interesting debate, and we have enjoyed that;

I must tell the hon. Lady, however, that—charming colleague though she is outside the House—her speech was, I fear, disappointing to all of us. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) rightly described it as an extraordinary speech, snide and denigrating in tone; the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said the same.

The hon. Lady treated us to a tour d'horizon, but I fear that her horizons proved rather narrow for me, at any rate —and, I believe, for the Committee. Hardly a commonplace did not receive a mention. The hon. Lady's remarks about United States culture and renaissance values, her attacks on the Government and Baroness Thatcher—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I do not expect to hear a seated commentary.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Thank you, Dame Janet.

Those remarks by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley were, I think, a disappointment to the Committee. They were not up to the standards that we expected. Moreover, in your absence, Dame Janet, she came out with some quotations in Welsh and invited me to follow her down the same route. I shall resist the temptation, as heaven above knows where it might lead me.

5.45 pm

The hon. Lady crowned her speech with a very silly proposition: that the European Community should set minimum standards of expenditure—and later on, no doubt, minimum standards of culture. As I have said, she came out with a number of commonplaces; even Dr. Goebbels got a mention. I think that it was Dr. Goebbels who said, "When I hear the word culture, I reach for my revolver."—[HON. MEMBERS: "Goering."] I am bound to say that when I hear the hon. Member for Cynon Valley discussing this subject I tend to reach for my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks)—who, alas, is not present today. I think that he would have dealt with the hon. Lady's remarks much more briskly and comprehensively than I could.

The article, as drafted in the treaty, responds to our concerns and provides a fully satisfactory basis for the development of cultural activity. It puts the emphasis where it rightly belongs—on national initiatives. It talks, for example, of the Community's "supporting and supplementing"—not replacing—co-operation between member states, and of the need to respect "national and regional diversity". It is also outward-looking in recognising the need for both the Community and member states to co-operate with third countries, the Council of Europe and others; and, in what is inevitably a sensitive area, it offers the safeguard of unanimity and specifically excludes harmonisation.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage has supported me throughout today's debate. As the creation of the new Department of National Heritage has underlined, the arts and heritage are of growing importance in many people's lives. That is true both in this country and in other member states. In practice, EC Culture Ministers have been meeting for several years, and the level of Commission activity has tended to increase.

It is an obvious advantage to have a proper legal basis for the co-ordination of this activity, which previously took place in a rather unfocused legislative context. Even better is to have a clear definition of what it is appropriate for the Community to do in the cultural field. Thankfully, article 128 eschews the grandiose, and identifies some sensible areas, which member states can usefully work together.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Minister explain why it is necessary to clarify the legislative basis on which Ministers have worked together towards co-operation if—as the right hon. Gentleman has told us—those Ministers do not intend to implement legislation at senior level? Surely Ministers cannot co-operate cheerfully and then suddenly say that they want a legislative base without giving the House a clear indication that they will do something with that legislative base.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There are two answers to the hon. Lady's perfectly fair question. First, in the past four or five years we have become increasingly aware that, unless the areas in which Commission activity is permitted are specifically defined and limited, the Commission in its enthusiasm—which is sometimes well placed and sometimes misplaced—will seek to involve itself in areas where we had not envisaged its intervention. We have become increasingly exposed to that possibility since the passage of the Single European Act. Some articles in the treaty would permit such involvement—by unanimity, I am glad to say.

Secondly, as taxpayers' money is likely to be spent, even though the sums involved will not be huge, I think it right to define, limit and clarify the areas in which the Commission can act.

The extent of cultural co-operation and interchange in Europe is growing all the time. It is already a practical reality that we have experienced in Britain and shared with our European neighbours. One recent example in the United Kingdom was the European city of culture programme and hon. Members, particularly those representing Scottish constituencies, will remember that Glasgow played a quite outstanding role, which has been of continued benefit not only to the citizens of Glasgow but to Scotland as well.

Dr. Godman: What is the Government's current position on the Council of Europe charter on regional and minority languages? Are the Government closer to becoming a signatory to that charter, or do Ministers still have serious reservations about it?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes, it is under active consideration. We hope to be able to respond to that question shortly, although I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a precise answer now.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised a point about Bohemian wood carvings. Several of our diplomatic posts in eastern Europe have reported details of stolen articles of this kind. An exercise is being co-ordinated in co-operation with the Department of National Heritage with the objective of establishing a register of stolen articles, including Bohemian wood carvings, which can be circulated to auction houses in the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) made an interesting and charming speech. At the end of that speech he said something which would have touched a chord with members of all parts of the Committee——

Hon. Members: We cannot hear.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I remind the Minister that both for practical reasons and for reasons of courtesy it is better that he should point in the normal direction.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham was expressing a sentiment that will be shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House. We all need to feel a sense of belonging to our own nation. That is important to us in the expression of our national identity. One of the anxieties that many hon. Members have felt is that, for a number of years, the Community has been moving towards seeking to persuade us that the sense of belonging that we feel for our nation can be, may be or should be replaced and substituted by a sense of belonging to the greater European ideal. In my judgment, the treaty in which the article that we are debating appears gives the lie to that and, to the extent that it ever was true, arrests the process and begins to reverse it.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl said in a speech in Oxford on 11 November:

"We have not laid the foundation stone with Maastricht for a European superstate which will reduce everything to the same level and blur the differences. Rather we have committed ourselves to a Europe constructed on the principle of unity in diversity."

I am confident that the Europe to which article 128, through the cultural dimension, will make a contribution, will be one in which my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham will feel at home and comfortable and in which his English identity is both respected and enhanced.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am pleased to be following the Minister, as it seems to me that article 128 sums up precisely what is wrong with the treaty. It is really about time for the House of Commons to say plainly that the Community must stop imposing from above views that ought to grow from co-operation between nations. The article is a classic example of that.

The Minister told us that, because the Commission does not have a clearly defined role, whenever there is a difficulty it begins to expand into areas in which it has no business to operate. I can understand the Minister's wish to prevent those divisions from getting into administrative and legalistic problems, because they have no direct legal right to interfere in national affairs. But the reality is different.

The House of Commons gets into a frightful muddle when it talks about culture. We have heard one or two examples of that this afternoon. For example, the culture of my grandchildren, which to a certain extent involves the use of videos, books and paintings that are based on the use of computers and computer design, is not the culture from which I benefited many years ago, from teachers who had a far more formal way of teaching. I do not think that they necessarily gave me a more widely based culture—it was simply different.

We should be worried about accepting something that talks about a common culture and says that we should make money available for grandiose events that will look as if they are joint efforts, without asking precisely what that means.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) was concerned about the diminishing British film industry. There are bilateral treaties, and over the past 30 years there have been attempts by the industry itself and by various cultural organisations to produce co-operative films, with varying degress of success, but the reality is that the Community allows enormous differences in national approaches, as it does on so many issues. Were we allowed to protect British films in the way in which the French protect their film industry, there would be some point in looking for a legalistic basis.

The French have always used every known barrier to protect French films, and they will continue to do so with impunity. They will think of a dozen different reasons. They will say that it is entirely a matter of protecting their language and culture, and that it is important to carry that culture to other nations. They use the money available for cultural budgets to go to Africa and other third-world countries to establish bases which are used, sometimes quite brutally, for the extension of trade—and good luck to them if they can get away with it.

If we tried to do the same thing, we should rapidly be told that there was no such protection available for English language films, because English is not a minority language. Not even in the House do we pretend that English is a minority language. From time to time, we might believe that we have the sole right to take control of it, but the truth is that, throughout the world, the film industry makes films in a language which is used commercially in a hundred different countries for a hundred different reasons.

The Community does not need such an article to get co-operation for cultural events. It is quite capable of that without any such definition. The Commission needs the article because it wants to extend its hegemony. That is the reality behind the clause, and that is my basic objection to it. Not all the affectionate or slightly esoteric commitments to the protection of the cultures of those using—that marvellous phrase that the Minister used—"less-used" languages will change the fact that the treaty is meant to "canalise", if we are making up words—*[Interruption.]* The Community makes up words all the time—its treaties could have been written by Lewis Carroll—so why cannot we all play the same game?

In any case, the Community is after a means of defining cultural pursuits and co-operation and the money available for culture. That is disastrous. The whole history of Europe shows that culture is the flowering of the arts created by individuals, not dictated by civil servants, by legislation or even by representative groups such as the House of Commons. Culture comes from inside people.

6 pm

Recently I saw the best piece of live theatre that I have seen for many years, in St. David's cathedral. It was an nativity play about morality, produced just before Christmas by mentally handicapped pupils of a school in the vicinity—young people who believe implicitly in the magic they create and who used that wonderful cathedral to the full, because they understood the connection between what they were presenting and that age-old marvellous church in Wales. That could not have been produced on a co-operative European basis. It grew out of the love and understanding of those young people.

Some hon. Members believe that the House of Commons has had its day, that we are moving to a larger theatre: a European theatre. So why, they ask, should we worry about an extension of the Community's powers?

They say that this is a logical evolution, a normal development towards different political institutions. Not so.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not interesting that, although some of the more enthusiastic pro-Maastricht Members think that the House of Commons has had its day, very few of them want to go to the European Parliament, but very large numbers of Members of the European Parliament, the moment there is a vacancy in the House of Commons, put forward their names and work hard to get here?

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am disappointed that my hon. Friend should adopt such a cynical approach to our colleagues' aspirations in the other European institutions. It is remiss of him to think that some self-interest might be involved——

Mr. Budgen: In her absence, perhaps I might speak for my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who has aspirations to move on from this parochial gathering to a wider and nobler gathering in Europe. Perhaps she is an exception to the general rule.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I had hoped that the hon. Lady would be here in person tonight, because with her histrionic abilities, I am sure that she could define the difference between the theatre of the House of Commons and the theatre of the European Parliament.

To return to the article under discussion, some people think that it is possible to produce an entire programme, using taxpayers' money—taken from the taxpayers of the Community—to develop cultural and co-operative projects. The House is right to have deep reservations about this article. I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) made a warm and committed speech, but I am not sure whether she thought it a good thing that we should develop this European cultural co-operation, or whether, on the whole, she had reservations about it. I at least have strong feelings——

Dr. Kim Howells: Is my hon. Friend saying that culture, as defined by article 128, is so narrowly described as to preclude the idea that the children who took part in that cultural event in St. David's cathedral will probably be able to remain in and around it because we have some European money to help to build roads out to Pembrokeshire? We have also managed to get some European money to build roads up to the valleys.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): We are just getting our own money back.

Dr. Howells: That may well be so, but we should not assume that one lot of money is acceptable while another is not—or that the one is not related to culture and the other is. That is to take an extremely narrow view of what constitutes culture in Europe.

Mrs. Dunwoody: This is my day for being told off by my Welsh colleagues. As a humble woman, I accept that criticism with humility—but I must tell my hon. Friend that what he says is a load of baloney. Some road schemes in this country are announced on large notices emblazoned with blue and gold stars. Those schemes enjoy a tiny percentage of money from the Community and a very large percentage provided by the British taxpayer. If my hon. Friend is suggesting that we can develop cultural events only by obtaining money from the Community, I am not convinced. I should want to see a large budget, clearly defined and under the control of these, admittedly inadequate, Ministers before I was prepared to go along with such an idea.

One has only to read article 128 to realise the difficulties:

"The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore".

What a load of rubbish.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Read us some more.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I could read more of it in considerable detail. There has always been a common commitment to the beautiful. It was William Morris who said that one should have nothing in one's house that was not either useful or beautiful—and I think he meant, preferably both.

Those of us who want the lives of every citizen of this country to be enriched have always wanted access for those citizens to the best of our literature, translated or otherwise—even translations from Celtic enrich those who read them. We want access to museums, to art galleries and to the best of all real art. But the great dearth of culture in the lives of many of those who serve will not be filled by any of this nonesense. Their culture grows out of their interests and their views, and who are we to gainsay them? This article does not deal with that problem, and it does nothing about the dearth of money—money that is needed to help to create the essential arts.

In my constituency, a small unit teaches teachers to enrich the lives of small children using computers in fabric design, picture design and writing music. I have seen the children in question freed from the pressures of having to draw up staves and create tunes by working them out in their heads. They can use the keyboards and computers to compose music. That is the sort of project that we should be pursuing. Nowhere in the Community does it happen, because it would be regarded as beneath those in the Commission who are full-time cultural employees, concerned only with their manipulative powers to control from Brussels.

That is what this is about. It has nothing to do with culture. It is concerned with the extension of the powers of the Community. As such, I would go along with my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley and her fellow occupants of the Opposition Front Bench if they voted on removing the provision.

I would take that view not because I am against culture —even though my ex-husband always used it as a word of denigration; even I know that one must have an expensive public school education before one can be rude about culture—but because I do not see that we are discussing an area in which the EC has any right, legitimate interest or vision of what it is doing. It should not interfere where it has no business to stray.

Mr. Budgen: It would be disgraceful if I spoke for long, because my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), who was a distinguished Minister at the Department of Education, will undoubtedly have a unique contribution to make to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) is also anxious to speak, for he has a strong view about the expression of British identity which is endangered by the article that we are discussing.

[Mr. Budgen]

We are aware of the vigorously authoritarian attitude that is being pursued by the Government in bashing the Bill through the House. They will do their best, by the means available to them, to prevent my hon. Friends from expressing their views. I shall not do the business of the Whips by speaking for too long, thereby excluding my hon. Friends who have distinguished contributions to make to this important debate.

In a long and important contribution, the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) demonstrated what can be described as the progressive force of the Community. She says of article 128, "My goodness, this is a jolly good little article. This is a provision by which we in the Labour party can encourage the institutions of the Community to use their power to subvert the will of the British people, as for the time being expressed in electing a Conservative Government to power.

"We," says the hon. Lady, "would like to see rather more money spent on the arts. We should also like to see local authorities interfered with by a Labour Government in imposing various architectural standards and standards of expenditure. Sadly, we have not been elected by the British people to carry out those proposals, so let us see if we can get them enforced on the British people by a European side wind."

The hon. Lady then uses article 128 as a way of subverting our constitution, and she suggests ways by which it could be extended. As we know, certain people in the Commission would support her in those aspirations. In addition, the European Court, sometimes called a progressive institution, would be pleased to support the aspirations of the Commission in extending the power of the European institutions. So it is easy to see how article 128 could be used for the purposes which the hon. Member for Cynon Valley suggests. For those and other reasons, it is important that we hear the views of the Committee before a vote is taken on the subject.

It is easy for the Minister to look at a narrow interpretation of article 128 and say that the British Government are not likely to agree to it being extended by the Commission or by any of those in the EEC with federal aspirations. But the most dangerous feature of the way in which business is done in the Community is the trade-off. Consider, for example, the trade-off which allows a British Conservative Government to applaud even the extension of cohesion funds and to pretend that that extension fits easily with the philosophy of the Government, in so far as they have any philosophy.

6.15 pm

I understand that the Government now pride themselves on having none. In the bad old days when we had a British Conservative Government with a philosophy, it used to be rather uncomfortable to return with proposals for rapidly increasing expenditure in the EEC. In the bad old days when Lady Thatcher was leading the Conservative party, she used to find it disagreeable to explain that she had agreed, as part of a trade-off, to increases in expenditure.

When it is said that we do not particularly want the soldiers of the Cheshire Regiment or, as it may become, the Staffordshire Regiment, unhappily risking their lives for European purposes in Bosnia; and when, as may be the case, this House begins to express its distaste for the European purposes of the Commission in the old Yugoslavia, it is likely that somebody will ask, "If you are going to take your troops away, do you think you could give us a bit more money for European culture?" So, rather than saying no to everything, the trade-off will be a slightly more progressive attitude towards article 128.

As I said, I shall be brief, because I am anxious that my hon. Friends are not excluded by the authoritarian attitude of the Whips from expressing their attitude towards the subject—*[Interruption.]* I hope that they will not only give their attitude but take action. Indeed, I am anxious that we hear the views of the whole House.

Article 128 is no insignificant matter, because it is to be considered a means of supporting and enhancing the identity of the European state. Why does any state subscribe money to the arts? In our modern democracies, money is sometimes given simply to buy support, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is so crude as to point out—*[Interruption.]* He is a very good man, whose views I summarise by saying that he points out that sometimes the funds subscribed by working-class taxpayers are used to buy middle-class support for expensive shows for which the middle class would rather themselves not pay entirely.

That is state expenditure of a modern, democratic sort. Much reference has been made to state expenditure on the arts in the past. It is pointed out that the Medici spent a great deal of money. That happened not because the Medici were demonstrating, as they spent their money on art, that they had a particularly warm feeling for their citizens and were saying, "We must never poison another human being."

Mr. Cormack: Perhaps my hon. Friend is referring to the Borgias.

Mr. Budgen: Let us not go in for another assassination: let us respect the dignity of our citizens. The Medicis decided to put some cash into culture to demonstrate the power, the authority and the identity of their state. That is what article 128 is about: it is designed to allow those who wish to enhance the identity of the European state to give money to promote that aim.

I listened with care to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). I wonder what my attitude would be if I were a Welsh nationalist and there was before Parliament a measure authorising expenditure on the making of the Union Jack. I would vote against it, because the Union Jack is a symbol of the authority and identity of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Budgen: I should like to finish this peroration, and shall deliver a second one when I have had time to draw breath.

Article 128 is designed to enhance the identity of the European state, and that is no more and no less than what every state has done throughout the ages. It has taken money from the taxpayer to enforce its power and enhance its identity.

Mr. Rowe: I find my hon. Friend's picture more encouraging than the reality, which appears to be that organisations such as the European Community or the Arts Council spend far too much money encouraging

extremely divergent cultures and do their level best to revive minority cultures that would be better consigned to oblivion.

Mr. Budgen: In a democracy, Governments use cultural subsidies to buy the support of various groups. I shall give an example. Until recently, Wolverhampton council was for a long time controlled by the Labour party and used to buy the support of ethnic groups by offering subsidies to ethnic theatres. Of course, that is not much different from the Government offering to support the middle class and trying to buy their votes by giving enhanced grants to the Arts Council. That is an inescapable part of the modern democratic process, but it has been the practice throughout the centuries for the state to spend money on culture to enhance its authority. Of course, article 128 does not state the honest federalism of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) but slips it in slowly and surreptitiously, carefully and hypocritically, and deals with

"bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore."

I do not know when European cultural policy will have a new boost. Perhaps it will be in 1996, when there is a mark 2 Maastricht treaty or when, eventually, the true federal nature of the European institutions will be unclothed a little more. Article 128 is just as much an expression of European identity as the provisions for European citizenship. Those of us who are British nationalists want to reject it all.

Mr. Randall: Essentially, the article is about co-operation between member states and with the third world to encourage diversity. That is a wonderful aim, which I wholly support, because culture transcends national boundaries. The article extends the Community's powers to cover culture, and that is welcome. The private sector, not just the Government, has an important role in funding the arts and culture. I was devastated by the way in which the funding of the Royal Shakespeare Company meant that some important productions had to be terminated. There was no scope for cutting costs, other than by reducing quality, and joint funding was essential.

The co-operative involvement of all Community countries as outlined in the article will benefit culture not only in this country but throughout the Community. Some such structure is needed because current co-operation is far too limited and needs to be extended. The arts and culture involve minority interests that cannot be funded by the market, because insufficient money is collected at the kiosks of theatres and other establishments. Therefore, there must be some subsidy.

Article 128 contains some worthwhile elements, and I am pleased that my party supports it. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said that we would not vote against it, but one's voting intentions on the treaty as a whole do not show whether one supports or is against an article. That is why I intervened on my hon. Friend.

The co-operative improvement of knowledge of European culture and its conservation would be excellent. The notion of exchanges of artistic and literary creations would strengthen the arts and culture. The article would encourage national diversity: if it did not do that, but sought to create homogeneous cultures, I would have great reservations about it.

Dr. Godman: Article 128 would give the Commission far more competence on cultural matters. Is my hon. Friend relaxed about such a development?

6.30 pm

Mr. Randall: Yes, I am—for the main reason that, when it comes to decision-making, recommendations will be made but there will be a question of unanimity, so I believe that there is protection if one has a feeling of horror about the power of the Commission. That is a powerful argument.

We are not talking about harmonisation at all. We are not saying that each national Government has to have the same legislation on this and that we are going to create art and culture like sausage out of a sausages machine. I am convinced that the will will exist throughout the Community and in our own Government and Opposition to ensure that that richness in our society would not be swept away. I believe that, although it is easy to put over the cynical argument that this is the Commission with Delors marching through and tearing our paintings off the wall and stamping on them and carrying out all that kind of nonsense, that cynical argument does not stand up because of the importance of this whole thing.

We are talking of the whole character and personality of our country expressed through this medium. That is all I wanted to say. Article 128 is worth while if one looks at it in isolation, as we must do in Committee. It is comprehensive and encouraging. The notion of the countries of Europe co-operating in this way is something which I find exciting; I am convinced that it will enrich the culture of our society and of Europe in a shared way which is utterly exciting.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: This culture article—article 128—reads like an article in the constitution of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It enjoys all the same sort of ad hominem goodwill, such as:

"while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore."

It has a series of aspirational claims. However I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) who led for the Opposition in characteristic form, showing the true colours of this debate. She moved an amendment to remove article 128 from the treaty, and I intend to speak in favour of that amendment. The hon. Lady suggested that she was probing, but I could not identify one probing comment in her remarks. She indicated, however, that she did not intend to oppose the article. I am disappointed about that, and I will give my reasons.

My hon. Friend the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) gave the essential concept of the nature of what is stated: art and culture are often used for the purposes of aggrandisement. I am very conscious of that aspect because in some of the instances that have been mooted and floated around the House—the great ruling families such as the Hapsburgs and the Medicis—it was to be an adornment for the state. That brings me to the point that I think has informed these debates the whole way through the examination of the Bill in Committee—that this is a constitution that we are considering. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) tried, under title I, to identify whether this did not have the elements of the state, of the executive, of their powers and

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

competetences and so on. One acknowledges that this small article 128 is an instance which lays claim to a common policy.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley noted that the article added a new legal competence to the Community, and said that additionally it was under a single institutional framework. Why is this necessary? The Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) was cautious under title I to say that this House need only legislate for that which is necessary. What is necessary about legislation within the United Kingdom to enforce the objectives of this article? What is wrong with working as we have always worked—intergovernmentally—to establish the objectives and ideals that we seek?

We can go through the words, but what is diversity of culture and "flowering of cultures"? What is European culture? I suggest that European culture is the sum total of all the constituent elements in it, no more and no less. When we say "culture", it includes all the elements of those things to which we respond. Opposition Members identify what is meant by the distinction that is often made in a popular sense: popular culture, high culture and middle-brow culture.

All these are competing elements, and many of the objects now identified as culture grew from the popular activities of the people of individual nations. Over the years, they fade or come into glory as they are: the insistent drum-beat, that everything now needs subsidisation or the transfer of funds from one area to another, is to keep what in being? I think of all the thousands of artefacts from ancient Greece that have been destroyed. Part of life is a remembrance of things past; part of it is the echo through the lines of culture that we have. What hon. Members have said is quite right: our culture is a common culture in one particular—that it draws from all the strengths and beacons of light, of intelligence, of spirit and soul that have illuminated the ages. Yet none of this has required a central European organisation to identify it.

Who is the best custodian of culture? If it will not flower from within ourselves or the people, surely it is the national Government who have the greatest regard. Has French culture failed to flourish because there is no European central commission initiating proposals for the survival of French culture? The proposition is ridiculous. France, vigilant as always to its honour, its integrity, and the regard in which it is held in the world, consigns a third of its public revenues to the maintenance of its cultural objectives. It recognises in culture that the prestige, the association and the grandeur which comes from that are part of its standing in the world as a whole.

It is because the French as a nation state within the European Community identify that, that others do so. We see in Germany the huge level of subsidies poured into state opera companies, and God bless them for it. They must direct their resources where they want and identify the elements of culture that are theirs.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley opened by saying that she was in harmony with our Front Bench, thus emphasising that we are now living under a Con-Lab Government in respect of Maastricht and there is resentment clearly emanating from Labour Front-Bench Members that they are not sitting with their colleagues in this matter, on the Government Front Bench. That illustrates the tensions involved.

No one, not even the Minister of State, explained why the matter needed a single institutional framework, nor why it needed a legal competence. If I understood his rather dismissive argument, it was that the Community extends its competences anyway and that putting some new competence in and giving it a legal life would limit its natural instinct to expand into other areas. That is a most extraordinary argument and a very confused one. If we are saying that we are all at risk without giving greater competences to the Community, that it will have them anyway, and that by giving them greater competences we are limiting this one, that is a very curious argument. Yet that is the sort of low-level, shallow argument of lies and deceit to be forced on the nation to tide us through on this Bill.

There has been no candid examination of any clause that I have heard in terms of what it is intended to accomplish. Why does it require a single institutional framework? Why does it need adjudication by the European Court of Justice? How do we democratically effect the objectives? We have talked about subsidy. Opera is a particular identity of Italy. The Italian state and the regional governments pour sums into opera houses that we do not even begin to understand. Does that require subvention from the centre,

"acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission"?

Notice the insidious way in which the Commission must propose, because the proposer holds the agenda and controls the directions to which the Community looks.

That assault on such things as our culture has caused the Danes to pause and hesitate, because linked with culture is another matter that we shall debate later—citizenship and all the linking elements of the state. The treaty is driving us towards a conclusion that, of the whole Community, only the British Government—in association, of course, with Labour Front-Bench spokesmen—wish to hide and conceal from the British people. Ours is the only Government in the Community who do not believe that the treaty is a centralising treaty. Every other leader has said, "Hallelujah—we are now marching towards a more central, single identity."

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Shepherd: I shall give way to my right hon. Friend, who would not give way to me.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have given way to my hon. Friend on other occasions; I am sorry that I did not do so today. Does he think that the Dutch Government, whose unitary text was defeated, went back saying that this was a great success?

Mr. Shepherd: I said that every other Government believed that Maastricht is a centralising treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Shepherd: Let me finish my point. If my right hon. Friend the Minister of State had had the courtesy to listen to the points and arguments advanced by Members across the Committee he would have been able to respond to them. It is difficult to put an argument when the response has already been given. The Dutch Government did not

get as federalist and centralising a measure as they would wish. Nevertheless, they recognised that the treaty is a centralising measure and told their people that.

Mr. Garel-Jones: When?

Mr. Shepherd: Several times—press reports have shown that.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is making a series of assertions. The fact is that the Dutch Government were openly disappointed about the defeat of their text. I am not aware—if my hon. Friend is so confident, perhaps he can give an instance—that they have said that they regard Maastricht as a centralising treaty.

Mr. Shepherd: It is a consolidating measure. My right hon. Friend will have to accept my recollection from press reports. I assure him that assertions have been made across the Community that Maastricht is essentially a centralising treaty, that the elements of the state are coming into place and that competences are being extended. The parrot chant of the new Con-Lab Front Bench is that the treaty is held back by a concept of subsidiarity, but no legal judgment has given flesh to confidence, in a juridical sense, in the belief that that means anything.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Has my hon. Friend noticed the insidious wording of paragraph 1 of article 128, which says:

"The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore."

Does my hon. Friend agree that, when there is conflict between the two, as there is bound to be, the Community will emphasise the common culture at the expense of the national culture?

Mr. Shepherd: My hon. Friend identifies one of the central concerns. I add the concern that a common anything is a homogenisation. The criticism of American culture made by many people on the continent of Europe is that it insidiously infects and diminishes European culture. The violence of American films and the crassness of American civilisation and culture are often cited. We all affect each other, but I fear that a central institutional framework will homogenise, reduce and diminish. Ministers have not argued why the French need protection for their diversity and the flowering of their own culture.

The second concept that has not been dealt with in the debate is

"Action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging co-operation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas".

The first is

"improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples."

Again, I do not know what that means or why each individual nation, which is responsible for the custody and safeguarding of its historic traditions, cannot argue its own perception.

What is a European history with a common perspective? The one glory of life, civilisation and culture is that we stand on different hillocks, perhaps looking at the same distant horizon, but because the angle of perception is different, our interpretation of the view is also different. That is an intimate part of the culture and diversities of the people of Europe. The institutional framework set out in the article contradicts the objective that it claims to seek.

6.45 pm

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend may be living under some misconceptions, which the article will help to put right. For example, he may believe that King Harold was a great English patriot trying to keep the French at bay and that Edward the Confessor was a traitor because he asked those dreadful Frenchmen to come here. The reality is that Edward the Confessor was a great European patriot, and what he did when he ceded his kingdom to William the Conqueror was a precursor for the Maastricht treaty. When the Commission takes over the writing of the European history that our children are taught in school, that new reality will be very much the truth.

Mr. Shepherd: I am grateful for that. I am always in awe of the perspective from Northamptonshire.

The dissemination of the culture and history of the culture of European people is a major debate on what constitutes history and what is history. Every hon. Member reads—other than the Home Secretary in connection with this treaty and public interest immunity certificates. Aragon was asked, "What is history?" His response was, "First you have to invent it." That is the argument that I am trying to put. We look from different perspectives and each of us has a particular recollection: that of the nation state, by language, unites a view. We fight over the interpretation of history, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has shown. We are very particular in our understanding of what it is. My fear is the homogenisation of all these matters.

The last thing that I want to say is about

"artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector".

Let us remember what art and culture was about. It was a popular expression of who we are, but now we have to subsidise it. I recall a directive on the proportion of television programmes which could be devoted to matters emanating from the United States. The European Commission wanted to protect what it regarded as the European concept.

We genuinely have a difficulty: English is our language. Churchill's "History of the English-Speaking Peoples" reaches around the world. We will always have a difficulty in that the accessibility of ideas, thoughts and spirit is communicated in a tongue that we understand. The United States will always be a great influence on us—and we, hopefully, on it—because of the commonality of our language. Our language reaches Canada, Australia and New Zealand. At the heart of all cultural, historical perceptions and so on, stands the fact that, no matter how rich or poor or what colour people are, we are united by our language. We speak the intimacy of our thoughts and experiences each to the other in our language.

All this nonsense, which is an endeavour to destroy the character of communities, of countries and of languages —all this tries to strike at the one great deception of Europe: it is not equal as regards public opinion, knowledge or understanding because it is not common in language. What do we do about that? Do we do something about it through this measure or through educational measures seeking some sort of Esperanto? In what direction are we heading?

[Mr. Shepherd]

Glory be to our diversity. What was it, that wonderful thing?

"Glory be to God for dappled things."

We are a "dappled thing". Let us have glory for what we are and reject the nonsense of homogeneity in this treaty insidiously undermining our institutions and opening up a gulf between both Front Benches and the people. How can the people have respect for the House when we are marched through the Lobbies and forbidden to speak? We cannot even return to a question. Every application for closure is accepted. We have had no free speech on this measure.

What do all the dumb journalists in the Hallelujah Chorus up in the Gallery think they do with their absurd commentaries on the British process of making and unmaking laws? Not one stays to listen to the detail of debate. "Yesterday in Parliament" is now in the business of mere sketch-writing. I listened to it this morning and I did not know what were the matters being discussed in Parliament in respect of the greatest constitutional settlement of the past 200 years, taking away our ability to change what Commission officials—Eurocrats—determine is in the interests or nature of European civilisation, culture and history.

We are it, we are part of it, and our constituents are part of it. So long as we can hold Ministers accountable for their actions, we can change the laws under which we live. We can direct all the funds that we wish to any objective that the British people deem appropriate. But by these arrangements, sneakily put through by conniving Front Benches, the Con-Lab alliance on this matter intends to try to take away that right.

If I speak passionately on this, it is because I feel passionate about it. If I hear people ask why we have not got through the debate, as some foolish hon. Members do, I will tell them that this was the method by which other countries of Europe lost their freedom: good men sat on their hands. Good men—and women, too—said that it would not work, that our fingerprints must not be on the treaty, and all the rest of it. Yet here are the fingerprints, embedding themselves into our very vitals, demonstrating what is the spirit of it.

Across the continent of Europe, there have been moments when each of us has had to turn to the other for the survival of things in which we believe. We have seen atrocities, but so long as there are beacons for freedom, so long as there are Parliaments such as this which can express the views and will of the people, we can stand against the tyrannies which face the ordinary person in this world.

The Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. David Lightbown) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 296, Noes 257.

Division No. 115] **[8.53 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*

Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Hughes and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Bitten, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Bosteng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin

Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Tipping, Paddy
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 70, Noes 297.

Division No. 116] **[7.11 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Cran, James
Cummings, John
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fry, Peter
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hawksley, Warren
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lord, Michael
McAllion, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Marlow, Tony
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Redmond, Martin
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Trimble, David
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wilkinson, John
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Austin Mitchell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine

Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): We come now to amendment No. 6.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. We have just heard a speech by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) about the importance of Parliament as a democratic assembly. It was with some irony that the closure was moved immediately afterwards. It certainly gave rise in some people's minds to the view that perhaps there was some sort of timetable agreed with the Chairmen and Chairwomen of the Committee. I am sure that that is not true——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order. I am seeking your advice, Mr. Lofthouse, on a matter relating to the amendment which we are about to consider. You will know that education and vocational training were never part of the original treaty of Rome, although the subject was mentioned slightly in the Single Act. However, we are aware that it now becomes very much part of what will be decided in this country, because it is very much part of the Maastricht treaty, which we are currently debating.

The House will be well aware of my interest in health matters, and I have to put this point to you because it affects the quality and standard of health in this country. Will we be obliged to accept diplomas, degrees and qualifications from European universities which are not of a standard equal to our own in this country, if we proceed with this Bill and ratify the treaty?

The First Deputy Chairman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is quite aware that that cannot possibly be a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The closure was moved at the end of the last debate at a disgracefully early time; it was less than three hours after the debate had started.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is criticising the Chair. If he wishes to do so, he must put down the appropriate motion.

Sir Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. While appreciating the enormous difficulties and pressures that you face in present circumstances, I must draw to your attention the fact that amendment No. 131, which relates to a very important article on page 16 of the treaty, was not referred to in any way during the debate that we have just had.

If you take the trouble to choose an amendment, I wonder whether it is in order for the closure to be moved when that amendment, relating to article 18, title V, which I and some others think is a matter of considerable moment, is not referred to, directly or indirectly, in any way during the debate. Can you give any guidance to the Committee on whether it is in order for the closure to be considered when one of the amendments which you have selected has not been referred to?

The First Deputy Chairman: Of course it is in order, or it would not have been done. It is a matter for the judgment of the Chair.

Mr. Marlow: I seek to help the House, and I seek your assistance in doing so, Mr. Lofthouse. You are probably aware that, from about 6.35 onwards, there was a growing number, outside and inside the Chamber, of payroll Members. They seemed to be surging towards the Chamber at that stage.

We know how you respect the House and its procedures and are anxious to have proper debates. It has occurred to me and to many of my hon. Friends that the Government are desirous of getting two groups of amendments through before 10 o'clock, because they are fearful that, come 10 o'clock, if they want to move the 10 o'clock motion and the Labour party is here and the Irish Members are here, they might not get it. So there is concern——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I have heard sufficient to know that this is not a matter for the Chair. Is it not a common occurrence that the payroll gathers before divisions? It has always happened since I have been in the House, and the hon. Gentleman must be aware of this. That was not a point of order.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: On a further point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Perhaps you can confirm that the Chair does not have to accept the closure when it is moved by the Whips—that there is a discretion in such matters.

The First Deputy Chairman: It is a matter of judgment for the Chair, and there it stands.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I think that I heard you say a moment ago that it is normal practice for hon. Members to be present at the time of a Division. The thing that worries me is how any of those Tory Members, the lap dogs of the Common Market, and everybody else—*[Interruption.]*—and them as well—manage to know that you would accept a closure.

Of course, all hon. Members will turn up at 9.30 or whatever if it is a 10 o'clock vote. However, if it is an unexpected closure, when the Chair has decided that it is the appropriate moment, how on earth do all those lap dogs know? Since you were not in the Chair when it happened, Mr. Lofthouse, it may well be that there was a nod and a wink in a certain direction from the Whips. If so, it is time that the gang was stopped.

7.30 pm

The First Deputy Chairman: The Chair is not aware of where hon. Members are at any given time. The point of order is not a matter for the Chair. I think that I have taken the points of order far enough.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Recently, I went to the Library to ask how many amendments were grouped together during the passing of the Single European Act, and I was told that it was an average of three or four. This time, however, the number of amendments grouped together is nearly 10. Are you taking that point into account when you consider the length of debates and agree to accept a closure?

If we have an average of 10 amendments, compared to the usual three or four, it will be inevitable, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) has pointed out, that on some occasions, as in the previous debate, some amendments are selected but not mentioned at all. I wonder whether you will take that into account in the next two hours and 29 minutes.

The First Deputy Chairman: The Chair takes those matters into account when it makes its decision.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse.

The First Deputy Chairman: Is it a different point of order from the previous one?

Mr. Marlow: Yes, it is a different point of order. You heard the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) express concern about the coincidence of the timing of the vote with the presence of Government Members. I will not say anything about that, because my point of order is totally different. We all have a great deal of respect for the Chair, and we are conscious that we should help the Chair and continue to show respect for it.

If the Government are seen to want to get two votes on two groups of amendments, there might be a concern among hon. Members that they were getting their way at the expense of Back Benchers. That is obviously the Government's intention, because we feel that they would like to start tomorrow on a clean sheet of social policy.

The First Deputy Chairman: I cannot see any point of order there. It appears that the hon. Gentleman is simply making a speech which borders on criticism of the Chair.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. In the conduct of business in Committee or in the House, when the Government wish to push such matters through, the normal procedure is to table a guillotine motion. This is no criticism of the Chair, because I accept that you, or whoever is in the Chair, must make a judgment based on the position when a motion of whatever sort is put to you.

However, is it not interesting that what we are seeing is beginning to look very much like a guillotine by motions being put to the Chair? I find that very worrying. I hope that you will take into account the perception and the impression which may be created outside if it does not stop. There is a guillotine working, although it was done without having had a debate on it.

The First Deputy Chairman: There has been no guillotine motion whatever. We will now move to the amendments.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I have taken the points of order far enough.

Mr. Marlow: I spy strangers.

Notice taken, that strangers were present.

Whereupon The FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143, put the Question,* That strangers do withdraw.

Question negatived.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Articles 126 and 127 on page 32 of Cm 1934)'.

The First Deputy Chairman: It may be convenient to consider at the same time the following amendments: No 193, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(p)'.

No. 199, in page 1, line 9, after 'II' insert

'except Article 57(2) on page 13 of Cm 1934'.

No. 212, in page 1, line 9, after 'II' insert

'except Article 127(2) on page 32 of Cm 1934'.

No. 365, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 57 as referred to in Article G on page 13 of Command Paper number 1934'.

No. 52, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert 'but not Article 126 in Title II thereof'.

Mr. Lloyd: Despite a delayed start, I begin the debate on vocational training by simply saying that the new competence which would reside in the Community is something to which we attach considerable significance. That is why the Minister will understand that the amendment is a probing one. Perhaps I should not reveal the Opposition's hand too early but simply say that we do not wish to put it to a vote, whatever the intentions of others.

It is widely recognised throughout the Community that vocational training and education lie at the heart of the future, certainly of young people in Europe and more generally in terms of the economic future of the whole Community. I must begin by pointing out that, during the United Kingdom's recent presidency of the Council of Ministers, it is significant that the Government paid so little attention to vocational training that there was only one formal meeting of the Social Affairs Council during the six-month period, and that only one resolution was adopted which had any relevance whatever to vocational training.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not want to embarrass the hon. Gentleman, but he will be aware that it is the rule rather than the exception that there should be one Social Affairs Council. During the past five years, which is 10 presidencies, I think that I am right in saying that we have had more than one Social Affairs Council only twice during a presidency.

Mr. Lloyd: If we had a Government who took unemployment and employment issues seriously, it might have been appropriate to start the presidency with a full meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss what most people in Europe recognise to be the dominant issue facing our economy. There is no argument that there could—and, indeed, should—have been more meetings.

The central point which I was establishing is that, during the six months of the presidency, only one resolution went through which dealt even vaguely with training and associated matters. That was a resolution on the transparency of qualifications.

The six-months presidency certainly did not demonstrate the Government's commitment to development of a Euro-competence in which adult training and education were involved. A European Community publication called "Skill Shortages: A Growing Problem in the Community" made it clear that the Community, the Commission and other institutions attach massive importance to the role of training. They argue:

"In general, the level of adult labour-market training activity tends to be higher in Member states where economic productivity is above the Community average and lower in countries with lower productivity."

Most importantly, they pointed out that there seems to be, effectively, a virtuous and vicious circle of economic development. Those countries which fail to train have low productivity and, having low productivity, fail to train. Those countries with high productivity have high levels of training and, consequently, continue to have high levels of productivity.

That is certainly the real history which we can observe between, for example, the United Kingdom and Germany. Over the years, the Germans have put considerable effort into both increasing productivity and investing in training, whereas in the past 13 years we have had a Government who deride training and want us to move towards a low-wage, low-productivity economy—one with all the worst features of the vicious circle which the European Commission described.

When, as recently as today in the House, the Secretary of State for Employment described training as a burden which the Opposition want to impose on employers, she was very much out of step with the dominant view throughout the rest of western Europe, which sees training as the hub of any attempt to get the economies of western Europe off the ground and into full gear. For those reasons, it is lamentable that we have a Government who are so negative about training.

It is instructive to compare and contrast the records of different countries in the Community. In Britain, the Government's own working party said in a document which fell into my hands that, far from having a training policy, they had a policy which was effectively about massaging unemployment statistics. It said:

"It was agreed that there had been a clear policy shift away from National Education and Training Targets and that Training for Work was largely an employment measure rather than a skills training programme."

Even the Government's friends recognise severe and real flaws in the Government's attitude to training.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Not only them.

Mr. Lloyd: As my hon. Friend says, not only them. Certainly those who have any knowledge or experience of training are disillusioned with the Government's efforts.

The Government's abolition of employment training and employment action, and their move towards the so-called training for work initiative represent a move away from skills training towards simply massaging unemployment figures. Those measures are simply a means of keeping the dole queues as small as possible in the statistical publications.

We know from recent parliamentary answers that the Government have systematically cut the finance available from central Government for training initiatives. Let us compare in constant terms the amount of money which the Government have planned to spend in 1993-94 with the estimated outturn for 1992-93. There has been a significant drop—more than 10 per cent.—in the training budget during that period.

Let us consider the number of participants in schemes such as employment training. The Government have cut the cost of those schemes which might suggest that more people could be accommodated. The reverse has happened. In 1989-90, 210,000 people were put through employment training schemes. The Government estimate that there will be as few as 150,000 people on the training for work scheme in 1993-94.

Those training schemes are designed for the long-term unemployed, yet unemployment has shot up dramatically and cruelly. The Government's response has been to cut the amount of money available for those schemes and to cut the number of places, so that fewer people have the opportunity to receive that type of training.

Mr. Cash: I do not particularly like making this point often, but I am astonished as I look across the Chamber to see that the hon. Gentleman is speaking to literally two other members of his party on a matter which affects

[Mr. Cash]

policy on education and vocational training for the whole of the rest of Europe, as well as for the United Kingdom. I wonder whether he could encourage some of his hon. Friends to come along and at least listen to his pearls of wisdom.

Mr. Lloyd: You will understand, Mr. Lofthouse, that at this stage in the proceedings I would find it difficult to go out and perform the task that the hon. Gentleman invites me to perform. Even as I gaze at the Benches opposite, it is clear that, unfortunately, the debate has not attracted many listeners. That may be my fault. We shall see whether the numbers flood in later when the hon. Gentleman has an opportunity to speak.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the monumental and excessive windbaggery of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) may have allowed word to get out from the Chamber that there is something marginally tedious about our proceedings on the Bill?

7.45 pm

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman makes his point in admirable style. The issue of training is vital to the future of Britain. The number of Members present certainly does not reflect the importance of training to the nation.

Mr. Winterton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way on a relevant point. It is nothing to do with windbaggery or whether many Members are present on the Opposition or even the Government Benches. Under the treaty of Rome, education and training were not within the remit of the Commission of the European Community. Under the Maastricht treaty, education and training become very much part of the remit of the Commission. One of the Commissioners has recently said that he wants to become involved in education and training policy. The Commission will use money to do that.

Does the hon. Gentleman, who is leading for the Opposition in this debate, believe that the European Commission is better able to direct funds for education and training in Britain than the Westminster Parliament through the Department of Education and the Department of Employment? If he does, where will the money come from unless we pay a much heavier account to the European Community and allocate much greater resources to it, depriving the United Kingdom Government of funds which they can currently spend, I hope, from a position of better knowledge than the EC?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. He is an opponent of long standing of most things that come out of Brussels, so at least he is consistent. However, his Government introduced the Single European Act and moved us towards the single market. Those of us who have had doubts about some areas of Europe's competence must also accept that there is no future for regions such as that which I represent if development of labour market activities does not take place in parallel with single market activities.

It is obvious to me that there is a paramount need for consistency in levels of training. I hope to demonstrate to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that the British Government, with their appalling record on training, stand in poor comparison with most of the rest of western Europe. To that extent, I would cheerfully exchange the levels of training which are provided in Britain for those, for example, in Germany or France. I look to the European Community to kick-start the British Government into doing things which they alone are unwilling to do. That is the answer to the nub of the question which the hon. Gentleman puts to me.

Mr. Winterton: I am grateful for the constructive response which the hon. Gentleman has made to the points that I put to him, but he referred to Germany. I am sure that he will admit that the system of education and training in Germany has nothing to do with the treaty of Rome or the European Community. Historically, Germany has had a different education and training system from ours. I like Germany's technical education, which has stood Germany in good stead, but surely that has nothing to do with the European Community. If we had wanted to copy Germany, we could have done so many years ago, long before the European Community came into being.

Mr. Lloyd: The relevance of Germany's educational philosophy to the European Community is probably about the same as that of the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the debate. I suspect that he makes them for a different purpose, but I shall treat his comments seriously, because, he raises a valid point.

In Germany, there is an education and training culture, something which I fear has slipped enormously in Britain in recent years. We must redevelop it. I do not have confidence in the Government to achieve that. It cannot be delayed. We are losing the training race almost daily. We must begin to make some efforts to reinvest in training. As I said, I look to the Commission to provide a kick-start in the process.

If hon. Members will forgive me, I shall make some progress in the substantive points that I wish to make in the relatively small amount of time that the Committee will make available this evening.

Mr. Winterton: Why? How do you know?

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman knows something that we do not.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: No, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I have given way several times.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said from a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) seems to know something that we do not know. Do you know it? Is it that the debate will not take long tonight?

The First Deputy Chairman: I do not know anything about it and that is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Lloyd: If you do not know, Mr. Lofthouse, I can place it on the record that I am in even greater ignorance, although the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) may choose not to believe me.

By common consent, the Government have lost their way on training. There have been significant cuts in the numbers of trainees and the quantity of funding for Government-led schemes. Employment training is at the

heart of the Government's training philosophy, but there has been a significant cut in the amount of finance, in constant terms, available to each trainee. For example, the real-terms value in 1992 constant pounds of the cost of an employment training course in 1989-90 was £6,504. By 1992-93, it had dropped to £6,074, which is a significant cut in real terms of about 10 per cent.

One of the real tragedies is that, while the Government have exhorted the private sector to train, they have listened with deaf ears because they have been beset with the problems caused by their very own recession. We know that the Department of Employment's *Employment Gazette* recently let the cat out of the bag with an analysis which showed that in Britain most people on employment and youth training schemes do not believe that they are receiving significant amounts of job-related training.

However, the amount of money made available by the private sector fell significantly, as did volumes of trainees. While it is true that things are a little better than they were in the early 1980s, the 3 million employees of working age in Britain who receive training are a far cry from the levels of training required for a labour force of about 20 million. We know that the Government and the private sector are failing the nation.

During the election, the Government made great play of the fact that the Opposition wanted to introduce a training levy, which would have kick-started the private sector into providing the sort of training that is needed. The Government said that that would be a burden on industry, would add to industrial costs and would wreck industry and shed jobs, but such an idea is viewed as ridiculous throughout the rest of Europe, where they prefer a virtuous cycle, in which high-quality training leads to high productivity and vice versa.

For example, in the year before last, more than 600,000 people used the vocational training places made available under Germany's dual system and 70 per cent. completed their courses. It is significant that 30 per cent. of the entrants were already educated to A-level standard.

The German concept of training, within the dual system, is seen to be important, as it establishes the training culture that allows such high productivity. German productivity is about 60 per cent. higher than in Britain, and wage levels are about 70 per cent. higher, and the two are interrelated. Britain has a low-wage, low-cost economy. Germany has a high-wage, high-productivity economy, which is in the interests of the German nation and its people.

The situation in France is different, but it is at least similar to that in Germany, in that, as long ago as the early 1970s, the French were struck by their lack of a training culture. I do not know whether I am allowed to mention Jacques Delors—the bête noir of many Conservative Members—who introduced a legal obligation for employers to participate in vocational training. When the scheme was introduced it required each employer to spend 0.9 per cent. of the wage bill on training. That figure has been increased to 1·2 per cent., but most employers spend considerably in excess of that amount, and some large companies spend up to 10 per cent. of the wages bill on training. In doing so, they are investing in the future of France and French industry.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): The hon. Gentleman has referred to Germany, and I do not doubt his figures, as I know them to be accurate, but does he agree that some European countries are not embarking on comparable training schemes, and that one of the dangers of the article is that money will go from northern Europe —and this country—to enable southern European countries to embark on ambitious vocational training schemes which will compare with our own? That will make those countries more competitive in the new industries that they are developing, which could cause great dangers to our economy, especially if the Community continues to have a low-growth economy.

Mr. Lloyd: The reality is that all Europe will be dragged down by the concept of a low-wage, low-skill economy, which periodically chooses to shed labour, as has happened throughout most of western Europe—in the Community countries and beyond—in recent years. There is no future for the Community as a low-wage economy, and the whole Community must accept that. Social tensions have already been caused by mass unemployment in France, Germany and Italy. Unemployment has caused problems in Britain—for example, in my constituency, where a young boy was shot and killed recently.

I cannot accept a scenario in Britain or in the Community in which we accept the concept of a potentially redundant army of labour, which can be brought in or dispensed with at will—a scenario in which pockets of long-term unemployment become virtually permanent, and in which no hope is given because the Government have provided Mickey Mouse training schemes. We must develop a wider approach. I look to the Community to develop a coherent training philosophy, so that it becomes a way of life throughout Europe.

The hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) asked whether I did not fear that we would end up having to prop up standards in Portugal. It may surprise him to learn that Portugal is already ahead of Britain in many aspects of training. Britain is third from bottom in the number of 16 to 18-year-olds who participate in education, and Portugal is one of the countries ahead of us. The days when Britain could look loftily down on the Mediterranean countries as despised nations are gone. The position has shifted during my lifetime, and perhaps a different generation has to account for that. The simple reality is that the Portuguese will not look to Britain for lessons on training.

The amount that various European countries spend on training is also significant. Germany is not the only country to spend more than Britain, as Ireland also does do. Ireland has long been regarded as an alternative labour market for the British economy. I come from a part of Britain where Irish people have lived for many years, and I know that they have been viewed as an alternative labour force in boom times, and that they have been expendable during recessions. It is especially significant that Ireland is spending more than Britain on domestic training, even though it has tremendous problems of labour emigration.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that one makes low-skilled people more productive by investing more capital in equipment and machinery, rather than by trying to give them additional training? Throughout the Pacific rim, where our main competitors come from, wages and skill levels are relatively low, but those countries are rapidly improving.

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

That is being done within the work process, without complicated Government training schemes, and we should aim to do the same here—never mind about Europe.

That is the way in which skills are passed on—by building on the shoulders of the former generation. The plans envisaged in the Maastricht treaty simply will not work. We cannot separate ourselves from that other part of the world, which contains 90 per cent. of the population, while Europe only has one tenth.

Mr. Lloyd: If that is the hon. Lady's view of the world, I find it almost immeasurably sad. Not only is she technically wrong; the flaws in her argument are precisely the kind that lead to the introduction of stupid policies such as those that the country has experienced for the past 13 years.

The hon. Lady suggested that countries on the Pacific rim considered education and training unimportant. Countries such as Taiwan and Singapore—which in my lifetime have been seen as the low-wage, low-skill nations described by the hon. Lady—are now investing a fantastic amount of national effort in the education and training of their young people: they are doing far more than this country in that respect.

The idea that such countries accept peripheralisation is born of an era that is rapidly disappearing. Suppose we told the Japanese that they should return to the days when they competed on the basis of volume rather than quality! The hon. Lady also mentioned the Koreans; they too are spending a considerable amount on training. She may be surprised if she looks at the comparative figures.

8 pm

The really sad aspect, however is this. The fact that the hon. Lady rests her case on bogus evidence suggests that she presses Ministers to provide bad training in this country. That is where the tragedy lies, and that is the reason for the anti-education, anti-training culture that has existed here for so many years. I believe that the Minister knows something about language training. In schools driven by the national curriculum—my children attend such schools—pupils are forced at the age of 13 to confine themselves to the study of a single foreign language, because of the needs of the curriculum. It is ridiculous, and atrocious, that they should be denied access to foreign languages. We are handicapping our young people: in France and Germany, for instance, that simply could not happen nowadays. The current state of affairs is almost uniformly barren; the Government's record bears no comparison with that of other western European countries.

As I told the Minister earlier, these are probing amendments, but we want him to respond in detail to our questions about why Britain's vocational training record is so bad. Under the treaty, vocational training and education will be governed by the terms of qualified majority voting; Britain—the anti-intellectual, anti-education, anti-training country that it has become—will no longer be able to hold to ransom not only the rest of Europe, but the British people themselves.

For those reasons, many people welcome this part of the treaty.

Sir Richard Body: I hope that the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) will not mind my saying that I, for one—and, I am sure, every other Conservative Member—found his speech disappointing. I do not mean that personally; no doubt the hon. Gentleman was entirely sincere. I had hoped, however, that he would probe this part of the treaty more fully and carefully, given the immense implications that it could have for millions of people in the United Kingdom.

The hon. Gentleman quoted a number of statistics. As I said earlier, I do not doubt those statistics, but the hon. Gentleman would surely agree that they came from the public sector. They excluded the many schemes in this country—and, indeed, in the countries listed by the hon. Gentleman—which are privately funded by business enterprises. Those of us with some experience of such schemes would say that, more often than not, they are more effective and do more to strengthen our economy than publicly funded schemes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) referred to the Pacific basin. In numerous countries in that area which are now booming, effective training in the private sector provides the main body of recruitment. Only a week or two ago, I met a number of business men in my constituency who said that they deplored Government-funded schemes and that if they could only have half as much money for training, they would ensure that it was more cost-effective and more in line with the needs of industry. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay: we should support private-sector schemes rather than those funded by the Government.

This article will enable the Community to spend a great deal of money which is, in the main, obtained from the northern European countries—the principal contributors to European funds. We are well aware how some southern European countries—especially Spain—want the money to be spent. We know what Mr. Gonzales has been saying about cohesion funds; we know that he will be difficult, over and over again.

Mr. Marlow: Yet again, my hon. Friend has drawn the House's attention to the way in which all these bits and pieces combine to produce another slush fund, which the Commission will be able to use. All right—the Government are not heavily committed, but money will be available—and majority voting will be possible. The fund will not deal with the content of educational programmes, but to an extent it will enable the manipulation of such programmes in a European direction, which some may want and others may not. It will also constitute a slush fund to be used in what Europeans call the regions—Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We know what they want to do with the regions; they want to divide and rule. Will my hon. Friend deal with some of those fundamental issues?

Sir Richard Body: I will indeed. My hon. Friend, like me, represents a corner of England. I use the word "England" deliberately: those of us who represent English constituencies are aware that we do not get much out of the slush funds.

In an earlier debate, it was pointed out that cultural expenditure would be used for enticement purposes—to enhance the popularity of Wales, or other parts of the Community. There is plenty of evidence that a good deal has been spent in Wales—and whenever money is spent there, the famous flags with stars on a blue background is

there to show that the money came from the European Community, although only a tiny fraction may have come from that source.

Mr. Cryer: Under article 126,

"Community action shall be aimed at . . . developing the European dimension in education".

That really means the European Community dimension. Taxpayers' money is being used to mount a propaganda drive to promote the claimed virtues of the Community. The adoption of the word "European", which belongs to a continent rather than to a political or economic organisation, illustrates the arrogance of the organisation which is promoting its ideas. This will be not education, but propaganda.

Sir Richard Body: That applies to all 12 countries—to western Europe as a whole, and it is the overriding argument against the Maastricht treaty: the treaty will make it much more difficult for the Scandinavian countries, the alpine countries, the countries of eastern Europe—and, in due course, those further east in the old Soviet Union—to be part of a European Community or Commonwealth. My dream is a European Community which allows all Europe to take part in common policies which are in the interests of individual countries.

Mr. Marlow: I apologise for intervening, but this is probably one of our more important debates on the treaty. The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and my hon. Friend spoke about the money that will be in the hands of the Commission and how it could be used.

Let me draw my hon. Friend's attention to a powerful revelation that we had today. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) is no fool. She is a very intelligent lady. She referred to things that have been done in her constituency with Community money. As we know, she is a fervent European. One of the reasons why she is in favour of Europe is that she perceives that these good things have dropped out of heaven from the European Community as if the European Community has a factory where it manufactures cash and with its generosity provides cash to her constituents. If we accept the article as it is at the moment, rather than take it out, there will be more money for more Eurocrats to spend in more constituencies so that more people can be seduced by the slush funds.

Sir Richard Body: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. We have almost forgotten green shield stamps. The money that goes back to Wales can be likened to green shield stamps. The people of Britain, including the people of Wales, contribute a great deal more than what is coming back. I am sorry that the hon. Lady, who is not in her place, has allowed herself to be deceived by payments out of what my hon. Friend calls the slush funds.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Slush funds?

Sir Richard Body: I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) is with us. He has been travelling to Strasbourg and he knows nothing whatever about slush funds. He is always totally innocent of anything of that nature, as indeed are most of those involved in Europe. It is only a minority who dip their fingers into slush funds.

We are not criticising European Parliamentarians. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was speaking about the opportunities which would be created by a further slush fund. We have debated the cultural slush fund and now we are discussing further funds to be allocated by majority voting, as the Council of Ministers may prescribe on the recommendation of the Commission as the article specifies.

Mr. Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I am very disturbed to find on the Bench here an envelope which says, "Can you keep going until 10 pm? If so, they surely cannot close." You were in the Chair last night when there were allegations of collusion. Surely there cannot be collusion between my hon. Friends. I cannot begin to think who might have written this diabolical note——

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Let me see the handwriting.

Mr. Harris: I do not know about that. It seems to me that there are some guilty people. It cannot be right that hon. Members are being egged on to filibuster to keep the debate going until 10 o'clock at night. Can you give your ruling on that?

The First Deputy Chairman: It is not a matter for the Chair what notes are passed.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I think that someone suggested that the only possible provenance of that dreadful piece of paper could be someone from the Whips Office as all my hon. Friends who take a similar view——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I have just given a ruling that it is not a matter for the Chair what notes are passed. Sir Richard Body.

Sir Richard Body *rose*——

Mr. Bill Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. I understand that we are attempting to implement article 126 this evening, but we have just given Scottish universities a fund to look after when that used to be a United Kingdom responsibility. As we have guarded our separate education system in Scotland, is it not nonsense to be faced with a proposal such as article 126?

8.15 pm

Sir Richard Body: I am sure that my hon. Friend realises that Scotland will be homogenised by what we are discussing tonight. As a mere Englishman, I concede that Scottish education is of the highest standard—much higher than that in England. Whether it will continue to be so is another matter. I hope that my hon. Friend will have the opportunity to put in a word for Scottish education, to prevent it from being contaminated—if that is not too unkind a word—by anything which may emerge out of Brussels.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we in Northern Ireland should pay particular attention to what is happening, as the more money that goes into the slush fund directly from the United Kingdom to southern Ireland threatens the development of our own education and training services in Northern Ireland?

Sir Richard Body: The hon. Gentleman may well be right that there are moves that he knows only too well, if I may coin an awful word, to desectorise Northern Ireland education and require pupils to go to the same schools, whatever their background. It may well be that the

[Sir Richard Body]

European Community will use what they call incentive money to give money to such schools. That may or may not be a good proposal, but it is surely for Great Britain and particularly for the people of Northern Ireland to decide whether they want their education policy to take that direction. It should not be a matter for Brussels and, above all, it should not be a matter for majority vote in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) made a wise intervention, but there may be people in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland who believe that they would do better through the Council regions and through the slush fund money for education. However, the whole system is based on the fact that we make a net contribution to the Community budget of £2,500 million a year which by grace of this treaty will increase to £3,000 million a year. If that were not passed to Europe as part of the mega-slush fund, we would have more of our own money to spend in Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland on culture and education in all parts of our country, but because of the structure and status that we have at the moment it goes to Europe, it goes to Brussels and it gets the stamp of Mr. Delors: it gets a European flag and we all have to bless the great and the good in Brussels.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Some of the interventions are rather lengthy speeches. Sir Richard Body.

Sir Richard Body: It is much worse than my hon. Friend describes when it comes to vocational training. This where the hon. Member for Stretford is mistaken. We shall be required to put a large sum of money into Community funds to enable vocational training to take place. We can try to ensure that there is—I hate to use the tired old phrase—a level playing field throughout the Community and equal opportunities for such training. Although the hon. Member for Stretford disputed this, we know that vocational training is not so advanced in southern Europe as in northern Europe, so there is bound to be a diversion of funds from the north to the south, to Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece.

Mr. Beggs: And southern Ireland.

Sir Richard Body: Indeed, although plenty of money is already going there—whether it can collar any more under the scheme, I do not know. At all events, there will be a massive transfer of funds to southern Europe from the taxpayers of northern Europe, to give the inhabitants of the south vocational schemes as good as those in the north.

Mr. Budgen: One of the most exciting and useful aspects of all this is the way in which the Community represents a gathering of friends and colleagues—of Heads of State. It is such a pleasant thing to see the friendship between politicians as they extract money from their taxpayers and hand it over to their friends, the other politicians, so that the latter may bribe their respective electorates. This is always described in each country as a great triumph for its national self-interest. It would be churlish if we did not recognise the process and express our admiration for it.

Sir Richard Body: My hon. Friend is right. We must admire it, but there comes a time when we should question it.

Mr. Budgen: If my hon. Friend starts questioning it, he will soon find himself in the kind of difficulties that I faced recently, when the Whips Office started ringing up my chairman and suggested that it was not the role of a Back Bencher to question anything that the Government were doing or to cause as much trouble as possible. I warn my hon. Friend against that line of action. We are, after all, here to rubber-stamp the Government's actions—and the most important thing that we can do is to express our admiration for everything that the Government have done.

I fear that my hon. Friend will come to regret his impertinence. He should bear in mind the authoritarian behaviour of the Whips, as shown by their moving the closure and preventing many of our hon. Friends from expressing their admiration for the Government. Most of us feel an extreme affection for my hon. Friend and hope that he will not jeopardise his career by being so stupid as to express criticism of the treaty or of the Government. To do that would be to undermine loyalty to the Government—a crime of which I am sure he would not want to be found guilty.

Sir Richard Body: I will try to take that advice. The only ambition I have ever had in this House was to work in the office of the Patronage Secretary. I am old-fashioned enough still to call the Chief Whip that. I imagined that I would learn a lot there. I see on the Front Bench the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), who was once in the Patronage Secretary's office and who had me to deal with among his flock. I am sure that he will confirm that I never questioned anything and sought always to do his bidding.

If the hon. Member for Stretford was truly expressing the policy of the Labour party and if, as a result, unemployment rises, he and the rest of his colleagues will have a great deal to answer for at the next election. We cannot be certain that the European Community will enjoy a high growth rate from now on. The smaller countries of Europe outside the European Community have more favourable growth rates at the moment. Germany is in difficulties with a declining growth rate. The German Government are under intense pressure over their revenue and monetary policies——

Mrs. Gorman: I should very much welcome my hon. Friend's wisdom and advice, as I know that he is a great repository of knowledge. Is it not true that in Germany young people are trained on the job? At 16 they take up training courses in firms—bakers, butchers or plumbers—where they are taught the skills by those who have them and who can pass them on without the need for any slush funds or Government intervention. Is it not also true that those young people, knowing the value of their training, do not expect to be paid as much as adults while being trained? They are paid the sort of money that the Labour party would describe as appropriate to sweated labour or pin money. In fact, the process is part of a tradition that my hon. Friend and I would like restored to this country so that we can avoid the sort of mega-schemes envisaged

under Maastricht, which would remove the training function from the people who know what needs to be taught.

Sir Richard Body: Of course my hon. Friend must be right. As she was speaking, I remembered the old adage that those who can, do, and those who cannot, teach. I fear that some professional full-time vocational training teachers are those who have not done well in the occupation that they originally chose. That certainly applies to the building and engineering industries. Those who are good at those jobs go into firms and prosper; those who are not so good find themselves out of work and having to take up employment providing some form of vocational training.

Mr. Marlow: The beginning of this article speaks of the Community contributing to the development of quality education. If the Community is to contribute to the development of education, even though it does not have the right to change laws in this area by means of directives, it is implied that the Community will be involved in everything at an early stage—for instance, in the geography and history syllabuses. The involvement will be indirect, but it will be effected by means of incentives, slush funds, and so on. Is my hon. Friend worried about that?

The article also mentions quality. My hon. Friend is a far greater expert on the English language than I am. What is meant by quality?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I have recently drawn the attention of the House to the length of interventions. Experienced hon. Members should not need to keep being reminded by the Chair about this. They are making speeches, not interventions, and I shall use my office to enable the debate to take place within the rules of the House. I will not allow the near-abuse of our procedures.

Sir Richard Body: I will, if I may, follow up what my hon. Friend said about quality education. I am troubled by that term. My mind goes back to the time many years ago when I began breeding pigs and contacted various butchers. I remember one outlet kept talking about quality meat. I realised that the person involved was not really looking for quality meat, but for meat that was cheap and nasty. I have no doubt that the education of which we are speaking will not be cheap, even though it may be nasty.

8.30 pm

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: My hon. Friend is talking about quality meat. As we are talking about education, will he confirm that the word "quality" is a noun and not an adjective, so there cannot be anything called quality education? It is difficult to see how one can have a common view of what Germany did to Poland, Germany did to France, or Russia did to Poland as a common quality educational instruction.

Sir Richard Body: As ever, my hon. and learned Friend is right. It is disturbing to find the word "quality" in any treaty and I suspect that this is its first appearance. To apply it to education is inappropriate and I would not rely on any Commissioners or group of officials in Brussels to decide quality in our terms.

Mr. Budgen: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's reflections on a difficult adjective.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) said that it was a noun.

Mr. Budgen: I apologise—of course it is a noun. If I were subject to overall supervisory care by some European gauleiter, I should probably have a more normal way of speaking, though it might be less interesting.

I am pleased to see that the Chairman has returned, as I wish to support the First Deputy Chairman in his observations to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) to the effect that a large number of Conservative Members wished to take part in the debate. My hon. Friend——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Member has been on his feet since I entered the Chamber, which means that he has made an excessively long intervention. He is clearly preventing other hon. Members from making their speeches.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I was merely endeavouring to put a point to my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body). So far as I could see, you had only just come into the Chamber, and I respectfully suggest that I detected——

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Budgen: —a degree of prejudice.

The Chairman: Order. I note that the hon. Member was called earlier. I produced the list earlier in the day and put him on it, so I do not know what sort of prejudice he thinks may exist. I remind him and all hon. Members that interventions should be short. I came through the doors into the Chamber well over a minute ago, and the hon. Member was already in full flight. I suspect that he has been a member of other Committees. He should know that interventions must be short and to the point.

Sir Richard Body: I shall endeavour to keep my remarks short, but I remind the Committee that I have been endeavouring to speak for some time and that this is the first time that I have spoken in this Parliament. One endeavours to get in and it sometimes happens that, having got in, one feels disinclined to sit down again.

Mrs. Gorman: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I seek clarification. Are you aware that in a debate in which, say, only one or two Conservative Members are called, it is imperative that we try to make our points through rather more lengthy interventions than we would otherwise make, as otherwise we would never speak at all?

The Chairman: The hon. Lady might argue that an intervention is as long as it is short. I must obey the rules of the House. I do not create them. They have been created by the House over the centuries. "Erskine May" says that an intervention should be short and to a single point, so that the hon. Member who is intervened upon can respond. I have been listening to all the interventions for the last hour. Few of them have been short or to the point.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I seek your guidance. Would you give an indication of the meaning of "short"?

The Chairman: It is my judgment.

Sir Richard Body: I appreciate that interventions must be short, and clearly, a short intervention makes it easier for the person intervened upon to deal with the intervention. But I remind you, Mr. Morris, that there have been a number of closure motions.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member is an experienced parliamentarian. I learned and listened at his feet in these cloisters. He knows that the subject of closure motions is not part of the amendments before the Committee. Will he please return to the subject under discussion?

Sir Richard Body: Indeed, and I return to what the hon. Member for Stretford said about vocational schemes.

Mr. Marlow: I promise that this will be a short intervention. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) pointed out that "quality" was a noun and not an adjective. The text of the article refers to "quality education." There is no such thing as quality in that it is good or bad or high or low quality. What are we supposed to deduce from an article in a treaty which is ungrammatical and undefined? How are we to evaluate the treaty in those circumstances?

Sir Richard Body: That is an important point and I hope that when the Minister replies—which I hope will not be immediately I resume my seat, although I fear, on past performance, that that may be the case—he will deal with it. Presumably at Maastricht the word was considered carefully by whoever was then representing Her Majesty's Government. That person no doubt queried the necessity for using the word "quality" and was satisfied, after receiving certain assurances, that it had a particular meaning and purpose.

If education is not about quality, it should not be education at all, so the word is surplus. Even so, having been inserted in that way, it raises a degree of suspicion. We must be told why it has been inserted in the provision.

The hon. Member for Stretford denigrated the Government's record in matters of vocational training. His speech almost mirrored that of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who equally denigrated the Government's record.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware of what he is saying. I think he meant to say "qualitated" rather than "denigrated."

Sir Richard Body: I used the word "denigrated" and I suppose that if one really probed the meaning of it, it might have some racial undertone. I did not mean it in that way. I hope I am not being unfair in saying that the hon. Gentleman denigrated the Government's record. He was sharply critical of the Government's programme of vocational training. He alleged that Britain was spending much less than Germany and other countries on it and he called for more to be spent. No doubt the Minister will supply some figures.

I do not think that the figures supplied by the Opposition spokesman included money spent in this country by the private sector. That money has been increasing and should be included. It may be almost impossible to quantify because much training is undertaken by small firms, but it should be possible to provide a guestimate. If that were put into the equation, it would be seen that total spending on vocational training in this country compares well with the amount spent by our Community competitors.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend speaks about the potential threat to the private sector of what is almost a Community incentive policy for education. I hope to raise that in my speech. Paragraph 2 of article 126 refers to "developing the European dimension in education,". Does that mean that there will be a European dimension to history and geography? What impact would there be on the understanding of British history and British geography if the Commissioners got to work through the slush fund?

Sir Richard Body: My hon. Friend raises two issues, the first of which is the threat to existing vocational training schemes. If the Community embarks on major schemes for such training which are more or less uniform throughout the Community, there will be two results. First, the Government will be less than enthusiastic about spending money on vocational training because they will be able to obtain funds from the Community. I know how the Treasury operates, and I know that the Chief Secretary or one of his assistants will reduce his vocational training estimate for the Department of Employment. In that respect the availability of Community money will be a disadvantage. The other threat is much more real. More money from the Community will lead to firms in this country deciding not to spend money on schemes they prefer when, with a bit of a push, they can get money from the Community.

Mr. Cryer: Firms proposing to do that should be warned that Common Market funds can be arbitrarily cut. When I was the EC member for Sheffield, a firm called Tyzack employed some apprentices who were partly supported by money from the EC social fund. The EC Commissioner demanded that they should be given computer training different from the computer training that they were receiving. Since such training could not be provided, the money was stopped. The reason for the dodge was that Italy had complained to the Italian Commissioner that the United Kingdom had been receiving too much money and that the distribution was unfair. That is precisely what happened in the case of a perfectly good training scheme. However, the apprentices were kept on and continued to train because Sheffield council paid Tyzack to keep them employed.

Sir Richard Body: I hope that the Minister has noted that and will deal with it, because it is the sort of thing that might happen if the power moves from here to Brussels. At least at the moment we can seek funds. We may not always be successful in dealing with European matters and the machinations of the Patronage Secretary's office, but at least we can raise issues in Adjourning debates. I suspect that, when the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was in the European Parliament, he had fewer opportunities to articulate his case than he has here. The hon. Gentleman's reference to Sheffield brings to mind another training scheme.

I am interested in promoting schemes for certain kinds of farming. One of our universities has a great reputation in agriculture, but it was unable to get money for a particular kind of farming in this country. A deputation went to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

for funding but was unable to get it. However, Sheffield polytechnic approached Brussels and I understand that it was successful in obtaining money.

The Chairman: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman speaking about vocational training?

Sir Richard Body: Yes. Farming is indeed a vocation. It is a most unprofitable occupation, as my hon. Friends will confirm.

8.45 pm

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman will have to do a little better than that. Everything is a vocation. Was the specific grant for vocational training? If it was not, perhaps the hon. Gentleman could use a different example.

Sir Richard Body: I think that I am on a good point, and it came to mind when the hon. Member for Bradford, South intervened. With due respect to Sheffield polytechnic, it had no expertise in this area and sought advice from me about where to obtain it, but it did that after obtaining an assurance from Brussels about money. Before allocating money for something of this kind, one would have thought that Brussels would seek out——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman speaks about "something of this kind", but that is not vocational training. I am here to serve the Committee. The amendments are fairly tightly drawn and we are debating vocational training. In his heart, the hon. Gentleman knows whether the advice that he offered related to vocational training. If it did, his remarks are in order: if it did not, he should not continue that line of argument.

Sir Richard Body: I shall move on, but I should have thought that training in a particular form of farming was vocational.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I should like to ask my hon. Friend about the mention in the treaty of what is called the "European dimension in education". What will be the European dimension in education of the Franco-Prussian war, the invasion of France by Germany, Poland's experience over 400 years, the concentration camps and the second world war?

The Chairman: Order.

Sir Richard Body: My hon. and learned Friend poses a fundamental question. I should prefer the whole issue to be left to the Council of Europe, but I shall not digress. If Monnet could hear our debate, he would be intrigued. Directly in reply to what my hon. Friend has said, in 1988 at a gathering to commemorate the work of Mr. Monnet as founder of the Community—I suppose that we would not be having this debate were it not for Monnet—Mr. Régis Debray, the former French prime minister, said that shortly before Mr. Monnet died he said that, had he been starting again, he would have sought to found the Community not on economics but on culture and education.

I think that that probably answers the question posed by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir Nicholas Fairbairn) because Mr. Monnet was all for—I do not want to use this ugly word—homogenising. He believed, in all good faith and with total sincerity, that the conflicts of Europe would never come to an end unless we were tending to think alike and to share the same values and therefore to share the same culture and to be educated in much the same way.

Mr. Monnet would have been appalled at the kind of history lessons that I and perhaps my hon. and learned Friend had when we heard about Waterloo, Trafalgar and matters of that kind. He would have preferred education to be European education, written objectively and treated impartially in the classroom. That meeting to commemorate the work of Monnet was very significant. Monnet might well have been right to give that opinion in those last few weeks of his life if he was seeking to create a superstate out of western Europe.

Of course we are going to have a European dimension for history, literature, and perhaps geography and other subjects, if we allow this part of the treaty to proceed and to be part of a common education policy. I dare say that my hon. Friend the Minister, when he replies, will say that there is no such intention because there is to be subsidiarity. I can almost see him making that speech now. My hon. Friend will realise already that this article uses the term "majority voting".

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): In article 126, in subparagraph 4, invoking 189b, and in article 127, under subparagraph 4, invoking 189c, both give the Commission a strong position to bring forward to the Council a rule on quantitative majority voting. Would my hon. Friend like to comment on the importance of that in relation to these matters?

Sir Richard Body: I should have thought that anyone concerned about educational standards would be concerned about that—including, of course, the Minister when he replies. We have been arguing for the last few years about a national curriculum and about standards, and arousing the ire of many schoolteachers on the subject. There is a hornets' nest in certain schools. Yet having gone through all that, we are putting our head into a noose and making our Minister, when he goes to the Council of Ministers, very vulnerable.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Is one to understand that the European dimension will be to say that the first and second world wars and the battle of Waterloo were draws? May I ask my hon. Friend to interpret the treaty which speaks of the increasing dimension of distance education? I have not had much education and I am very close to my hon. Friend in all ways, but I do not understand why a noun is again being used instead of an adjective in an educational paragraph. What is distance education? Does it mean that the teacher is so scared of his pupils that he lives in the Isle of Wight and has to shout?

The Chairman: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman is perfectly in order in asking what is distance education, but he must allow the hon. Gentleman who has the Floor to respond.

Sir Richard Body: My hon. and learned Friend should not be surprised by the drafting of this. Has it not been drafted by one of his fellow poets? Hardly a phrase, certainly not a whole sentence, nor any part of the treaty, can be described as being in decent literary English.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education(Mr. Tim Boswell): Perhaps I can assist the House by saying that my understanding of

[Mr. Tim Boswell]

distance education and distance learning, allowing for the point made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) and his aversion to the use of nouns as adjectives, is that it is learning or education done at a distance, rather than being conveyed on a personal basis across the classroom. It is teaching which may be delivered, or learning received, by means of a number of modern techniques, audio-visual cassettes, written material sent through the post, which is particularly characterised in this country by the Open university and done very well.

Sir Richard Body: I always keep my distance from anyone who is teaching, for very good reasons. I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I had assumed that that was the meaning of this. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross has touched on an important point about this European dimension. I can see, as the whole House can surely see now, that we shall have large parts of our history books and syllabuses reconsidered with incentive money. That is the term used. It was hinted at in particular by the Commissioner for education when he went to Madrid. I think that it was last November when he talked about how important it was to have a common system of education for Europe and said that the Maastricht treaty would enable that to come about, so I am sure that the fear expressed by my hon. and learned Friend is right.

Mr. Marlow: I have many weaknesses and one of them is that I am a great patriot and populist and I am keen on England and English history. There are great victories in English history like Crecy, Agincourt, Poitiers which we talked about at school. If one looks at a French map one will not find those battlefields. Is it likely that under the provisions of this article future generations of our children, when they look at history maps in English history lessons, or European history lessons as they will be, will not find Crecy, Agincourt and Poitiers? They will not be on the map or be talked about. They will not be anything. There may be other aspects of English history where the same things may happen.

Sir Richard Body: No doubt that will be the case. Many people, including some hon. Members, look forward to the day when our schools no longer teach such subjects and when our history is "more objective", as they say. Many in the teaching profession look forward to that day.

Mr. Cryer: Does not this exchange show the sloppy drafting of the treaty? The European dimension can mean little or it can mean a lot. Unlike the drafting of Government legislation and delegated legislation, there is no area that defines the words that are used—hence the term European, which I assume refers to the Community but could equally apply to the whole of Europe. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is dangerous language to accept in a binding treaty, because once it has been established it is as long as a piece of string to anybody who wants to interpret it?

Sir Richard Body: The hon. Gentleman is right to use the word "dangerous". I use the word "arrogant". It is appalling arrogance to attribute to 12 countries the description "Europe", but that appears over and again in the Maastricht treaty. One or two of my hon. Friends are enthusiastic about the treaty, although I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) beside me, who is pretty pragmatically enthusiastic about it all.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Intelligently.

Sir Richard Body: Intelligently, yes.

9 pm

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend will be aware that it is customary in Scotland to teach Scottish history up to 1707 and United Kingdom history thereafter. The content of history books depends much on whether battles were won or lost.

Sir Richard Body: Indeed. We in England should learn our English, United Kingdom and European history. I was taught European history half a century ago by somebody who inspired me to take an interest in the subject, and that interest has never left me. I get rather fed up with being denounced as anti-European, because I enjoy reading about Europe and European history and have been interested in the subject for a long time.

That is one of the reasons why I am so hostile to the idea of the European Community. European history shows over and again that such ventures always end in tears. There has been no exception to that.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman concede that the reference to European is not confined only to article 126 but appears on the face of the Command Paper? We are debating the treaty on European union. Is that the rich man's club of 12 or does it take in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and even Russia?

Sir Richard Body: Indeed. The right hon. Gentleman —my right hon. Friend, if I may so describe him—is right and I endorse his comments wholeheartedly. The European dimension will exclude matters of geography, history or anything to do with, for example, Bohemia, which was mentioned earlier, or Russia. Russia is part of Europe. I believe that Tschaikovsky was European. Chekhov's plays and Tolstoy's novels are European. The treaty provides for education in an European dimension, but I wonder whether literature will include Tolstoy or only those authors who came from one part of Europe —that covered by the EC.

Mr. Cryer: And given EC subsidies.

Sir Richard Body: Indeed.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: We are discussing the nonsense of describing the EC as Europe as if the rest of Europe did not exist. What shall we call this ridiculous Community when Turkey is included, 98 per cent. of which is in Asia?

Sir Richard Body: Turkey has long had an application to join the European Community, and some years ago I went to Ankara and heard their enthusiasm to join. I pointed out one or two difficulties that they might encounter, but I have since discovered that Turkey is very unlikely to be admitted, and for one very good reason of which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) will be aware, that Germany is almost certain to veto it because—I must not speak too harshly of the Germans—they are reluctant to

have any more Turks coming into their country, and perhaps they may be right to be reluctant, given the troubles in eastern Germany.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend touched on the issue of distance education, but I do not think that he gave it as much attention as it perhaps merits. In one of our earlier debates here, one of our hon. Friends talked about satellite broadcasts of a programme called "Red Hot Danish Love". I understand that, to a certain extent, it was educational——

The Chairman: Order. That does not come under this article.

Sir Richard Body: I am disappointed, Mr. Morris. I thought that we might hear more about this "Red Hot Danish . . . "—I forget the last word. I implore my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster to close her ears. Perhaps we should not go along that road. I think I ought to get back——

The Chairman: Order. I have some difficulty in working out where the hon. Gentleman is going. Will he address either of the two particular articles that we have before us, neither of which has anything to do with enlargement or any of the other areas that he has drifted into?

Sir Richard Body: I am very anxious to get back to the amendment that has been moved by the hon. Member for Stretford, because his speech was riddled with fallacies. In particular, he and his party should reconsider their attitude of support for Community-funded vocational training.

It is common knowledge that Mr. Gonzalez, the Prime Minister of Spain, has insisted on large sums by way of cohesion money. He threatened to veto the Maastricht treaty unless the money was advanced to Spain. This heading will, in my view, enable large sums of money to go to Spain, and it will be necessary—because Spain, and Portugal, I will allege, despite what the hon. Gentleman said, Italy and Greece, are all far behind us when it comes to vocational training. This article will enable money to be diverted from our resources to southern Europe. It is inevitable because, if we are to have fair competition throughout western Europe in the single market, we must have systems of vocational training that are more or less in line, and at present they are not. No one can say that they are in line at the moment.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is talking about vocational training, but he knows that among the amendments we are also discussing education, and he will be aware that, when article 126 says that

"Community action shall be aimed at . . . developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education system of the Member States",

it means people visiting each other, going backwards and forwards; money; Europe; slush fund. It could be very seductive, and it could be abused.

I would be very interested to hear my hon. Friend's views as to whether this is an appropriate use of European taxpayers' money, how it could and should be used and what constraints and controls he would put on it.

Sir Richard Body: I am sure that it will be abused. Indeed, the Court of Auditors has made it plain year after year that national Governments were ineffective in policing how Community money is spent in their own countries. I shall not mention the common agricultural policy because I should be ruled out of order but £5,000 million has gone astray. Our Government have been criticised by the Court of Auditors, although I am sure they behave much better than some other Governments in spending that money. There is no encouragement for Governments to ensure that Community money is properly, effectively and honestly spent.

Mr. Bill Walker: Article 126 states that Community action shall be aimed at

"encouraging the development of youth exchanges".

Few of us would disagree with that, but what is meant by "exchanges of socio-educational instructors"? Would my hon. Friend care to comment?

Sir Richard Body: That merely confirms what I said earlier—a poet such as my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) could not have drafted a single sentence of the treaty.

Socio-economic policies——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The words are "socio-educational".

Sir Richard Body: I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster has spotted that. As ever, she is taking an acute interest in the subject and perhaps she will contribute to the debate later if she is lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Morris.

I was trying to give a warning, although it is perhaps not for me to do so.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: You have not said what they are——

Sir Richard Body: I was diverted. Mr. Morris, you will——

The Chairman: Order. The Chair is having great difficulty hearing the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), who appears to be having a conversation with the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman). Will he please deal with one of the two articles so that I can follow exactly what he is saying?

Sir Richard Body: Indeed I shall, but my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster is always tempting me. I shall seek to avoid her blandishments and raise my voice to speak directly to you, Mr. Morris, as I know I should. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I step back a little from her.

Mrs. Gorman: Before my hon. Friend leaves the issue of training and the use of slush funds, I should be interested to hear his comments on the attitude revealed in article 57 and amendment No. 199. The article is sinister because it refers to the laying down of

"directives for the co-ordination . . . by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States"

in relation to the activities of self-employed persons. It is sinister because the essence of many forms of self-employment is that people can drift into them, especially when they have lost other work. If there are to be directives, laws and regulations——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Lady's point is relevant. She has asked a question and perhaps she will now allow the hon. Member for Holland with Boston to answer.

Sir Richard Body: I agree wholeheartedly with the point of my hon. Friend's intervention. I was self-employed before I came to the House—many of us were. A self-employed person should be sufficiently endowed to be able to decide for himself or herself what type of vocational training is suitable. It is amazing that the European Community or those who drafted the treaty should go so far as to suggest that the self-employed should take part in such schemes—it should be entirely a matter for them.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does my hon. Friend accept that article 57 does not offer opportunities for everyone? The second sentence of paragraph 2 of article 57 refers to "training and conditions of access for natural persons." My hon. Friend seems to have studied this matter carefully. As we know from last night, however, the Minister does not answer questions but simply reads prepared speeches. That is unfortunate, but perhaps my hon. Friend can help me. Bearing in mind the reference to "natural persons", can he tell me what unnatural persons are? Or perhaps some Opposition Member can enlighten us.

This is a very serious point. The Bill with which we are dealing is to become the law of the land. Training and access are to be provided for natural persons but not, apparently, for unnatural persons. What on earth is a natural person? May we have an assurance——

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman must not keep asking the same question. He has asked what a natural person is. Perhaps he will allow his hon. Friend to respond.

9.15 pm

Sir Richard Body: My hon. Friend is, of course, right. This just goes to show how difficult it is to translate these documents into some kind of English. At one time I did a little lecturing in company law. We used to talk about "persons". A person can be a corporate entity. For example, I believe that, in law, ICI is a person.

Sir Teddy Taylor: But a natural person?

Sir Richard Body: My hon. Friend and I are natural persons. I shall not point to anyone who might be described as anything other than a natural person; indeed, all of us here are natural persons. In law, ICI, Unilever, Shell and all other such organisations are persons, but not natural persons.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I have great respect for my hon. Friend, who is one of the wisest people in the House, but I have to point out that he is stating what he thinks the position to be. Is there a definition anywhere? Constituents of mine will probably have to obey these laws. When it comes to training and access, I shall have to ask, "Are you a natural person?" My hon. Friend says that he thinks that he and I are natural persons. Where is the definition? This is not fun; it is a serious matter. All those who say that this Bill should be rushed through should realise that what it contains would become the law of the land. I demand that before we leave this matter we be told, by my hon. Friend or by somebody else, what the blazes a natural person is.

Sir Richard Body: My hon. Friend should not be quite so naive as to believe that the people who drafted this treaty, as well as those who will put it into effect, have very much interest in the people of Southend. The treaty contains many examples of the way in which it will be very difficult for ordinary people, particularly those who are self-employed, to understand the laws that govern their lives, disobedience of which may result in punishment.

Mr. Cash: Perhaps tucked away in this convoluted treaty is a reference to a Euro-person. In the light of previous debates, I believe that we are moving rapidly to the notion of a European culture in which a person will be seen as natural in the European context. This is very disturbing. Does my hon. Friend know of a recent conference in Madrid that was partially funded by the European Commission? We are told that at that conference a certain Dr. Lenarduzzi of the Commission said that the Commission had been seeking to influence education——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows his way round the treaty better than most hon. Members. I am finding it difficult to relate his remarks to article 126 or 127. Or can it be that, as the hon. Gentleman has just appeared in the Chamber, he has lost track of where we are?

Mr. Cash: I had just reached the point about education policy and training. Dr. Lenarduzzi said that for a very long time the Commission had sought to influence education policy, especially through selective financial support. He admitted that under the treaty of Rome there was no remit to do this, and that therefore these provisions were being used to legitimise something that was known to be not within the vires of the existing treaty.

Sir Richard Body: I did touch upon what that gentleman said, because he is a Commissioner and he was speaking about the powers of the Commission as at present and how he sought to extend them. Reading the extracts from the speech that I have seen, he seemed to revel in the prospect of the enhanced powers that he would have as a Commissioner in deciding matters of education and vocational training.

This illustrates again, and very vividly, that as Commissioner he will be in charge, and he sees more power going to him. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster, as we all know, is an intelligent European and has credentials in this field. But she feels some dismay that this Commissioner was boasting—I do not think that that is an unfair word—that he would have so much more power.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: There was a reference to ultra vires persons; I was saying that these are intra vires persons, since legal language is being used.

Sir Richard Body: My hon. Friend shares with me the distinction, although I am not sure that it is a distinction, of having both been a barrister and a farmer. I know that she is well aware of the law on this subject. The Commissioner in question was hinting that he, as Commissioner for education, was exceeding his powers and therefore acting ultra vires, to use my hon. Friend's expression, when in future they will be intra vires and he will have the power to do things that he cannot do at the moment.

That is why some of us feel very concerned about this article, and indeed other articles, and why we believe that the people of this country should be alerted to how powers

are moving away from here to Brussels, to be exercised by someone who boasts as does the Commissioner whose name I fear that I cannot pronounce.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am sorry to trouble my hon. Friend again, but does he really think that the socio-educational instructor is a natural person? He can be a schoolteacher or a youth leader, but, whoever he is, do we really need a treaty in law to define what he is? If we intend to encourage the movement of people, can we not do so on a basis that makes good sense, and in good English?

Sir Richard Body: Indeed, my hon. Friend is right, and I endorse those views entirely. To some extent there may be a need for international co-operation in matters of education and, if there is, I would think that the Council of Europe was well equipped to do what is necessary. Indeed, it would be able to speak for virtually all Europe, other than parts of what was the Soviet Union. As I understand it—you will correct me if I am wrong, Mr. Morris, as a former member of the Council of Europe—it already has a cultural and educational dimension.

Mr. Beggs: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the excellent educational arrangements that we have in Northern Ireland. We respect the rights of those who wish to send their children to church schools, we have an excellent state system, grammar and secondary schools, and we have an integrated system. If this treaty is to proceed headlong, is there a risk that there will not be recognition of the rights of those who wish to make choices in Northern Ireland? In one section of article 126 we see that Community action shall be aimed at

"promoting co-operation between educational establishments".

But then, further down, it also says that the Council,

"acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations."

Is it conceivable that it might ultimately be said that in Northern Ireland there should be only integrated education? Will we be directed ultimately from Brussels as to what is best for our young people?

Sir Richard Body: That is how I understand it. I wonder what my hon. Friend the Secretary of State will say in response. The matter is one of many to which we should have a response. Northern Ireland has high standards. It is the part of the United Kingdom which has more university places per head of population.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Because of the grammar schools.

Sir Richard Body: I am not sure about that. Lincolnshire has kept grammar schools, but it does not yet have a university. We hope to have one. I must not digress to talk about a university in Lincolnshire except to say that we hope to have one by the turn of the century, subject to what the Minister of State says about it. I do not think that there is a causal relationship.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was not suggesting a causal relationship between grammar schools and a local university. I was suggesting a causal relationship between the excellence which a grammar school education gives and the capacity of its students to get to university. It does not need to be in Lincoln; it could be in Lancaster, where we have an exceptionally good grammar school.

The Chairman: Clearly, it is not in Brussels and is not relevant to the article, interesting though it is.

Sir Richard Body: I am sorely tempted to describe my visit to Lancaster university, but I will not. There should be concern in Northern Ireland about the Commissioners having the power to propose education schemes, as, indeed, in Scotland where there is and has been for generations a much higher standard than has prevailed in most of England.

Under the article, it is plain that the Commissioners will have the power to propose education schemes to include Northern Ireland. Such schemes would be to the detriment of Northern Ireland at present. At the Council of Ministers, if we have United Kingdom representatives who wish to object to that, I hope that they will.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) may agree that representatives from the United Kingdom who are attending the Council of Ministers may not always have the interests of the United Kingdom uppermost in their minds. One can be sure that the interests of Northern Ireland might have to be lowered in preference to the interests of some other parts of the United Kingdom or the United Kingdom as a whole. Certainly, we should be concerned that the Commissioners may propose education schemes which could include Northern Ireland. I hope that my hon. Friend the Secretary of State will deal with that point categorically.

Under this article, the Commission will have the power to allocate money or propose the allocation of money by way of incentives to a national Government to adopt schemes which the Commissioners have introduced. That is a dangerous practice. The danger is heightened by the fact that a majority will vote on the issue. When it comes to majority voting, my hon. Friend will agree that Northern Ireland will not have a good chance. As someone with Ulster blood in his veins, I regret that.

The hon. Member for Stretford was making a grave mistake on behalf of his party. I hope that the Back Benchers behind him will see the danger in his argument that vocational training schemes should be devised in Brussels. If vocational training schemes are devised in Brussels, we can be sure that the amount of money available will be limited.

If the amount of money available is to be parcelled up equally, those who represent Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece will insist on more money than the northern European countries. They will say, "It is not fair. We are behind northern Europe in vocational training so we cannot compete fairly in the single market." One can hear the Spaniards saying, "We already have 10 per cent. out of work. We shall have even more if we have to face competition from northern Europe. We must have vocational training as good as that which pertains in northern Europe."

9.30 pm

Mr. Molyneaux: I apologise for intervening a second time in the hon. Gentleman's admirable speech. Does he agree that it will be a question not of bringing southern European countries up to our standards but of levelling us down to a common lower standard?

Sir Richard Body: My right hon. Friend has almost plucked the words from my mouth. I was going on to say

[Sir Richard Body]

that. The amount of money will be limited. We cannot assume that large sums of money will be available for vocational training. The budget will be limited.

If the European Commission says, to use that tired phrase, that there must be a level playing field and that vocational training schemes must be more or less the same throughout the Community, we can be sure that standards in southern Europe and southern Ireland will have to be raised. If the budget is limited, less money will be available for comparable schemes in northern Europe. Therefore, we shall be placed at a disadvantage. That is crucial if we are to seek, as we should, to get rid of the wretched horror of mass unemployment. I see nothing but dangers ahead.

In the main wages are lower in southern Europe. People can afford to accept lower wages because heating, clothing and other costs tend to be lower than in northern Europe.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend give us his views on the fact that, under articles 126 and 127—those which are covered by the amendments that we are discussing tonight—the Commission's proposals will be subject to qualified majority voting? Therefore, the standards which apply in other parts of Europe, which may well be much lower than the fine quality education standards that we have described in our own territories—Scotland, Ireland and many parts of Wales and England—may supersede our standards. The decision will be taken by majority voting. We shall be only one twelfth of the voting body.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already given us his views on majority voting, so I am sure that he will not be tempted down that route.

Sir Richard Body: I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to deal with the point in his reply. It is important. With all due respect, my experience has been—I hope that he will not contradict me; I shall be sorry if he does—that Ministers do not always reply to some of the points that are made in the debate. I hope that they will deal with the matter. After all, majority voting is a serious matter. It means that, if one country or perhaps two or three countries stand out with interests different from those of others, their interests would be overridden. I can see precisely that happening on vocational training.

Anyone who has attended a meeting of the Council of Ministers in recent years will confirm that the Spanish Minister in particular is for ever being extremely difficult about any concessions that might be in our interest but which might conflict with those of southern Europe. He needs only to obtain the support of France and possibly another country to win the day and override our interests.

Mr. Marlow: As my hon. Friend has studied the matter carefully, I expect that he will have read the article in *Education* on 18 September by Mr. Ken Hopkins, a former chief education officer in Mid Glamorgan, in which he mentions a previously not well-recognised concession made by our Prime Minister saying:

"Mr. Major's apparently minor concession at Maastricht thus has significant implications for the education service in the UK. The previous heavy vocational emphasis to the Commission's programmes will be lifted."

Whereas the only impact that the bureaucrats had on our education system in the United Kingdon was through vocational training, it now extends throughout the whole realm of education.

Sir Richard Body: Yes, I have had the advantage of seeing that article.

The Chairman: Order. This is not the appropriate time for the hon. Gentleman to read the article. He should have come prepared.

Sir Richard Body: I am not seeking to read it: I would not do so. That article was not written casually. It is in the journal for education and was written by someone with considerable experience of education and education policy. The article expresses grave concern about article 57 because the author believes that our educational system is satisfactory. Although that may not altogether please Opposition Members, I hope that at least on the Conservative side of the House that view will be supported.

He queries whether we can maintain that standard and whether we would have to change. In the article he says that if we are to change our education system we should decide to make the change. We should not surrender our interests and allow our education standards to be determined through qualified voting procedures by people whose interests might not be the same as ours. That is a powerful argument and I commend it to every hon. Member.

Mr. Cran: What a wonderful speech my hon. Friend has made, which is why I have not intervened so far. Could he turn his mind to article 126, which seeks the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study throughout Europe? Would he like to comment on the fact that many academics and graduates at my local university in Hull are extremely worried about that? They take the view that the academic standards achieved in British universities—especially at the university of Hull—are higher than those achieved at some universities in other parts of Europe. Does he agree that that concern is real and if so, why is it not recognised by the Government?

Sir Richard Body: Hull university has a distinguished professor of government. I sit on an editorial board beside him and can vouch for the good advice that he always gives. He is well known to many Members of the House, has written several books about the House and dearly loves it, but—if he does not mind me saying so—he has strong views about the way that it seeks to be cavalier about the way that its powers are slipping away.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Surely the hon. Gentleman recognises that the Maastricht treaty gives educational advantages to some member countries of the European Community? That is the whole purpose of the Maastricht agreement. Is he aware that the new Government which has just been formed in the Republic of Ireland—a coalition of Fianna Fail and the Irish Labour party—issued a joint policy statement, before the Government was confirmed by the southern Irish Parliament?

That statement announced that, for the first time, grants would be available to provide free third-level university education. The grants would be financed by the cohesion fund that the Maastricht agreement would create, and paid for by British and German taxpayers. That is how the parties presented their Government policy.

Sir Richard Body: Indeed, that must follow. After all, Ireland receives from Community funds six times more

than she puts in. Ireland is a major beneficiary—as, allegedly, are her farmers. I must not digress, but we know only too well how the money has disappeared; it is not really enhancing the farmers' standard of living. It is a great pity that they do not understand what is going on.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It is not just the Government of the Republic of Ireland who are aware of the big difference and the approaching changes; the Commission are aware of that too. Perhaps my hon. Friend can find a way of letting the Government read the Commission's recently published report on Lingua, which was featured in *Education* magazine on 28 August 1992. The report revealed that, during that year, 200 teachers in the United Kingdom had undergone in-service training in a foreign language, compared with 71 in Spain, 66 in France and 48 in Germany.

Even in regard to the number of students going on the foreign exchanges that the treaty will formalise, encourage and finance, Britain's record was about four times higher than that of France. If money is to be provided to equalise the position, Britain will lose out: it will pay more, while gaining no advantage for its people. Less money will be available to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the provision of necessary facilities.

The Chairman: Order. Let me remind the House that, as we are still to debate the cohesion funds, it would not be appropriate for the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) to develop that argument now. Let us return to the two articles covered by the amendment—as I know the hon. Gentleman was about to do.

Sir Richard Body: I believe that the information given by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is germane. It relates to how the article that we are discussing could affect our standards. It asserts that our standards are, on the whole, very good, and quotes statistics to establish that. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will endorse that, rather than adopting the line of the hon. Member for Stretford and allowing it to be said that our educational standards are lower than those generally prevailing on the continent.

What the hon. Member for Stretford said is likely to be mirrored again and again in southern Europe. I hope that the Committee is as grateful as I am for this warning of what will happen in Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece. The Commission will be bound to try to enforce similar standards for vocational training, and that will mean either that our standards will be lowered, or that the taxpayers of northern Europe—primarily those in Germany and the United Kingdom—will have to contribute much more than is currently envisaged.

If that does not happen, our employees will be put at a disadvantage. They will not have the standard of education that they have now. When the Opposition say that our standards are poor, they must realise that those standards will be worse if we go ahead and allow the Commission to lay down standards and impose a uniform pattern across western Europe.

Mr. Cran: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's answer on article 126. Will he address his mind, albeit temporarily, to article 57? He will be well aware of the facts and I do not ask him to read it, but I shall try to tell him succinctly that that extraordinary article requires the Council to issue directives on the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualification. Does he not agree that it is already Government policy that there are far too many directives coming out of Europe? Can he guess why the Government are asking for more directives, albeit on this subject? Do we not want fewer directives?

9.45 pm

Sir Richard Body: I owe my hon. Friend an apology for not answering that question previously. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with it in his reply to the debate. We are gathering quite a catalogue of questions and I suspect that only a very few of them will be answered when the time comes.

Mr. Cryer: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that part of the spate of delegated legislation that the Government are producing is based on introducing statutory instruments to implement directives? Does he agree that 1992 saw an unprecedented number of statutory instruments, orders and regulations? There were more than 3,000—a number never before achieved by any Parliament or Government in history. As the hon. Member for Beverely (Mr. Cran) said, one wonders why the Government are going after a treaty that will produce still more directives.

Sir Richard Body: I once judged a country's degree of socialism, or the socialist instinct of its Government by the number of regulations upon its people as each one tells at least someone what they shall have or what they shall do. The hon. Member has raised a very strong point. We are deluged by statutory regulations and it is a matter of very great concern to the business community.

Large companies all have one or two people whose job it is to examine the regulations and ensure that the company is keeping the law, but they are a severe burden on small businesses. I can think of businesses in my constituency, and I am sure that every right hon. and hon. Member can say the same, that they are desperate about some of the legislation being produced. They almost always complain about secondary legislation; it is very seldom primary legislation.

Mrs. Gorman: Before my hon. Friend leaves the point about training in business and professions, will he turn to amendment No. 199, which deals with article 57? Paragraph 3 deals with training and qualifications and co-ordinating of the medical and pharmaceutical professions and the progressive abolition of restrictions between countries in those professions. I am sure that my hon. Friend has great knowledge of the subject. Does he agree that it is extremely dangerous for us to remove such separations, as we expect very high standards which are not necessarily followed throughout the market? Can he give us the benefit of his experience?

Sir Richard Body: That is true of several professions. The standards of veterinary training in Spain and Portugal are way below ours, although I regret to say that, because I am fond of Portugal. We founded the profession, and the standards set by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and other centres of learning here have been of the very highest. Those who wish to enter training for the profession need A grades at A-level. There are other such examples, and no doubt my hon. Friends can think of them.

[Sir Richard Body]

There is no doubt that we will be disadvantaged if we agree to this article, which is bound to lower our professional standards.

Mr. Cran: I am sorry to be tiresome, but I should like to ask my hon. Friend to return to article 57. I do not want my hon. Friend to read it because he has a great deal else on his mind——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now attempting to read the article for the third time. He should do hon. Members the courtesy of recognising that they have followed the debate and they know what is in the article.

Mr. Cran: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I have not taken up much of the time of the Committee and I put it to you that I was going to present an entirely new aspect of article 57——

The Chairman: Order. It is of little relevance how often an hon. Member may have spoken. Some hon. Members who have spoken many times have spoken in order. Others who have spoken only once may have been out of order. On this occasion the hon. Gentleman is out of order.

Mr. Cran: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. The point that I was going to put to my hon. Friend was entirely different from the one that I put to him before. It relates to why doctors and dentists are being treated——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot just persist. He should know that it is not right to quote at length from the treaty. He should recognise that hon. Members have read it and know what is in it—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—and they have followed the debate intensely. I call Sir Richard Body.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. It is a known fact that the Home Secretary has not read the treaty.

The Chairman: I call Sir Richard Body.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a different point of order, Mr. Morris. The treaty is not couched in the normal language of the Westminster Parliament of the United Kingdom. I suggest that there will inevitably be large parts of each article, therefore, that need explanation by Ministers. So far they have not been giving us explanations.

The Chairman: With the greatest respect, Ministers have not had the chance to respond to anything yet. The hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) has been on his feet for the best part of two hours, so it is a little hard to chastise Ministers.

Sir Richard Body: I do not deny that I have been speaking for two hours. I began by taking the hon. Member for Stretford to task, and there have been some interventions to which I have sought to respond. That is only courteous.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman himself decides whether to give way to interventions, but they are all part of his speech and count towards the time of that speech.

Sir Richard Body: Correct me if I am wrong, Mr. Morris, but I believe that one of the amendments alludes to article 57. It is that to which my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) was trying to refer. It concerns the medical and pharmaceutical professions. Why should not there be differences between this country's view of those professions and that of other countries in the European Community?

The article seeks to harmonise the education, training and qualifications of those two professions in such a way that anyone in them can freely cross frontiers and, having done so, can practise. I accept that there are many advantages to that, and none of those who share my views about the Maastricht treaty would suggest that professional people should not cross frontiers. But we are concerned about the education, training and qualifications of those who will cross frontiers, because we want the highest standards to prevail in those professions.

Mr. Cash: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is possible, under arrangements for the mutual recognition of diplomas and degrees, for a first-class degree from one of the great British universities such as Oxford or Cambridge to be equated with a similar first-class degree from some other place that clearly does not carry the same quality, as a result of which there will be complete confusion as to the value of first and second-class degrees?

Sir Richard Body: Yes, and we must ask whether those professions and the patients who seek advice from them will be at a disadvantage.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Hon. Members are aware of my interest in the health service and its quality. My hon. Friend alluded to the interests of patients. If we are forced to accept what I would describe as a substandard medical qualification because of the Maastricht treaty, which extends vocational training and education to the Commission and the European Community, the British Parliament, by proceeding with the Bill, could be putting the safety of British patients in jeopardy. We should be deeply concerned about that.

Sir Richard Body: My hon. Friend speaks with authority on that subject and I cannot aspire to his understanding of the two professions in question. But as I said, I know something about the veterinary profession, and in that the standards in some southern European countries, particularly Spain, are manifestly lower than they are in Britain. I am in favour of free transfer, but only if we can decide the appropriate standards for our own country.

Mr. Cran: I assure my hon. Friend that I am not besotted with article 57. Is he aware that there is dubiety about whether an English doctor who practises in another country in Europe need speak the local language and, similarly, about whether a doctor from a European country need speak English? That reinforces my hon. Friend's argument that health care will go down rather than up.

Sir Richard Body: That is self-evident, and I hope that when the Minister replies he will deal with that and the catalogue of other questions that have been raised. I beg him to treat this group of amendments more seriously than Ministers treated previous groups and to deal with every point that we have raised. It has been said that we do not

need a referendum because the matter will be fully debated and all the points at issue will be answered. If the questions that we raise are not answered that will weaken the Government's case for denying a referendum. It is in the interests of the Government to deal adequately with all these matters in a language that the people can understand. That cannot be said of the treaty because we have already heard many examples of how it——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee to report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Commercial Court

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): This is very much a case of third time lucky. After the fracas on the day before the start of the Christmas recess, I was prevented by Opposition Members from making this speech.

In drawing attention to delays in the commercial court, I declare an interest as a solicitor and a director of companies which, from time to time, have had reason to use the commercial court. One of the main reasons why hon. Members should not be deterred from holding outside interests is that they are able to bring to the attention of the House problems that arise in those outside interests and which the Government can remedy.

Britain is a trading nation, and depends on international trade and commerce for its existence. At its heart is the City of London and, as I am a Member for a London seat and many of my constituents work in the City, its success is paramount to my constituency's interest. The City of London has a pre-eminent role in global trade and, inevitably, there are disputes in such trade. The commercial court provides a disputes resolution service for the international trading and commercial community, and to date it has been most successful.

The commercial court enjoys a worldwide reputation for providing the service for which it was instituted nearly 100 years ago in 1985. It was set up to overcome delays in the High Court—which, ironically, is now its chief fault. In well over half the cases that appear before the court, all the parties are foreign enterprises, and in more than three quarters of the cases, at least one of the parties comes from abroad. One of the chief results of that success is that the court is a substantial earner of foreign exchange in the form of invisible earnings. Those earnings arise not merely from those directly using the court, because the existence of the court in London means that the big international law firms in the City have an advantage over their overseas competitors and can offer as part of their services their familiarity with the practices of a court of world renown.

Bearing in mind the huge costs of commercial legal advice and advocacy, it would not be an exaggeration to measure the financial benefits of the court in hundreds of millions of pounds per annum. According to the Central Statistical Office balance of payments year book, foreign legal earnings are £425 million per year. The success of the commercial court over recent years is demonstrated by the fact that the court is so popular that the number of judges on commercial cases has increased from one 30 years ago to the present six. It is a credit to this Government and the Lord Chancellor's Department to have nurtured and promoted this state-owned industry. However, a few problems have recently occurred. Due to the international nature of the court, it has developed a system of providing fixed hearing dates. One of the principal reasons for this is that a system of fixed dates gives foreign litigants and witnesses fair notice of when they will be required to travel to this country.

Another important reason is that all those concerned with commercial affairs much prefer to know in advance when their disputes and differences will be resolved. In

[Mr. Richard Ottaway]

order to provide fixed hearing dates that are reasonably reliable, the court must have a constant minimum number of commercial court judges.

Given that starting point, the court can construct a list of court cases and dates. It is the aim of the commercial court that, in principle, cases should be heard at the earliest date on which the parties can be ready. That is in line with the suggestion in the civil justice review, that cases should be listed and heard within 12 months from the time of giving a trial date. That aim is also, most importantly, in line with what commercial enterprises want and need from a commercial disputes resolution service. In this field, justice delayed is likely to be justice denied or at least diminished.

Within an establishment of six judges sitting full time it was possible in the past to come close to achieving that aim. However, the situation has deteriorated recently. At the beginning of the last legal term, only five judges were available, and for reasons which are not surprising in a commercial court, four of those judges had become tied up in cases which had overrun or been brought on expeditiously. So we have a situation in which one judge is doing the work of six. He is the judge in charge of the commercial list, who is unable to undertake any trial of any length, as he has to be available to deal with the administrative matters and paper applications, which run to dozens every week.

The upshot of that is that the commercial court faces an immediate and serious problem. Had the full complement of judges been available, the difficulties would largely have been overcome, but on 22 October 1992, the question of judicial resources was raised in the other place when Lord Byron specifically raised the problems faced by the commercial court because of the lack of a full complement of commercial judges.

The Lord Chancellor, dealing with this point, observed that it was not immediately possible to replace those promoted to the Court of Appeal, but that he hoped to be in a position to appoint replacements and that the matter was temporary. A similar response was given to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. John M. Taylor), when, in answer to an oral question on 30 November, he said that a further appointment would shortly be made and implied that that would solve the problem. He gave that response in absolute good faith and I assure him that I am not suggesting otherwise.

Unfortunately, since then it has transpired that the problem is proving more than temporary. The complement of commercial judges is, on information I have available, likely to be affected indefinitely. As my hon. Friend is aware, three fresh appointments have been made in recent weeks, but I am informed that, because of shortage of judges in other parts of the Queen's bench division, two of these new judges can be made available next term for the use of the commercial court, and one is one of the five already struggling.

If I may anticipate my hon. Friend's reply, he may suggest that this is a matter for the Lord Chief Justice, but the Lord Chief Justice has been saying for many years that he does not have enough judges. My hon. Friend may say that this is a matter for the working party recently set up, but I put it to him that it has already been submitted to the working party that the High Court requires more judges. In other words, the shortage of judges in the commercial court will continue, and the difficulties will multiply every day. They cannot be solved next term, because the court will not have the judges available to do next term's list, let alone grapple with this term's problems of the emergency problems that next term itself may bring.

The commercial court users committee met last month. It is a committee not merely of lawyers with a vested interest in the success of the court but predominantly of major City and international organisations that reflect the cause of global trade. Its spokesman in discussions with the Government is Peter Tudball, the chairman of the Baltic Exchange, who has done much to raise the issue, not to be difficult but to protect London as a centre of world trade. I wholeheartedly support that attitude.

On being advised of the present position, the committee considered the matter so serious that an immediate approach should be made to Government. Its aim was to ensure that all concerned were made aware that it is not only the lawyers of the court who believe that a properly manned commercial court is essential for the continued well-being of many City institutions, which provide international service and thus enable Britain to earn its living in the world. It believes that a total of four new judges are required.

The situation is now such that the judge of the commercial court list recently wrote:

> "To my mind, the Commercial Court is no longer merely in a state of crisis. It is about to reach the point when it would be dishonest to continue to pretend that it is capable of providing the service for which it was instituted."

This autumn, Lord Donaldson, a former Master of the Rolls, said:

> "The situation has gone from crisis to catastrophe."

If that is true, it is a very serious matter indeed. In drawing it to the attention of the House, I have sought to show that the problem can be resolved.

It is not clear to me how we have reached this position. I am aware that the Government must exercise restraint in public expenditure, but there is a solution for the commercial court. The sums of money in dispute in the commercial court are huge and run to millions of pounds, but the writ fees are insignificant. If the writ fee were raised to £1,000 for every case filed in the commercial court, it would be a drop in the ocean to the users of the court, but it is estimated that it would raise £2 million per annum.

That would make the court largely self-financing, would allow for the appointment of even more judges, and might leave a small profit for the Treasury. Perhaps that will help the Treasury to review the situation and allocate more funds directly for more judges in the commercial court.

On that happy note of suggesting a small profit for the Treasury, I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend's proposals for sorting out this situation. I emphasise my belief that this institution is a credit to the Government, and that its problems are capable of resolution.

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I acknowledge the concern that has been expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) about delays in dealing with the work of the commercial court, and I congratulate him on securing this Adjournment debate.

I should first explain that the commercial court is part of the Queen's bench division of the High Court and came into existence in 1895 to provide a tribunal with greater familiarity with the subject matter of commercial and mercantile disputes and procedures to enable those disputes to be justly determined expeditiously, effectively and without undue formality.

Those remain the objectives of the court, which operates a system of fixed rather than floating lists because its users, many of whom carry on their businesses in foreign countries, are given fair notice of when they will be required to travel to London, so they know in advance when their disputes and differences will be resolved.

Under section 6 of the Supreme Court Act 1981, the Lord Chancellor nominates the High Court judges who may then be deployed to sit in the commercial court. Apart from the commercial judge, who is in charge of the list and who sits full-time in the commercial court, the others who sit there are drawn according to need and availability from the pool of judges nominated by the Lord Chancellor.

The work load of the commercial court has shown a steady increase, year by year, since 1988. The number of judicial sittings has also increased proportionately, from 936 days in the year to July 1988 to 1,256 in the year to July 1992. The commercial court had reached a relatively stable position and had been able to allocate trial times for parties who were ready for trial. Recent promotions to the Court of Appeal have, however, had a temporary effect on waiting times.

At the beginning of the last legal term, only five judges were made available from the pool of nominated judges to sit in the commercial court, although lists were planned on the basis that six judges would be available to sit. Of those five judges, two were tied up on cases which had considerably overrun their time estimates, as my hon. Friend indicated. Two others were involved in cases which were expedited—that is, ordered to take priority over other cases in the list. There was therefore only one other judge available to take the cases at that time. All five were, however, transacting the business of the commercial court.

It was not possible to secure immediate replacements for judges who had been promoted to the Court of Appeal. The pool of suitable practitioners is relatively small, and full-time appointments of judges suitable for nomination to the commercial court bench are difficult to arrange, especially as appointees may have other commitments to be met. I am pleased to say that further nominations have now been made, and the Lord Chief Justice has additional judges available for him to deploy in that court.

On 30 November, the Lord Chancellor nominated a further judge, Mr. Justice Tuckey. On 9 December, he further nominated Mr. Justice Colman, who was appointed to the High Court on that day. On 11 January, Mr. Justice Clarke, another new appointee to the High Court bench, was also nominated, to bring the number of nominees in the pool up to 10 who, together with the commercial judge, thus providing 11 judges who are currently able to sit in the commercial court, although I understand that there has had to be some replanning of lists for the current term because of last term's difficulties.

Of course, some of the judges who sit in the commercial court have other commitments. Two of the High Court judges who sit in the commercial court are presiding judges on circuits, and visit those circuits for part of the legal term. Others are also deployed to sit in other parts of the Queen's bench division, the Court of Appeal, the divisional court and the Crown court from time to time by the Lord Chief Justice.

The day-to-day deployment of judges in the Queen's bench division is a matter for the Lord Chief Justice. While it is important that fixtures arranged in the commercial court several months in advance should be kept, the Lord Chief Justice, in deciding on where judges are deployed must, of course, give due weight to the needs of the Crown court, the Queen's bench division, the Court of Appeal, criminal division, and the divisional court. The Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice consider a reduction of waiting times in these latter two courts to be of the utmost importance at this present time. At any one time, therefore, there will be difficult questions of priority to be decided in the allocation of judges. This is an important point and one which is accepted by the commercial court judge.

As the Lord Chancellor explained in the other place on 22 October 1992, in response to an unstarred question from Lord Irvine of Lairg, there is some difference between the waiting times in the various parts of the High Court, and this is true within the Queen's bench division itself. The most recent figures I have seen illustrate these differences. In the warned list, the statistics show that waiting times have halved since June 1991, from two months to one month, while the waiting times for fixtures and after fixtures fell from 15 months to eight months and from six months to three months respectively. There have been improvements in waiting times in other areas of business.

The overall picture is a very complex one, and there is no doubt, therefore, that the situation requires a thorough review. It is one thing to believe that, because of delay, more judges seem to be required; it is quite another to determine how many and on what basis.

It has been said that there is a need to plan for more judges overall, so as to ensure that enough are available in all jurisdictions, including the commercial court. That there should be sufficient High Court judges to hear the most serious, sensitive or complex cases is a natural public concern, and in recognition of this concern, the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice have asked a group of senior judges and officials to provide advice on the work, deployment and numbers of High Court judges. The group is chaired by Lord Justice Kennedy, and its other judicial members are the Deputy Chief Justice, Lord Justice Watkins, Lord Justice McCowan, Lord Justice Scott, Lord Justice Rose, Mrs. Justice Bracewell, Mr. Justice Johnson and Mr. Justice Macpherson.

The group's first meeting was on 5 October 1992. It has met several times since then. The chairman has commissioned material relating to the work, deployment and numbers of High Court judges from members of the group and from other members of the judiciary who have responsibility for, or knowledge of, specialist High Court jurisdictions.

The advice which the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice are seeking would cover a number of areas. The first area is what work, civil and criminal, it is appropriate for High Court judges to undertake and merits their expertise and what work can be left to others. The second is how High Court judges should be deployed to dispose of that business, having regard to the relative needs of the circuits and, in London, of the Court of Appeal, the three divisions of the High Court, the

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employment appeals tribunal and the other commitments they must meet. The third and related area is the system for deploying High Court judges, including the information needed to allocate appropriate business to them and to deploy them flexibly within the courts' structure to carry the work out.

It is hoped that the advice will help to address the number of High Court judges not simply in terms of needing more, or indeed fewer, to meet immediate demands, but in developing a more systematic method of determining those numbers.

The commercial court judge has contributed his views and those of the users of the court—to which my hon. Friend referred—to the group of judges and officials, and these views will be taken fully into account. It is hoped that the advice will be received soon, but until it is received it would be premature to speculate or reach conclusions about how many High Court judges are needed adequately to discharge the work load falling on them in all or any of the jurisdictions in which they sit, or how best they should be deployed to meet it.

I think it pertinent to mention finally that, since the Lord Chancellor came to office in October 1987, the number of High Court judges increased from 79 to 85 in June 1992. Although that number has fallen very recently to 83 because of promotions and retirements, steps are being taken to bring the number back to 85 as soon as is practicable.

It has been suggested that fees should be increased to pay for more judges in the commercial court. I am grateful for this suggestion. Supreme Court fees are currently subject to review, and I have offered to meet my hon. Friend to hear his views on that. The commercial court cannot, however, be seen in isolation from the rest of the court service and there could be no guarantee that increased fee income would translate directly into increased "judge power" in the commercial court.

It has also been suggested that the problems of the commercial court might lead to a significant decrease in this country's invisible earnings. I find it improbable that a temporary reduction in the total number of judges available to sit in the commercial court will do any long-term harm to its excellent reputation.

I have been asked whether the advice of the group of senior judges and officials will be published. It is unclear yet whether the advice will be in a form which could be published. Parliamentary and Privy Council approval is required to increase the current statutory limit, so in the normal course of events, any changes which were proposed to be made as a result of the advice would come into the public domain.

I should add, however, that, even if an increase in High Court judge numbers were agreed, the need to seek such approval and the problems of disengaging candidates from their current practices would mean that some time would inevitably elapse before any appointments would become effective.

The list of judges, then, nominated to sit in the commercial court as at 11th January 1993 was as follows: Mr. Justice Sheen, Mr. Justice Hobhouse, Mr. Justice Saville, Mr. Justice Gatehouse, Mr. Justice Phillips, Mr. Justice Potter, Mr. Justice Waller, Mr. Justice Cresswell, Mr. Justice Tuckey, Mr. Justice Coleman and Mr. Justice Clarke.

Mr. Justice Sheen is the Admiralty judge and devotes about 20 per cent. of his time to the commercial court. Mr. Justice Waller and Mr. Justice Potter are also presiding judges on circuits.

I should like to thank the House for the opportunity to reply to the points raised by my hon. Friend and, once again, to congratulate him on securing this Adjournment debate on a very important subject, about which I know he cares very sincerely, and of which he has considerable knowledge.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Twenty-six minutes past ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 20 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Northern England

1. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Government's policies to bring new industry to the north.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): We seek to ensure that the north and all other regions in the United Kingdom benefit from the prosperity which new industry brings.

During the past six years our policies and grant incentives have enabled the north to attract £2 billion of inward investment creating or safeguarding 15,000 jobs.

Mr. Mandelson: To everyone listening in the northern region that will seem a pathetic reply, especially when regional assistance to it has been cut by 78 per cent. since 1979, unemployment has been higher there for each of the past 20 years and when the recovery was weaker in the second half of last year than it was in the first

Will the Minister give an assurance that, when he makes his announcement on regional assistance, there will be no reduction in assisted area status for any locality in the northern region? Will he give a commitment that the funding of the Northern Development Company will be maintained in real terms? When will the Government create the one-stop business advice centres, a network of which they promised us last year?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman has not managed to improve on his record when he was advising the previous Leader of the Opposition. He does not appear to know the unemployment figures in his constituency, which have fallen sharply since 1986, and he completely downgrades the tremendous success of the northern region in attracting companies such as Nissan and Fujitsu. I am suprised that he, as a new Member, does not spend more of his time praising the people of the north, the Northern Development Company and other organisations on their spectacular success in attracting inward investment to the north.

Mr. Devlin: Has not the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) just quoted figures that were bloated in 1978 by the massive subsidies paid to loss-making industries, particularly steel and shipbuilding? Is not it the case that, since then, we have diverted much of that money more profitably and usefully into Teeside development corporation, Tyne and Wear development corporation and the Northern Development Company as well as a host of other agencies that have brought new investments to the north and are currently constructing several new advance factories, one of which I shall have the honour of opening on Friday?

Mr. Eggar: I agree completely with my hon. Friend. I very much hope that inward investors will look to the messages delivered by my hon. Friend rather than to those of Opposition Members.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister would be better advised to use his energy to answer the questions specifically put by my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) rather than simply trading in personal abuse.

I put the same question to the Minister. Against the background of rising unemployment in the north of England in the past two years, the loss of jobs in manufacturing industry and the fact that much industry in the north of England is dependent upon regional assistance, will the Minister give the House a clear commitment that no area in the north will lose under the review of the assisted areas map?

Mr. Eggar: I am delighted to be exchanging pleasantries once again across the Dispatch Box with the hon. Gentleman now that he has followed me from education. Obviously he has not done his homework in this new area of responsibilities. He knows perfectly well that we await decisions on regional assistance in the light of the current overall look at the map.

Energy Review

2. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to announce the conclusions of his review of the Government's energy policy.

9. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent discussions he has had with representatives of British Coal about the future of the coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

The President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I hope to be able to publish the coal review White Paper as soon as possible next month. As part of the review process I meet British Coal as necessary to discuss a range of issues.

Mr. Nicholson: Any fair-minded person will recognise that resolving the problems that my right hon. Friend inherited will require some cost—whether financial, legislative or ideological. Will my right hon. Friend carefully examine the case for more private enterprise, rather than more subsidy, in the coal industry? Will he also take a hard look at the hidden subsidy that the British consumer pays, through the channel link, to the French nuclear industry and to the dash for gas?

Mr. Heseltine: I know of my hon. Friend's concern in such matters and I assure him that both the Select Committee and, I hope, my Department have carried out an extremely comprehensive and thorough review. I hope shortly to put the findings of the review before the House and I assure my hon. Friend that the matters that he has raised will be included in our review.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Secretary of State investigate the astonishing claim made earlier this week by the chief executive of Scottish Power that, towards the end of last year, British Coal did not even bid for a contract to supply 800,000 tonnes of coal to Scottish power stations, so that Scottish Power had almost no option but to go for subsidised imports? In view of the Government's complete lack of an integrated energy policy and the fact that the Secretary of State was found guilty of flouting the law by unnecessarily closing pits, will the right hon. Gentleman face up to his responsibilities and intervene to save the British coal industry, or resign and make way for someone who will?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will realise that the specific issue of tendering for coal supplies to the Scottish electricity industry or any other consumer is a matter for British Coal. I shall certainly draw the attention of British Coal to the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman. British Coal is charged with the responsibility of advancing the interests of British coal and it must decide whether to bid for contracts. As to the hon. Gentleman's general observations, he will find that our review will be extremely comprehensive and we shall look carefully at the large subsidies in the energy industry, many of which we have sought to reduce during the past decade to fulfil our energy policy objective of providing a diversity of supply at competitive prices.

Mr. Robathan: In my right hon. Friend's deliberations on the future energy policy of the United Kingdom, will he take into account his Department's renewable energy advisory group recommendations, in particular the generation target of 1500 MW by the year 2000 and the idea of a renewable energy obligation? Will he also look into the sensible use of combined heat and power and municipal waste-to-energy schemes? When is he likely to make his decisions on those matters?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises two more aspects of the wide-ranging review that we are conducting. I assure him that we shall deal with both matters when we produce our White Paper.

Mr. Fisher: As part of his review of energy policy, will the President of the Board of Trade give the House the time scale for the review of the 10 pits ordered by the High Court? Will he assure the House that that review will be no less thorough and rigorous than that of the 21 pits? Will he allow coaling to start in the 10 pits so that the reviews may be of equal parity and importance and conducted on an equal basis?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is right. We have asked Boyds—an internationally respected firm of consultants—to introduce the degree of independence to the consultative processes now under way in the light of our judgment of the court findings. It is now for Boyds to conduct the review and we have asked it to look at the evidence and the state of the pits. That matter was also raised in the light of the assurances given by the chairman of British Coal to myself, the Select Committee and the courts. It is for Boyds to determine the speed at which it conducts its review, which must be done thoroughly. It is for British Coal to consult the unions on whether they accept the element of independence that the appointment that I have made could provide in the circumstances. When the exercise has been conducted and I have received the report, I shall ensure that the House is fully informed.

Mr. Kynoch: While conducting his review of energy policy, will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is a proper balance between all forms of energy, with particular reference to the North sea oil and gas industry, which contributes an important amount to the economy of the north-east of Scotland?

Mr. Heseltine: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. It is important that all aspects of energy provision are considered in our review and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Robin Cook: Has the President already forgotten that since last Question Time, the courts have ruled that his decision of 13 October was unlawful and that his decision of 19 October to shut 10 pits was both unlawful and irrational?

Would not the rational response to that ruling be to let the miners who clock on at those pits every day go underground and dig coal? Why, then, does not the right hon. Gentleman instruct British Coal to reopen the 10 pits that it unlawfully shut? As he has told the House that he has met the top people in British Coal, who will all keep their jobs, will he say which pits on the list he has visited during the review and what meetings he has had with the people working there who face the sack?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that we have continual discussions with British Coal, which is responsible for the management of pits. We have not instructed British Coal to resume coaling at the 10 pits, for the simple reason that it advises us that it does not need the additional coal. It already has large stocks, both at the pithead and with the generators. The contractual prospects for British Coal would not justify the additional cost of extracting that coal now.

Mr. Riddick: Is my hon. Friend aware that my local council—Labour-controlled Kirklees—is imposing smokeless zones on the rural parts of my constituency, despite the fact that the council's own figures show that emissions of smoke and sulphur dioxide are well within the legal limit? The result will be that hundreds, if not thousands, of local households will switch from burning coal to burning gas. Is not that Labour hypocrisy in action?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend brings out one of the less attractive features of the controversy that has surrounded the pit closures. It must also be said that we have not heard a great deal from the environmental lobbies, which were so vociferous in urging us to achieve better environmental standards in this area.

Mining Industry

3. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's support for the British mining industry.

Mr. Eggar: We are engaged in a wide-ranging review of the prospects for 21 of the pits proposed for closure by British Coal, in the context of the Government's energy policy. We shall shortly be publishing a White Paper setting out the results of that review, which will then be debated in the House.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister give an undertaking that in view of the High Court's ruling that British Coal and the Government acted unlawfully in closing the 10 collieries, which include Parkside in my constituency, he will ensure that the criteria under which Boyds reviews those collieries will be exactly the same as the criteria being used in the review of the other 21 collieries? Everyone could then be sure that those 10 collieries were getting a fair deal.

Will the Minister give the House and the country a further undertaking that the miners at the 10 collieries will not be dismissed, at least until the House has had the opportunity to debate the Government's review of the future of the British coal industry?

Mr. Eggar: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, Boyds' report on the 21 pits plus the additional 19 will be published. With regard to the report on the 10 pits which my right hon. Friend has asked Boyds to prepare, both the unions and British Coal will be consulted. We assume that that report will also be published and made available. At that stage, the House will have an opportunity to consider it, as well as the report that is shortly to be published on the 21 pits plus the additional 19.

On the latter part of the question, there will be no compulsory redundancies until there has been a debate in the House, until the review has been published and until the House has had an opportunity to discuss the White Paper and the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry.

I apologise for the length of that answer, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Cormack: Does my hon. Friend accept that many thousands of miners are finding it extremely difficult to decide on their future before they know the future of their industry? Therefore, will he talk to Mr. Clarke urgently and ask that the special redundancy and early retirement arrangements be kept in force for at least another six months so that those men are relieved of the intolerable, agonising pressures that they face at the moment?

Mr. Eggar: We are acutely conscious of that point, which Mr. Neil Greatrex of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers made to me this morning.

Mr. Skinner: The 90 days are almost up.

Mr. Eggar: We have said—I think that this must be right—that we should not make any decision, nor should we press British Coal to make any decision, in advance of the publication of the White Paper, because that obviously has a bearing. The two are interconnected.

Mr. Hardy: Before reaching any conclusions, will the Minister take particular care to consider the total cost of the closures as well as the sterilisation of large volumes of coal? Will he take even more care in considering the recommendations of the electricity regulator in the recent report on electricity purchasing which appears to ignore the costs of production and reaches conclusions that are not justified by the facts, which are known to the hon. Gentleman, his Department and every hon. Member who is concerned about this matter?

Mr. Eggar: Of course, the matters mentioned in the hon. Gentleman's first point will be considered as part of the review. The responsibility for the report is Professor Stephen Littlechild's, but, as the hon. Gentleman would expect, that report is one of the factors that we shall consider as part of the review. It may help the House, as the matter was raised from a sedentary position, if I add that the 90 days is the minimum consultation period.

Mr. Alexander: Bearing in mind the huge anxiety among the mining communities about the final outcome, may I ask my hon. Friend to confirm that the Boyds' report on the 10 pits and the reports of the Select Committees on Employment and on Trade and Industry will all be the subject of the Government's conclusions in their White Paper before we come to the House and discuss it with a view to determining our future energy policy?

Mr. Eggar: It will be important to have those documents available, but my hon. Friend will be aware that the coal industry faces a major crisis at the beginning of April when there are no contracts for coal. If we were to delay the publication of all the documents in the way that my hon. Friend suggests, no coaling at all may be possible on 1 April. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not want that, but I shall bear in mind his other points.

Mr. O'Neill: The Minister clarified his reply to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) in relation to the 90-day period and the special redundancy terms that have been offered. Will those redundancy terms remain on the table until the various problems that flow from the court decision are resolved? Can we take it that the offer will remain for as long as it takes to resolve the matter? That is the men's worry at present and the Minister was not specific in his reply.

Mr. Eggar: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. First, I repeat that the 90-day consultation period is a minimum period, so no miner should be under the impression, as I understand some are, that on 30 January the position will suddenly change from what it was on 29 January.

The hon. Gentleman's second point relates to the end of March date for the present voluntary redundancy terms. To clarify the matter, we are acutely aware of the concern about that, but we do not think that it would be right either to announce that the scheme will stop on that date or that it will be extended beyond that date, in advance of the publication of the White Paper and the other papers. Those decisions must be taken in the light of the White Paper. I hope that the House will understand that.

Manufacturing Productivity

4. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the change in manufacturing productivity for the latest period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): Manufacturing productivity in the three months to October 1992 was at record levels, 2 per cent. higher than in the previous three months and 6 per cent. higher than the same period a year earlier.

Mr. Dunn: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Would he care to speculate on what those figures might be if all the restrictive practices that we abandoned, abolished and swept away were reimposed according to the policy of the Labour party?

Mr. Sainsbury: That is a good point. It is ghastly to contemplate where we might be if we had not introduced our reforms of industrial relations law, in the teeth of persistent opposition from Labour,

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister accept that in the real world, under a Conservative Government, total employment in manufacturing continues to decline, particularly in the west midlands? Instead of planting silly questions such as this, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us what action the Government will take to save this vital sector of British Industry?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that if we are to have an internationally competitive manufacturing sector, its productivity must be of the highest standard. The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind the fact that, because of our changes to industrial relations law, productivity growth in manufacturing industry since 1979 has been three times as fast as that achieved under the last Labour Government.

China (Ministerial Visit)

5. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the visit of the Minister for Trade to the People's Republic of China.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): I made a visit to Guangzhou between 3 and 5 January with a team of 20 senior business men, to pursue important opportunities in the fastest-growing region of the world. I made clear our long-term commitment to a significant expansion of trade between the United Kingdom and China. Our substantial commercial presence in Hong Kong has a vital role to play in this process.

Sir Thomas Arnold: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his successful journey, which was made at a difficult time for Anglo-Chinese relations. Does he believe that British business is taking full advantage of the opportunities that China has to offer?

Mr. Needham: I do not think that we are taking full advantage, but we are taking much greater advantage than we were even a year ago. As my hon. Friend said, there are immense opportunities for British business in China. We have a long trading relationship with the country, which is one of the fastest-growing markets in the world. It is a market which we must and will enter and I am sure that we shall be successful in it.

Mr. Bell: The Minister will be aware that we have sold nose-cone radar for fighter aircraft to the Republic of China. Last time the issue was raised in the House, he told us that there was a ban on arms trade. Is that ban extant?

Mr. Needham: Yes, Madam.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend ensure that a rather vociferous and sometimes short-sighted minority in Hong Kong does not imperil our relations with the Republic of China, on which so many jobs and so much else will depend in the future?

Mr. Needham: The governor's proposals for the 1992 elections strike me as entirely consistent with both the Basic Law and the joint declaration. China has been invited to discuss those proposals with us; in the mean time, our trade with China continues. The vice-premier of China, Zhu Rongji, and the mayors of Suzhou and Shanghai have recently visited this country and I have every confidence that business between our two countries will continue to grow.

Cultural Programme

6. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current cost of the cultural programme administered by overseas trade division 3 of his Department.

Mr. Needham: My Department does not normally administer cultural programmes. However, overseas trade division 3 had a budget of £1·4 million for the cultural and entertainment programme connected with Expo 92.

Mr. Cohen: Did the existence of that cultural programme come as a surprise to the Minister and his officials? Is not that symptomatic of the absence of any serious promotion of British trade abroad? Are not the Government so ashamed of the Britain that they have run down over the past 14 years that they cannot promote British culture or help our exporters?

Mr. Needham: I was not in the slightest bit surprised by our cultural budget for Expo. We can teach anyone in the world about culture, and we did so at Expo. The British day was the most successful of all national days at Expo because of our immense cultural attainments.

Mr. Duncan: Given the importance of our cultural programmes overseas and the fact that the Sri Lankan Minister of Trade and Commerce, Mr. Abeygunasekera, is currently visiting the United Kingdom, will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to reaffirm his belief in the importance of our trade and cultural relations with Sri Lanka and, indeed, our admiration for that country's domestic policies?

Mr. Needham: Yes, although Sri Lanka is rather far from Seville.

Mining Equipment

7. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on the mining engineering sector.

Mr. Eggar: Our policy, as for all other sectors of industry, is to help United Kingdom companies to compete successfully at home and abroad.

We are working closely with the industry to give our suppliers every proper assistance.

Mr. Hinchliffe: As the Minister will recall, I have already expressed my concern about the implications of Government policy on the coal industry for the export efforts of the British mining engineering sector. Is he aware that the British Jeffrey Diamond Company in my constituency has developed an award-winning leading edge technology in switched reluctance variable speed drives? *[Laughter.]* That is what it says here. Is the Minister aware that there is major export potential, but that the company and the industry as a whole are concerned that Government policies for coal are destroying the future potential of such products, which can earn for Britain, because our shop window to show these products is being destroyed with the British coal industry?

Mr. Eggar: May I be the first to congratulate the hon. Gentleman on reading his hand? I am aware of the importance of the British coal industry to the British mining equipment industry and I understand the difficulties to which he drew attention. It is right to point out that the mining equipment industry has been a successful exporter which runs a positive balance of trade surplus. We are working hard to help it to promote exports in areas such as China.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware of a company called Wallacetown Engineering in my constituency which specialises in electrical mining equipment? It currently has representatives in China seeking new business in view of the difficulties in the coal industry. There are encouraging messages, but may I have an assurance that the Department of Trade and Industry will do all in its power to encourage and help companies such as Wallacetown Engineering?

Mr. Eggar: It was precisely to help such companies that I went to China, and for precisely that reason that we are seeking to reach an agreement between the Export Credits Guarantee Department and Chinese banks to facilitate coal equipment exports.

Engineering

8. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will next meet motor manufacturers to discuss measures to support the engineering sector.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I will be meeting the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders and senior representatives of the leading vehicle manufacturers later today.

Mr. Butler: At that meeting, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the importance, as set out in detail in the Bangemann report, of pre-competitive co-operation in the development of high technology products? Will he also bear in mind moves to encourage further inward investment which, in successful areas such as Milton Keynes, now accounts for 18 per cent. of our employment?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend on both points. He mentioned inward investment. The success of inward investment evident in his constituency, which I had the pleasure of visiting recently, is attributable largely to the creation of the right economic climate, a climate of low taxation, good industrial relations and minimum regulation—the very factors which would be most put at risk by Labour's policies.

Burdens on Industry

10. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress is being made in ridding industry of unnecessary legislative burdens.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): We have taken a wide range of measures in Whitehall, in town halls and in the European Community to promote deregulation. For the first time, all Government Departments have had to undertake a census of their regulations. Following that, by 1 April they will be providing me with their candidates for repeal and simplification.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will shortly be announcing the terms of reference of a scrutiny of the formulation of European Community law and its implementation and enforcement in the United Kingdom, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will shortly be holding a seminar for Cabinet and other Ministers and senior civil servants to impress on them the importance of achieving results in the deregulation initiative before the next Government reshuffle.

Mr. Gill: I am sure that many people employed in the wealth-generating sector of the economy in my constituency and in the rest of the country will be encouraged by my hon. Friend's positive response. Will he assure the House that, in considering those important matters, the Government understand that what bothers the entrepreneur and imposes a high cost burden on industry is not just one individual piece of legislation, but an amalgam of hundreds of them?

Mr. Hamilton: I fully agree with my hon. Friend that the greatest burden of regulation falls upon smaller businesses. That is a tremendous distraction from wealth creation and job creation, and we at the Department of Trade and Industry are determined to play our part in reducing that burden.

Mr. Trimble: May I draw the Minister's attention to the problems experienced by exporters, especially in the implementation of the single market? Their job has not become easier, despite no longer having to regain certain classes of papers, because under the new value added tax regulations they have to find out the VAT numbers of the persons to whom they are exporting. They have considerable difficulty, especially when dealing with countries where the cultural attitude to tax matters is different from our own.

Mr. Hamilton: I agree that, although the single European market offers great opportunities for businesses in this country and, overall, has reduced the burden of regulation, there is still much more that can be done. I am keeping a wary eye out for opportunities to reduce the burdens. If the hon. Gentleman comes across any examples among his constituents' businesses, I should be grateful if he would send me the details.

Sir Michael Grylls: Most hon. Members will give enthusiastic support to my hon. Friend's vigorous campaign to get rid of unnecessary burdens and overbearing Government measures affecting all sorts of industries, but will he ensure that he is informed of any new burdens proposed by other Departments, especially regulations and secondary legislation? Supported by the President of the Board of Trade, will my hon. Friend do all in his power to ensure that, at the highest level, Ministers are told to bring proposals to him first to find out whether they are really necessary?

Mr. Hamilton: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. He has been a doughty fighter in the cause of deregulation for many years in the House. Each Department now has its own deregulation Minister, whose responsibility within that Department is to ensure that if any new regulations are proposed they are proportionate and not too costly to businesses in this country. The deregulation initiative is centrally co-ordinated from

within my Department, so I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall subject proposals from other Departments for increased regulation to the closest possible scrutiny.

Dangerous Toys

11. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many warnings have been issued by his Department under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 to manufacturers and distributors of dangerous children's toys.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): Since October 1987 my Department has served 18 prohibition notices on named companies prohibiting them from supplying toy-like items which were considered to pose a choking hazard. My Department does, of course, from time to time offer informal advice to traders on matters relating to the safety of toys and other consumer goods.

Mr. McAvoy: With so many official recalls of dangerous children's toys, kettles, car tyres, washing machines and electric light bulbs, is it not clear to the Minister that his system is ineffective and leaves tens of thousands of consumers at serious risk from dangerous products?

Mr. Leigh: No, I do not take that view. Trading standards officers are responsible for enforcing the Consumer Protection Act. The hon. Gentleman's original question referred to toys. Under the directive on the safety of toys, trading standards officers have all the powers that they need. That directive is extremely detailed and lays down strict criteria as to how toys should be manufactured and retailed. There is no evidence that trading standards officers do not have sufficient powers to ensure that toys are safe.

Mr. Michael Brown: Is my hon. Friend aware that I have a very great vested interest in receiving a successful answer to my question as I am a purchaser of toys for my god-daughter—his daughter? I believe that consumers, both purchasers and recipients, should have the benefit of some kind of British safety standard so that it might at least be clear that a toy is safe for my hon. Friend's daughter.

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He will be relieved to hear that if he were to attempt to buy for my daughter anything called Splat Balls, Splat Eggs, Splat Tomatoes, Slime Balls, Sticky Balls, Tacky Wacky Wall Rollers, Spike Balls, Sticky Flying Hammers, Hand Hammer Sticky Catchers, Sticky Hand, Sticky Flicker or Sticky Troll, that would be illegal under consumer protection legislation.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: How does the Minister defend the present recall system, which leaves four out of five dangerous articles in the hands of consumers? The system is ineffective and open to abuse by manufacturers and retailers.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman is, of course, a slime ball and should get his tacky hands off—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. As hon. Members will have seen, I was rather distracted when the remark that has caused the interruption was made. However, from the reaction of the House I take it that it was made in good humour.

Mr. Leigh: Of course it was made in good humour, Madam Speaker. The hon. Gentleman and I get on extremely well in respect of all these matters, as he knows.

This is a serious matter, and if the hon. Gentleman has any evidence we shall ensure that it is passed to trading standards officers.

Debt (Late Payment)

12. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further plans he has to tackle the problem of late payment of debt.

Mr. Leigh: The Government are already addressing the problem of late payment with a range of measures, including pilots with trade associations and new Government contracting terms.

Ms. Lynne: Does the Minister agree that late settlement of debt has caused many small businesses to go to the wall, not only in Rochdale but throughout the country, that this has led to increased unemployment and that the trend will continue in the foreseeable future? Does he agree that Government measures to date have not ended late settlement of debt? Is it not time we had a statutory requirement that interest be paid on overdue debts?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Lady is, of course, correct in saying that this is a very serious problem for small businesses. We keep these matters constantly under review, and we have an open mind about the question of a statutory requirement that interest be paid on overdue debts. The problem—a difficult and serious one—is that it would simply result in larger companies' imposing longer credit terms on their contractors. Other countries in the European Community have such provisions. France and Italy are examples, but their late payment problem is worse than ours. Denmark and Germany, too, have such provisions, but the fact that they do not have the same problem is probably due as much to cultural factors as to statutory controls. Most small business organisations—such as the Federation of Small Businesses, the Confederation of British Industry and the Association of British Commerce—support our present stand.

Mr. Tracey: Is my hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members have campaigned for many years for improvement in respect of the question of late payment, which is so very debilitating to small businesses, especially at this time? Does my hon. Friend know that small businesses say that some of the biggest companies in this country are among the worst payers?

Mr. Leigh: I pay tribute to the campaign waged by a number of hon. Members with regard to the late payment problem. As well as keeping an open mind about the need for legislation in the future, it is vital that the Government should set an example—indeed, there is a requirement that Government Departments pay promptly, within 30 days—and to ensure that prompt payment goes down the line to subcontractors. The campaign waged by hon. Members has had an effect on Government action, and I am delighted to say that the Association of District Councils

has taken up the campaign with regard to the need for prompt payment by local authorities and that trade associations, too, are following the problem through.

Manufacturing

13. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on changes in the manufacturing base of the economy.

Mr. Sainsbury: Over the 1980s, manufacturing output grew at the same rate as in Germany, and faster than in France and in Italy. Output in the three months to October was higher than at the end of 1991.

Mr. Henderson: Is the Minister aware of the plight of the machine tool industry—a key high-tech and capital goods industry at the heart of the British manufacturing base which has lost 25 per cent. of the United Kingdom market in the past three years? Will the Minister tell the House why he thinks that that has happened? What does he intend to do about it?

Mr. Sainsbury: I appreciate that the machine tool industry has suffered severely during the recession. It is understandable that it would be one of the industries likely to suffer most and therefore it is equally likely to benefit as the upturn comes, so long as we retain the competitive position that we now have with low taxation, less regulation and a competitive exchange rate.

Mr. Rathbone: What actions have arisen in Government policy in the light of the submission from the Engineering Employers Federation?

Mr. Sainsbury: It was an interesting submission and we have studied it carefully. We have discussed and will continue to discuss it with the Engineering Employers Federation. As I am sure my hon. Friend agrees, a careful reading of the report—rather than some of the press comment that accompanied its release—will show that there is much in it which is being done or has already been done on the recommendations made to the Government.

Mr. Turner: Will the Minister accept that the manufacturing base is fast disappearing in the black country of the midlands—an area in which there was more wealth created per acre than anywhere else in the world. The latest casualty is Cannon Industries in Coseley. Unless we can save it, the plant is to be closed, with the loss of 900 jobs. The company has been trading satisfactorily for the past 175 years and makes top-quality products——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now doing a public relations exercise instead of putting a question.

Mr. Turner: Not at all.

Madam Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to come to his question.

Mr. Turner: I am speaking for the 900 workers who will lose their jobs, and for their families. What do the Government intend to do about that?

Mr. Sainsbury: I wish that the hon. Gentleman could use his public relations skills to praise the achievements of British manufacturing industry. Manufacturing output—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition may not wish to hear, but the country should know that manufacturing output is now one fifth higher than it was 10 years ago, manufacturing investment is one third higher, productivity is more than one half higher and export volume is four fifths higher.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I entirely endorse the views just expressed by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner). What response will my right hon. Friend give to the Engineering Employers Federation on the excellent campaign that it has launched? Will he admit that the manufacturing industries of this country, together with construction, are the only source of non-inflationary economic growth? What action does he intend to urge on the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the two Budgets this year to broaden our manufacturing base? Although my right hon. Friend gave some optimistic forecasts and statistics, the fact is that we have one of the narrowest manufacturing bases in the European Community.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of manufacturing industry. I am sure that we share the wish to see the manufacturing base expand. I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's autumn statement responded very adequately to the needs of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Cousins: The Minister will recognise that the British aerospace industry, which is our largest exporter, is facing a period of considerable change and difficulty. Last Friday the largest order for cargo aircraft ever placed was placed with Boeing. What action has the Minister taken to ensure that British Rolls-Royce engines are used for that order?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Member is well aware of the difficulties being experienced by the aerospace industry internationally, partly due to the cutback in defence requirements. My Department works closely with the aerospace industry and keeps very close contact with it in all its aspects in order to promote the interests of British manufacturers. I am happy to have this opportunity to pay tribute to the export achievements of the aero-engine sector and Rolls-Royce in particular.

Industrial Competitiveness Division

14. **Mr. Page:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement concerning the work of the industrial competitiveness division.

Mr. Heseltine: I attach great importance to the work of the industrial competitiveness division, which is central to my drive to make the Department of Trade and Industry a real partner to British business. The division provides me with a wide range of advice on the United Kingdom's competitiveness, based on research at home and abroad, which I take into account when considering Government policy.

Mr. Page: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. I am delighted that he takes information from that division into account in formulating Government policy. That is a change from what some of his predecessors have done. Nevertheless, does he agree that it is vital for the information gathered by the division to be disseminated to British industry so that industry knows where it is lacking

and where it can compete to drive out imports and increase exports? Will my right hon. Friend please say how he will get this information through to British industry?

Mr. Heseltine: I very much sympathise with what my hon. Friend has said. He will realise that we have a wide range of contacts with British industry, both large and small companies. The purpose of the competitiveness division is not to produce one jumbo report, but to continue to advise us. We shall therefore use all the avenues available to us, through the sectoral divisions or through the one-stop shops that we are pioneering, to communicate information to the companies where appropriate.

Mr. Barry Jones: When can the right hon. Gentleman get the problems of manufacturing at the head of the Government's agenda? When shall we see an end to the indecision and drift which are at the heart of industrial policy in Britain today? Would it not be better to invest in manufacturing rather than go for quick profits from privatisation sales?

Madam Speaker: Order. I feel that perhaps the hon. Gentleman is putting a supplementary to the wrong question. We are here concerned simply with the division in the Board of Trade which is concerned with industrial competitiveness.

Mr. Heseltine: I understand the point that the hon. Member was making, but I am at a loss to understand how he can criticise the Government when his own party has produced a budget designed to cut back on the levels of investment in British industry by a windfall tax on consumers of British-manufactured products.

Coal Industry

15. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now make a further statement about the coal industry.

Mr. Heseltine: If I may, Madam Speaker, I will answer this question and question 18 together——

Madam Speaker: Order. I was not informed that questions 15 and 18 were to be linked. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will deal only with question 15 at this stage.

Mr. Heseltine: In that case, Madam Speaker, I will not answer question 18 in conjunction with question 15.

The answer to question 15 is that the Government are conducting a wide-ranging review of the prospects for 21 of the pits proposed for closure by British Coal. I hope to be able to publish a White Paper as soon as possible next month, setting out the results of that review, which will then be debated in the House.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not true that, according to the High Court, the review turned out to be illegal, that the 90 days' consultative period is up on 27 January and that miners at some of the pits are being told by local management that if they do not take their redundancy pay by this weekend they will lose their £10,000 supplementary redundancy pay? It is a form of blackmail. We need an assurance that since the Government acted illegally and the High Court has ruled that the consultative period must be extended, those redundancy payments will be extended as well. We expect better from this Government, who ought to have been surcharged—especially the right hon. Gentleman, who has cost the mining industry £100 million, including miners' lost wages. If he had been a member of a Labour council, he would have been surcharged.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that the courts did not deal with the review that we are talking about. However, I wish to deal very seriously with the essence of his point, which is about the availability of the redundancy terms. The redundancy terms are available until the end of March, and it is clear—*[Interruption.]* No, the official 90 days—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was ever interested in the answer to any question, he would listen to what I have to say because it is vital to the people whom he represents and, of course, to a wide range of other hon. Members' constituents.

The consultation period, which ends at the end of January, is a minimum consultation period. We have made it clear that there will be no steps to close mines until the House has had an opportunity to debate the issue in the context of the White Paper. We have made it equally clear that the redundancy terms will still be available at that time.

Mrs. Peacock: Following the reply by my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy to a question on the special redundancy scheme, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that that scheme could continue after the end of March as the matter is causing great concern to many miners and their families?

Mr. Heseltine: I quite understand the point that my hon. Friend raises. I can assure her that we shall deal with that issue in the White Paper and that the redundancy terms will be available until that review is published, and then we shall clarify the future.

Mr. Cunliffe: In view of the right hon. Gentleman's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), will he now clarify that, as the British Coal 10-day pit closure was declared invalid and illegal, the 90-day consultation period is meaningless and invalid? Will he now give a categorical assurance, as the Prime Minister has written to the miners' parliamentary group saying that the 10-pit review which he has now spoken about is independent of the other 20 pits and that the 90-day consultation period must be introduced again from the day the right hon. Gentleman presents the review to the House?

Mr. Heseltine: Obviously, I have read with great care the judgment which, of course, has not yet been perfected; nevertheless, I have read all the evidence that I can. It seems to me that the judge was saying that I should ensure that there is a degree of independence in so far as it lay to me to do so. It was with that in mind that I appointed Boyds to conduct the review of the 10 pits. The point remains that the 90 days is a minimum period. I have made it absolutely clear that, before any further decisions are taken in terms of the closure of those pits, the House will have an opportunity to debate the outcome of the White Paper.

Mr. Oppenheim: What conclusions does my right hon. Friend draw from the fate of Kloeckner, the leading west German steel maker which recently declared bankruptcy

because of Germany's high-price energy policy and because of Germany's policy of protecting its coal industry from competition? Does that not show that, if we protect one industry from competition, we simply load costs and job losses on to others?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend obviously makes a most important point, which underlies our determination to achieve competitiveness in British industry. It would be inappropriate for me to analyse the precise reasons for the failure of that steel company in Germany, but it is absolutely self-evident that the British Government have negotiated to ensure that some of the more onerous social costs of the German economy are not imposed here.

Mr. Janner: Will the Minister reassure the House that his White Paper will take into account the recommendations of the Trade and Industry Select Committee and of the Employment Select Committee? Is he aware that the chairman of British Coal, who told the Employment Select Committee that he had been too busy to go down any pit to meet affected miners, has announced that tomorrow, by a strange coincidence, he will go down a pit at precisely the time the Employment Select Committee is to put out its report? Did the right hon. Gentleman know about that? Were the Government told that that unworthy public relations exercise was to happen?

Mr. Heseltine: I think that my Department received that information by way of a press release. To go back to the substance of the hon. and learned Gentleman's first point, obviously it is the Government's intention to take account of the views of the Employment Select Committee, which the hon. and learned Gentleman chairs, and of the Trade and Industry Select Committee. It looks as though that will now be possible, as we had always intended. We could not have known that at the outcome, but certainly that is what we have sought to achieve.

Mrs. Currie: Does the President of the Board of Trade agree that, however tempting, it may be dangerous and, indeed, foolish to postpone economic change any longer than necessary? Is he aware that, from 1987—when the closure of the last pit in my constituency was announced —to the end of 1992, more than 11,000 new businesses were registered for VAT by the South Derbyshire VAT office, and that the unemployment rate in my constituency is 6 per cent? None of that would have been possible if we had struggled to keep that dead old pit open. Will the President of the Board of Trade take that point of view into account?

Mr. Heseltine: I understand the point that my hon. Friend has made. There is no doubt at all that it is one of the obligations of my Department to pursue energy policies that make competitive prices available to our manufacturing base and to domestic consumers.

Mr. Robin Cook: May I press on the President of the Board of Trade the points made by my hon. Friends about the extension of the period for enhanced redundancies? Is he aware that there is a view in many of the pits that he will not extend the deadline beyond 31 March so that he can pressure miners to make a decision immediately to leave the pits? If that happened, the Government could claim that the miners had taken voluntary rather than compulsory redundancy. Is the President of the Board of Trade aware that if he does not report on his review until the end of February, there will be only five weeks left until 31 March for those people to make important decisions about their future lives? Why does he not now have the confidence to say that, whatever the outcome of the review, the deadline will be extended if there are to be redundancies?

Mr. Heseltine: It is obvious that if one is conducting a wide-ranging review into all aspects of the pit closure programme in the context of our White Paper, the issue of subsequent redundancies and the terms of them must be part of that review. The redundancy terms are available until 31 March, and I hope that we shall have a debate in the House before that date.

Redundancies (Pendle)

3.32 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing an urgent and important matter, namely,

"the 574 redundancies announced in Pendle yesterday."

Smith and Nephew is one of the largest employers in Pendle. Yesterday's decision to sack 574 people will reduce the work force by half in an area in which unemployment levels are already grotesquely high. We need to explore urgently any possible way of retrieving the position.

The matter is specific. It involves a decision of Smith and Nephew to pull out of denim manufacturing completely. That means that, when the decision is taken through, Britain will no longer be capable of producing denim cloth. That is staggering when one considers the number of fashion products that are made from denim cloth. I am not necessarily talking about imports from the far east. Forty per cent. of imports of denim cloth into the United Kingdom come from the European Community —Germany and Ireland—and from other high-cost producers such as the United States.

Why are we faced with a further contraction of the textile industry in my constituency? The issue is of national significance. The redundancies will have a devastating impact locally, but they will have an enormous impact throughout Lancashire where the textile industry is losing the critical mass to continue as an effective manufacturing industry.

The matter is of national significance because it will cost the Exchequer £5,166,000 in dole payments and social security payments to offset the cost to people who were gainfully employed. It is also of national significance because it throws into high relief the supine attitude of the Government to protect the textile industry in the GATT negotiations and their complacency to allow a vital part of the manufacturing industry to go down the pan. That is an important reason why we should have an urgent debate on the matter.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the 574 redundancies announced in Pendle yesterday."

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member has said about the decision of Smith and Nephew to close its denim-making plant at Colne, with the loss of 574 jobs. I have to give my decision without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter which the hon. Gentleman has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.35 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): May I ask for your guidance, Madam Speaker, on two issues relating to a matter which has recently come to my attention? I have notified the Members involved that I intended to raise the matter on the Floor of the House this afternoon. It has come to my attention that Sheffield city council subsidises the constituency offices of four Sheffield Members—the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts)—*[Interruption.]*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The matter which the hon. Gentleman is raising with me arises under Standing Order No. 128, which provides for complaints relating to the registration of interests. That must be considered by the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I have to tell the hon. Gentleman, and any other hon. Member who might be interested in such matters in the future, that such complaints should not be made to me on the Floor of the House. The subject should be raised immediately with the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I ask the hon. Gentleman to take that course of action now.

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to you for pointing that out to me, Madam Speaker; I take that point on board entirely. I wish to raise another issue on which I should like your guidance. I was going to point out that the Sheffield Members are being subsidised to the tune of——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must accept my guidance.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Is it a separate point?

Mr. Riddick: It is an entirely different point, Madam Speaker. I am pointing out, so that people may know the background, that Sheffield Members are being subsidised to the tune of £55,000——

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman has a genuine point of order to raise with me, I am prepared to listen to it; but it must be directed to me.

Mr. Riddick: I should like to ask you for guidance on the propriety of Members of Parliament receiving additional public money for constituency offices.

Madam Speaker: Order. This is an abuse of the House. I ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I draw your attention to question 1 on the Order Paper today, tabled by the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson). The question refers to "the north". It became clear during his question that he was referring to the north of England, which is, of course, to the south of Scotland and largely to the south of Northern Ireland. I do not intend any criticism of the hon. Member for Hartlepool because I am sure that he used the word in shorthand, but perhaps when such questions are tabled and accepted people could look at them more closely so that they are not misleading.

Madam Speaker: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I am sometimes guilty of regarding myself as coming from "the north" and representing "the midlands".

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. For the second time this week a Conservative Member has launched a campaign against an Opposition Member. On Monday the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) attacked my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) without telling him that she intended to refer to him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) is chairing the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and has asked me to speak on his behalf. He has been accused by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) when he cannot be here. It is a carefully chosen time. This is an orchestrated campaign. The protocol of the House is that Members should give notice that they intend to refer to other Members. This is a plot by Conservative Members.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall hear no more on that matter. I have heard one point of order from either side, and I shall now move on.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During Question Time a Minister used abusive and unparliamentary language, and I apologise for not telling him that I intended to raise the matter. At the time, you said that you were temporarily distracted and that you were sure that the remark was made in good humour. I must draw your attention to the fact that it was certainly not regarded as good-humoured. Will you reflect upon the possibility that Members, and especially Ministers, having hurled abusive remarks, will further abuse the system and defend themselves by pretending that it was done in good humour?

Madam Speaker: I said at the time that I was distracted, as I think the House could see. From the reaction of the House, it seemed to me that the remark was taken in jest, and I hope that the matter can rest there.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I ask for your general guidance about a matter that I wish to refer to one of the Committees of the House? At the weekend, 14 members of the Conservative party were accused by a member of the shadow Cabinet of having their votes bought——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must inform the hon. Gentleman that I do not give procedural advice across the Floor of the House. If he needs such advice, he should come to see me and he will be advised correctly.

Small Aircraft (Insurance)

3.41 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require owners and operators of small aircraft to carry third-party insurance; and for connected purposes.

The measure is limited, but nevertheless is common sense and it is important, as it will fill a loophole in aviation law by requiring the operators and pilots of small and microlight aircraft to maintain minimum third-party or passenger liability insurance. That would lessen the consequences of accidents, provide security for people who live near aerodromes and have an impact on the irresponsible few who do not bother to take out third-party insurance.

During the past few years there has been a significant increase in the number of small aircraft, and of microlight aircraft in particular. The British Microlight Aircraft Association told me that it has 3,800 members with 3,500 machines and that the number is growing significantly all the time. The Civil Aviation Authority told me that it has 11,000 small aircraft on its register, 7,400 of which are relatively small and weigh less than 273 kg.

The growth of the sport is welcomed, especially in my constituency where a microlight airfield has grown up during the past year, provided that its environmental consequences can be controlled and local people can be assured that, should there be an accident, they are likely to be able to gain compensation, through insurance, from those responsible.

Under present legislation, the Civil Aviation Authority requires people who ply aircraft for hire or fly them for commercial purposes to have third-party insurance. The noble Lord Caithness recently told me that European Community licensing regulation 2407/92, which came into force in this country on 1 January, requires insurance for passengers, luggage, cargo, mail and third parties if operating licences are to be granted to people flying commercially. I also understand that gliders are required to have third party insurance. However, under present law, hobby flyers—people with small aircraft who do not ply them for hire—are not required to have any insurance for passenger liability or third parties. I believe that that should be put right.

There is no legal requirement to take out such insurance despite the fact that, according to the recent letter from Lord Caithness, section 76 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 imposes upon pilots and fliers an absolute liability to pay compensation to people who are injured or where property is damaged on the ground as a result of their activities.

Thankfully, accidents are relatively rare. The CAA tells me that, since 1988, the average annual accident rate for aircraft weighing less than 2,301 kg, excluding microlight aircraft and helicopters, has ranged between 215 and 230. Those figures are relatively small, but, in absolute terms, they are significant. There are about 200 accidents a year involving microlight aircraft, of which between 10 and 30 are major ones and, in the past 10 years, they have caused, on average, between two and 10 fatalities a year.

In one sense, the Government recognise the problem because they have recently encouraged the CAA to distribute 10,000 copies of an updated leaflet on insurance which encourages fliers and owners to take out

"very substantial third party insurance for claims of up to £1 million or more."

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

Despite that message and the logical demand that third-party insurance should be available, as it is for cars, for all aircraft, the Government have refused to act. They have refused to act despite demands for safety and the long-running campaign by the CAA—supported by the British Microlight Aircraft Association—for such insurance to be compulsory under statute. They have refused to act despite the fact that the vast majority of non-microlight owners and fliers and two thirds of microlight fliers take out some form of third party insurance—it is not terribly expensive and costs between £80 and £200 a year.

The Government's refusal to act now is based on their argument that to introduce a compulsory, statutory system of third-party insurance would be, again according to the letter from Lord Caithness, "administratively cumbersome and expensive." I do not believe that that is right, nor do the CAA and the British Microlight Aircraft Association.

The CAA has told me that it would be easy to introduce such insurance through its existing registration system for aircraft, which is updated annually. It would be easy to make that registration conditional upon proof of third party insurance. Similarly, the British Microlight Aircraft Association, on behalf of the CAA, has to grant a certificate of validation to individual microlights every year. The chief executive of that association literally told me a few moments ago that to combine third-party insurance certificates with its annual certificates of validation would be "administratively no problem at all." That refutes the argument of Lord Caithness that such a scheme would be "administratively cumbersome and expensive."

My Bill, whose scope is limited, is a common-sense measure, which would require people to have third-party insurance, possibly even passenger liability insurance. What fliers do to themselves in the course of pursuing their hobby is up to them, but the Government have a responsibility to ensure that their activities do not damagingly impinge on innocent parties who might otherwise be affected. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Simon Burns, Dr. Kim Howells, Mr. Bob Dunn, Mr. David Porter, Mr. Keith Vaz, Ms. Estelle Morris, Mr. James Pawsey and Mr. Rod Richards.

SMALL AIRCRAFT (INSURANCE)

Mr. Anthony Coombs accordingly presented a Bill to require owners and operators of small aircraft to carry third-party insurance; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 February and to be printed. [Bill 116].

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 19 January]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

Amendment proposed, [20 January], No. 6, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Articles 126 and 127 on page 32 of Cm 1934)'.
—*[Mr. Tony Lloyd.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): I remind the Committee that with this we are also considering the following amendments: No. 193, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(p)'.

No. 199, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 57(2) on page 13 of Cm 1934'.

No. 212, in page, 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 127(2) on page 32 of Cm 1934'.

No. 365, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 57 as referred to in Article G on page 13 of Command Paper number 1934'.

No. 52, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert 'but not Article 126 in Title II thereof'.

Sir Richard Body: A number of important issues arise from the articles. I hazard a guess that you, Mr. Morris, selected some of the amendments, as they were of a probing nature. A number of questions arise which have not yet been put to the Minister. He may be aware of the article that appeared on 18 September last year in the journal *Education*, in which Mr. Delors was quoted. Anyone reading the quotation—no doubt many of those in the teaching profession did so—would have felt apprehensive about the Commission's intentions.

Mr. Delors clearly said that every European must—not ought to—have the same educational route. That seems to be a denial of the principle of subsidiarity. When my right hon. Friend replies to the debate, it would be helpful if he would say how he interprets those words, and how the Government's representative in the Council of Ministers, will react when proposals are made by the Commission in accordance with the powers that the Commission will soon be granted under the treaty—*[Interruption.]* Does my right hon. Friend the Minister wish to intervene?

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): No.

The Chairman: Keep going.

Sir Richard Body: I hope that my right hon. Friend will say a little more about what he understands the term "education of quality" means, when linked, as it is in the context of one of the articles, with culture. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, the larger the country or unit, the lower standards of education tend to be? It was said last night that Scotland has, for a long time, had a tradition of providing higher standards of education than England.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): But it does not have higher educational standards than Northern Ireland, which has retained its grammar schools.

Sir Richard Body: We are treading old ground. We discussed that matter last night, and we must not go over old ground; otherwise you, Mr. Morris, will intervene—and we do not want that.

In both contemporary and historical terms, the smaller countries have given more to the world in terms of culture than the larger ones. That has been the case in our country both historically and in contemporary times, and there are a number of other such examples around the world. If we are to have common educational and cultural policies and schemes, there is a great danger that standards will fall, because culture and education should be judged qualitatively, not quantitively. That means value judgments, which can be made with unanimity only if there is some homogeneity—and that is manifestly lacking in Europe. It may always be lacking, because the great wealth of Europe is not material so much as the rich diversity of its culture. I hope that my right hon. Friend will deal with that point, and also assure us that he does not share the view of Mr. Delors

Amendment No. 199 stands in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who, as the House knows, is suffering from flu. Unfortunately, he has not been able to be here as much as we or he would have wished. The amendment relates to article 57, paragraph 2. I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to one vital word—"shall". The paragraph says, "the Council shall". There is to be no option, no discussion; it is a mandatory instruction to the Commission to introduce legislation under article 189 of the treaty of Rome—which, as we all know, bypasses this House.

Yet again, we come to subsidiarity. How will my right hon. Friend or his successor judge such a serious matter in the Council of Ministers? Thousands, if not millions, of self-employed people in this country could be affected.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Does my hon. Friend again accept that paragraph 2 does not apply to everyone—there is no question of everyone being affected—but only to "natural persons"? Until we can get our right hon. Friend the Minister to explain what that means, we do not know what category or percentage of people will be covered by that paragraph.

Sir Richard Body: I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will deal with that point. I also hope that he will deal with the matter of majority voting. Millions of self-employed people will have their lives redirected because of majority voting in the Council of Ministers. That is made perfectly clear in the first half of paragraph 2.

In the second half, after the full stop, there is a reference to unanimity. However, unanimity in a decision by the Council of Ministers appears to apply only if a member state has already introduced and passed legislation concerning the affairs of the self-employed. I hope that my right hon. Friend will deal with that point with some care. There are hundreds of self-employed people in his constituency, in mine and in all others. My constituents, like his, want to know where they stand.

Has my right hon. Friend investigated whether there is already on the statute book legislation concerning the self-employed that would enable us to veto any legislation proposed by the Commission under that article? The matter affects possibly millions of British people, so I hope that it has already been carefully considered by those who advise my right hon. Friend. I hope that they have the answers to my questions ready, and that they will have already briefed him on this important matter.

If the unanimity rule applies, should not we consider at this stage whether it would be wise to introduce legislation to safeguard the interests of the self-employed in future? Unless we do that fairly promptly, we shall, as I understand it, forgo any opportunity to veto legislation by the Council of Ministers governing the lives of our self-employed constituents.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is talking about training, but we are also concerned with education, and he will be aware that article 126(4) says that changes with regard to recommendation can be produced on the basis of a qualified majority but only on the basis of a proposal from the Commission. The Commission is in the driving seat. The Commission is the only——

The Chairman: Order. I made it clear yesterday that hon. Members should ask one succinct question. The hon. Gentleman has asked that.

4 pm

Sir Richard Body: As always, I agree with my hon. Friend. We have learnt that that is how the Commission works. That is how great quantities of legislation are churned out. That is the result of article 189 of the treaty of Rome. Those of us who opposed it many years ago may feel that our position was justified.

Amendment No. 212, also in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford, excludes article 127(2). There are important questions to be answered. That paragraph hands over to Brussels considerable activities concerning vocational training. We discussed some of the details at length last night, and I shall not repeat them. But one question above all arises, and that is that the article suggests that there should be co-operation between European countries on vocational training. That is a fine idea, which I support.

I am glad to see that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), is to reply. I want to ask him why on earth, all these years, we have failed to use the services offered for vocational training by the Economic Commission for Europe. As my right hon. Friend must know, it sits in Geneva and is in a position to do a great deal for Europe. When I say "Europe", I mean all Europe, not just 12 countries. The Economic Commission for Europe has around the table representatives of all 35 countries of Europe. It has the power and the mechanisms necessary to co-ordinate the activity which the Government now appear to consider desirable.

Why have we not used the Economic Commission for Europe? If my right hon. Friend is a true European, as I am, and therefore believes that Europe consists of 35 countries, not just 12, here is an opportunity to bring round the conference table and to co-operate with countries beyond the 12. Surely among them, just as much as among ourselves—more so, indeed—there is a need for such co-operation.

It is sad that the Foreign Office has put the brakes on the Economic Commission for Europe. If it had not been

[Sir Richard Body]

for its antipathy, I have not the slightest doubt that the Economic Commission for Europe could do a great deal more for the benefit of Britain and for all of Europe. I hope that, in reply, my right hon. Friend will explain why we have not been able to use the services of that European institution in recent years.

Amendment No. 365 is in the name of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). No doubt he will have various questions to ask if he catches your eye, Mr. Morris, but I shall ask just one.

The amendment would enable mutual recognition of various formal qualifications. In our language, "mutual" implies the existence of two parties. Does the wording mean that, within the Community, two countries may agree to recognise each other's qualifications, or does it mean much more than that—that qualifications will be agreed throughout the Community?

I shall not go over old ground, but it was pointed out last night that in some countries professional qualifications are of a lower standard. I hope that no lowering of standards will result. May we have an assurance about that and may we also be assured that, under the article—it is not a bad article, in my opinion—mutual recognition in the ordinary sense of the word will be possible? Many people in this country believe that we have much in common with certain other countries in regard to professional qualifications: I am thinking especially of Germany, Denmark and, of course, Ireland.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Article 57 states:

> "In the case of the medical and allied and pharmaceutical professions, the progressive abolition of restrictions shall be dependent upon co-ordination of the conditions for their exercise in the various Member States."

Is it not interesting that, in matters of life and death, the absurd nonesense of trying to homogenise all the rules and regulations remains at the discretion of nation states? Should not that guiding rule apply to all recognitions of qualifications?

Sir Richard Body: As ever, I agree with my hon. Friend. I only hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will agree as well; he is not quite a lost cause, but I am not over-optimistic about my chances of persuading him.

Amendment No. 52 also raises a number of questions. The phrase "quality education", for instance, seems to limit the concept of education. Why is that? Are we embarking on another value judgment, and is that judgment to be made in Brussels or elsewhere? Have we completely forgotten about the principle of subsidiarity? In the treaty, we ask Brussels to support my right hon. Friend in matters of education. What kind of support does he seek?

The article also contains the word "supplementary". What supplement is needed? Are we conceding to the Opposition Front Bench that much is lacking in the provisions for educational and vocational training? I hope that we shall be given a clear explanation of the meaning of the word, and of why it is used.

The article provides for an exchange of information. The Economic Commission for Europe already performs that function, and is willing to expand it in respect of 35 European countries. Why is such duplication necessary? The treaty uses the phrase "European dimension". Does it mean Europe in the true sense of all 35 countries, or does it mean only the 12? Surely we are missing an opportunity—the Economic Commission for Europe has the resources, facilities, expertise, mechanisms and committees already established but we are failing to use them. It is a criticism of the Government that they have failed to support the Economic Commission for Europe because, I fear, they are so besotted with what happens in Brussels.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend kindly referred to an amendment which I hope to move and to speak to shortly. Does he agree that the basic point, which I hope to illustrate, is that the words "quality of education" mean exactly what the Commission decides? In other words, it can introduce any directives as long as it believes that they refer to the quality of education. Basically, it can do what it likes, and it is a waste of time looking for a definition, because there is not one.

Sir Richard Body: I fear that my hon. Friend is right. As lawyers say, obiter dicta. Mr. Jacques Delors, whom I admire because he is frank and honest—unlike some others—has said that all Europeans must follow the same educational route, which is why I am suspicious of the fact that we are handing powers to Brussels. We may have better education as a result, but I would rather that we had our own education system and powers to decide our own practices. I fear that we are on the way to giving away that ability.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Gentleman's comments on Mr. Delors will be echoed by many of my colleagues. Mr. Delors makes it perfectly clear what he, as President of the Commission, wants to do. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) should also be congratulated on making it clear that he wants a federal Europe, and that it is the pro-Maastricht people who are not so frank, especially those among the Tory Members, who should be condemned?

Sir Richard Body: The hon. Gentleman's last word is a strong one, and I would not wish to echo it. However, I too congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) on having spoken frankly in recent weeks. I can remember speeches that he made decades ago, when he spoke differently about what he saw for the future of Europe. We are not to know whether his views have changed in the intervening years, but I am glad that he is now frank about what he wants, and what I fear various hon. Members also want but which they are unwilling to state frankly to the British people.

I feel strongly about that. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) may know that I was once a federalist——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying and being repetitive. I should be grateful if he would restrict his remarks specifically to the issues with which he was dealing.

Sir Richard Body: Of course I shall, Mr. Morris.

Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will respond to my final point. The regional fund has been increased as a result of the Edinburgh summit from £10,000 million to £16,000 million, and it seems that this country will be eligible for an appreciable sum of money from that fund. We said last night that some of the

proposals will be costly. Money must be found from somewhere, and I should like to ask my right hon. Friend whether we shall be able to tap in to some of the regional fund.

It is not a matter for pride that we are now proving eligible for regional fund money. Northern Ireland has received it in recent years, but when the regional fund was established, not only were we major contributors but no one at that time believed that our standard of living would fall so much that we should be entitled to make a claim.

Under objective 1, concerning the budget, regional fund money may be available if average earnings in an area are 75 per cent. of the Community average. Northern Ireland, at 76 per cent., is almost in that position, and it is disturbing to read that, in the highlands and islands, the figure has fallen from 98 per cent. to 78 per cent. I understand that the Commissioner for regional policy, Mr. Bruce Millan, whom we remember as a Member of the House, is holding a meeting today to find out whether the 75 per cent. ruling could be made more flexible.

4.15 pm

That is of some importance to this country, because many areas in the United Kingdom are drawing close to the 75 per cent. It may be a matter for some shame that our standard of living, and our average earnings, should be falling. Those areas of the United Kingdom include my constituency, because many hundreds of my constituents work in the gangs. They do casual work on the land, and many earn only £2 an hour, so manifestly they are earning 75 per cent. of the Community average. That is a matter for concern to my constituents, so I hope my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will give us a clear answer. If those figures for our average earnings are right, we shall be eligible for an appreciable slice of the £16 billion in the regional fund.

I submit to my right hon. Friend that vocational training should fall within that branch of the budget. It would equip many people to get jobs or to earn more, so would it not be appropriate for that part of the Community budget in the article to come under the regional fund? If so, does my right hon. Friend envisage areas of the United Kingdom becoming eligible, and will he say how he thinks we would spend that money? Would all schemes have to be approved by Brussels, or could we have some subsidiarity and tailor our schemes to our own needs?

I have put rather a long list of questions to my right hon. Friend, but they are important questions, because we shall not have many opportunities to debate this part of the treaty. I have studied it closely this morning, and I am horrified by the extent to which the Commission will attract to itself powers which the House will lose. The Government may not altogether lose those powers, because they will still be a member of the Council of Ministers, but the House will lose a great deal as a result of the two articles.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will give the assurances that we have sought, and will answer my questions.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): In one sense it is an unqualified pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), because to do so means by definition that his speech must have come to an end. You recently uttered an amazing phrase, Mr. Morris—although I do not know whether it will find its way into the *Official Report*. When the Minister was talking to another of his hon. Friends, the hon. Member for Holland with Boston thought that his right hon. Friend was intervening in his speech, and you advised the hon. Member for Holland with Boston to "keep going". That was a brave thing to say, Mr. Morris, and I shall be interested to see whether it is duly recorded.

My remarks refer not so much to what the hon. Member for Holland with Boston said this afternoon, as to his speech last night. That substantial contribution reminded me of the boy who was sent to church on Sunday on his own. He came back a long time later, and his parents asked him, "What did the Minister talk about in his sermon?" The boy replied, "Well, daddy, he talked about sin." The boy's parents said, "You were away a long time, son. What did the minister say about sin?", to which the boy replied, "I think he's against it."

The hon. Gentleman talked about the amendment. I think that he is against the group of original provisions, but I do not know that we got much further than that. He said that this was his first contribution since the general election last April. I am sure that, their appetites having been whetted, the House of Commons and the country are looking forward to many more contributions from him during the passage of this Bill, as we deal with the entire ratification process.

Last night the hon. Gentleman said that he did not consider it at all appropriate for the Community to concentrate on vocational training and to do so to an even greater extent. Leaving Maastricht aside, I regard that as an astonishing observation. A number of years ago Parliament legislated for something called the single European market, with all that that implies. Is itnot a logical consequence of the single market that we must think about education and training, too, so that we may be as competitive as possible right across an integrated economy? It seems to me that that is a logical corollary of the Single European Act—never mind the signposts that the Maastricht treaty contains. I suppose, therefore, that I have a fundamental disagreement with the hon. Gentleman. I respect the position that he takes, but I cannot see eye to eye with him.

Sir Richard Body: Does the hon. Gentleman go as far as Jacques Delors, who, according to words that I quoted earlier, believes that every European must go along the same education route? It will be interesting to hear the Liberal party's view on that matter.

Mr. Kennedy: I have said that I regard myself as a good European. In so far as M. Delors was indicating that it makes sense for educational developments in one member state to take account of what is happening in other member states and to provide for a degree of integration —for reasons with which I shall deal later—he was talking extremely good sense. If the whole idea is that the European Community should become an economic engine capable of competing effectively, on a global basis, with the Pacific basin and with the single market that is being put together in north America, it makes sense to go in that direction.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) by reminding him that article 126 states specifically that the Community must fully respect the responsibility of

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

member states for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems. In addition, it specifically rules out any harmonisation measures.

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to the Minister for his intervention, to which I should like to add a postscript.

Sir Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Surely quotations from the treaty should be accurate. The Minister has said that article 126 contains the word "must". In fact, it does not.

The Chairman: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Sir Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Order. The matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised has nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Kennedy: I can see that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is exercised about this matter. I expect that if the Minister catches your eye, Mr. Morris, he may want to deal directly with it—presumably to his hon. Friend's satisfaction, as the Opposition have observed is customary on these occasions.

On the basic point of principle, there has been a fair degree of paranoia and xenophobia—hysteria, indeed, though carefully controlled. The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) made an impassioned speech, but I noticed, with professional respect, that his passion was well channelled. His attack was carried in "Yesterday in Parliament" this morning, so his views were communicated with some effect to the outside world.

What came through in the debate on culture and is now coming through in the debate on education is a degree of not only hostility, but downright paranoia about openness to other member states in the Community. I find that attitude especially perplexing in Conservatives and in Unionists. In the United Kingdom Parliament, whatever arguments we may have about constitutional reform within the United Kingdom, nobody can say that as a result of not only a common currency, but a common language and a common legal system—albeit with different traditions in different parts of the United Kingdom—the English, the Scottish and the Welsh have become indivisible and unrecognisable one from the other. We all know that that is not the case.

Why are Unionists, in the United Kingdom sense, of all people so worried about losing their sense of individualism and national character in the European Community? The Community is nowhere near as centralised or homogeneous as the set-up in the United Kingdom. I find that worry perplexing.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kennedy: I will not because I want to make progress. We have listened to an immensely long speech and I do not intend to detain the House. Others wish to speak and there are other issues that we want to discuss this evening—the sooner the better.

It is encouraging to see greater emphasis being placed on vocational study as well as on non-vocational study. We very much support that. If we want an effective and well-resourced expansion of further and higher education, the emphasis being given to education at Community level acts as a good signpost for the United Kingdom. Some will say that the policy will cost money, which is a fair criticism to make when Opposition parties propose it.

I remind hon. Members that during the election, the Liberal Democratic party laid special emphasis on educational policy. We went further and said that we believed that the basic rate of income tax should increase by 1 per cent. to fund it. That was an example of the seriousness with which we approach—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) does not seem to be terribly interested in listening to different viewpoints. He seems to display the lack of tolerance that he ascribes to every European country apart from our own.

The emphasis that the Liberal Democrats placed during the election on education in this country is an emphasis that we want to see at European level, too. That is why the provisions on education are so important and why we give them our support in this debate.

We want the provisions to go further, not least for tertiary education. In some ways Scotland has been more continental and more international in its outlook, not least in education. Scotland has looked to the continent of Europe. Scots are proud of that outlook, which has served us well. We now want to take the opportunity of the single market and of greater integration at European level to build on that outlook for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Schemes such as the Euro-credit transfer scheme, whereby Europewide credits can be obtained in universities across the Community, could contribute to a more flexible degree programme. I like to think that in years to come, more students will not only think of universities within the United Kingdom where they can pursue their educational endeavours, but will look automatically to other member states as well. That will broaden education and will become the norm rather than the exception, as it is at the moment.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To which amendment is the hon. Gentleman addressing himself? I inquire so that I may relate his speech to the text and to the amendment.

Mr. Kennedy: I note that the hon. Gentlman did not raise that question during the two hours of verbiage that we heard last night. I am addressing in the main the group of amendments currently under debate, as the hon. Gentleman well knows. The amendments give rise to a variety of different, interlinked educational and training issues. That is perfectly legitimate.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The hon. Gentleman has just said that he hopes that in future young people in this country, students and potential students, will look to a whole range of universities, not just within the United Kingdom. I endorse the view that he has expressed. I entirely agree with him. But would he not accept that a very large number of people from Europe and elsewhere in the world currently look to United Kingdom universities for their higher education and that this sector of education has a high reputation not just in Europe but throughout the world?

4.30 pm

Mr. Kennedy: Yes. If the hon. Gentleman looks in the record of the debate tomorrow, he will find that I made that point just about two minutes before I went on to make the point about the future. No one is decrying educational

attainments and standards in this country. One is proud to say that in many cases we have centres of world excellence and we want to maintain and extend that. What I wish to add—I do not think that the hon. Gentleman disagrees with me on this point—is that this very excellence can be sustained and built on by those would-be graduates and graduates going through the system at present, gaining from their international experience, coming back to the centres in this country and enriching them as a result. That is something that we want to see developed and built on and it is something which this aspect of the treaty can help emphasise and give an impetus to. That must be a good thing.

The debate that we had yesterday on the importance of culture—the diversity of culture and the bringing forward of European culture in general—together with the emphasis in this section on education and training, is worth while. It bodes well for better understanding and greater harmony—harmony not in the technical sense of harmonisation, but in its proper meaning of understanding and comprehension between individual countries and between Europe and other parts of the world. It is something that, in principle, Liberal Democrat Members very much support. It is one aspect of the treaty that deserves a positive response, not the negative and at times xenophobic response that it has received from some hon. Members on the Government Benches, and we are happy to support it.

Mr. Marlow rose in his place and claimed to have, That the Question be now put, *but* The CHAIRMAN *withheld his assent and declined then to put that Question.*

Mr. Garel-Jones: Thank you very much, Mr. Morris.

Sir Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: If I may be allowed just to enter upon my speech, I think that it will be of help to the Committee.

I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) for opening the debate and for indicating to the Committee that amendment No. 6 is a probing amendment, the purpose of which has been to offer the Committee the opportunity to discuss the educational and vocational training aspects of the treaty. I shall try to respond to the invitation that the hon. Gentleman issued in opening the debate.

I shall also, as I proceed, seek to respond to some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) in his intervention last night, but I hope that he will forgive me—and I am sure that the Committee will—if I make a distinction in responding to amendments moved as probing amendments, to provide us with the opportunity for debate, and the amendment in the name of my hon. Friends the Members for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). You have guided us, Mr. Morris, with the help of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), in making it absolutely clear that no amendment selected by you is a wrecking amendment, and I accept that; but the amendments that my hon. Friends have moved and intend to press, if given the opportunity —and the Committee needs to be clear about this in other important debates that we are to move on to—would make the United Kingdom a non-ratificant country.

I know that it is offensive to many of my hon. Friends, but a consensus has now emerged in Britain about our membership of the Community. That does not mean that the Conservative Members agree with Opposition Members. Indeed, we are shortly to have a debate, in which our disagreements will be very sharp, about how we wish to use that Community, to shape that Community and to make our contribution to it. It is that consensus —that overwhelming consensus—which now exists in the House for our membership of the Community that I am seeking to address.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will not give way just for a moment.

My hon. Friends will forgive me if I do not address every point that they have made in the detail that they would wish, because I understand, and the Committee understands, that their purpose is not the purpose of the Committee. Their purpose is to make the ratification of the treaty impossible. Let me give just one example.

My hon. Friends the Members for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) and for Southend, East have made great play about the term "natural person". The Committee will understand that that is a matter of very great consequence. The term "natural person" is in the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act. Its meaning is perfectly clear. It seeks to make a distinction between a person, people and institutions or companies. I do not intend to detain the Committee by making copious reference to every point raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East and for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), because their purpose is well known to the Committee.

Mr. Marlow: I will admit to my right hon. Friend that I do not want to see the treaty ratified, but I do not wish to leave the Community. I am sure that many of my hon. Friends would agree with me. I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend would not misrepresent us.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not think—the record will so reflect tomorrow—that I was presumptuous enough to say what are the ambitions of each and every one of my hon. Friends and, indeed, Opposition Members so far as Britain's future in the Community is concerned. That is not for me to say. I simply make the point that there is a difference, it seems to me, between those who wish to ratify the treaty and those who do not. It is courteous of me to address the overwhelming majority in the Committee who wish to debate these matters in a ratificant mode.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for the courtesy that he is showing in his response to the debate. Several times he has referred to the overwhelming consensus in the Committee supporting the——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Put it to the test.

Mr. Winterton: Will the hon. Gentleman please give me time?

Although my right hon. Friend assumes that the Committee overwhelmingly backs the ratification of Maastricht, does he accept that one of the vital constitutional purpose of the House of Commons of Westminster is to represent the interests of the people of the United Kingdom? Will he therefore perhaps be more understanding of the role of those Conservative Members whom he describes as Euro-sceptics? We are doing precisely that. We should be only too happy if my right

[Mr. Winterton]

hon. Friend were to say, "We are prepared to give the people of this country, not just the House of Commons, an opportunity to express their views on the Maastricht treaty."

The Chairman: Order. I hope that the Minister will not be tempted down that route. There are later amendments on that topic.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have already said, Mr. Morris, as you have reminded the House, that there are amendments on a referendum, and I look forward with considerable relish to dealing with them with the hon. Member for Macclesfield. So far as Euro-scepticism is concerned, I do not describe the hon. Member as a Euro-sceptic. To the extent that I would give him a description, it would be "Euro-nihilist". I regard myself and every right-thinking person in Britain as sceptical about the Community, as we should be sceptical about the Community. We should also be sceptical about Whitehall, the Government and any institution that is funded by the taxpayer. It is our duty to——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I wonder whether you could clear up a matter for me. I shall be brief. My right hon. Friend said that he is prepared to address the arguments of those who are in favour of the treaty, but that he is not prepared to address the arguments of those who do not want to see the treaty ratified. Is that a proper process?

The Chairman: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will now make some progress in my speech.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: May I simply respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North. I think that the Committee will thank me for this. I do not think it is possible to respond in detail to every point made. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I shall say why not in a moment, if I am allowed to make some progress. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston, who made a lengthy speech yesterday, I am not under written instructions from anybody about how long I should take with my speech. I shall make my speech in my own time, and I shall respond to those points that I believe are worthy of response.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, I will not give way for a moment. As the Committee will be aware, co-operation on education between the member states of the European Community and the Commission is nothing new. In 1976, the member states agreed to a programme of intergovernmental co-operation in education outside the scope of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Knapman: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. In the past few minutes, my right hon. Friend said that our purpose is to debate the question whether to ratify the treaty. Does that mean——

The Chairman: Order. If the hon. Gentleman raises a point of order, it must be something on which I can rule. I cannot rule on the content of speeches from any hon. Members unless they are out of order. So far, nothing has been out of order. What exactly is the point on which I am to rule?

Mr. Knapman: Does that mean that the House has any opportunity to amend the treaty? If what my right hon. Friend is saying is correct, we are not here to amend the treaty; we are here for a canter around the course.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that we have many days ahead of us. If he uses a little ingenuity, he may find that further amendments are possible, but I cannot decide that until he puts them in writing.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The co-operation has comprised non-binding resolutions, exchanges of information and experience and pilot studies. One outcome has been the establishment of a working group to exchange ideas about teaching the European dimension in schools. The most recent fruit has been the establishment of a small programme of school partnerships. Schools throughout the Community have been brought together to pursue projects. Twenty-three British schools are involved. I am sure that the pupils in those schools will receive an invaluable insight into Europe.

In addition to such intergovernmental co-operation, the Community's education programmes, ERASMUS, LINGUA and COMETT, have been adopted under articles 128 and 235 of the treaty. They have produced substantial benefits for universities in the United Kingdom. COMETT has helped United Kingdom universities to link up with industry across Europe, LINGUA has assisted with the teaching of foreign languages and ERASMUS has enabled more than 25,000 United Kingdom students to spend part of their time at university studying abroad. The Committee will be pleased to know that the United Kingdom is a leading—often the leading—participant in all of those programmes.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: On that point, will my right hon. Friend give way?

4.45 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: Not yet.

At Maastricht, it was accepted that amending the treaty of Rome to insert an education article was the logical next step in building on the co-operation. This treaty will put the co-operation between member states on a firm footing. It will clearly distinguish between those areas in which the Community can assist the member states and those in which it should not be involved. That is an important development, because the potential scope of the existing article 128 on training is both unclear and unlimited and has given good grounds for considerable anxiety on both sides of the House.

I want to clear up the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East made. The treaty article explicitly enshrines the principle of subsidiarity in education. My hon. Friend was right to jump up, because it might not have been clear to *Hansard* exactly at which point the quotation marks come in. The quotation marks come in after the word "fully". Article 126 mentions the Community

"fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity."

In addition, any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of member states is expressly ruled out. There is thus no possibility of Community interference in, for example, the national curriculum.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Not for the moment.

The Community will be limited to adopting incentive measures——

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: When I have made my point, I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills.

The Community will be limited to adopting incentive measures, such as the exchange and co-operation programmes already adopted, and making non-binding recommendations. The treaty envisages Community activity in matters with a genuine transnational character: for example, teaching the languages of the member states, exchanges of information and experience, distance education, and so on. The enthusiasm of our schools and universities to become involved in European projects and programmes is ample evidence of the benefits that they see in European co-operation. With the boost of article 126, they are set to benefit even more.

Mr. Shepherd: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am about to finish my point and then I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

As I have already said in passing, Community activity in training is well established. The existing article 128 provides for the Community to lay down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy.

The new treaty provision constitutes an improvement for two main reasons; this is a point of which I am anxious for the Committee to be aware. First, the voting base is changed from simple majority to qualified majority voting. That is an improvement on the position under the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act. It will increase the control of member states over Council decisions and will allow member states to wield much greater influence over the control of the training budget. Secondly, the new treaty text states that the Council

"shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States."

As for the new education article, the treaty specifically rules out any attempt by the Community to impose on member states training strategy common elements that take no account of their diversity. That is a welcome change. It respects subsidiarity and is a substantial improvement for member states over the position that pertained under the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act.

Mr. Shepherd: My question for information arises out of an earlier comment in which my right hon. Friend outlined the ways in which the Community attempts to influence education policy in the Community. My right hon. Friend may recall that, at a conference in Madrid recently, Dr. Lenarduzzi argued that there was no authority under the treaty of Rome for such excursions. If that is right, what is the authority by which the member states are expending money to influence educational projects?

Mr. Garel-Jones: In a sense, that is my point. I did not have the pleasure of attending the conference in Madrid with my hon. Friend. One of the anxieties that we have felt is that the Commission has sought to insert itself into education through the training article in an inappropriate way. There are some areas in which we want the Commission to insert itself. However, we believed that it was right to define and limit what the Community could and could not do.

If my hon. Friend read the five or six tirets in paragraph 2 of article 126, he would find that most of our fellow citizens would prefer to promote co-operation between educational establishments. In the United Kingdom, 25,000 schoolchildren already benefit from such programmes. So these are worthy programmes which supplement and complement what we are doing in the United Kingdom. That is why it is important to make the distinction between the overwhelming majority of the Committee, who are in favour of the treaty, and the small but perfectly honourable and respected minority who see a phantom in every line and a ghost in every article. That view is not shared by any political party in the House; nor is it shared by the overwhelming majority of our fellow citizens.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): This was a probing amendment. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Lloyd *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 483, Noes 58.

Division No. 117] **[4.50 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene	Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Adley, Robert	Bell, Stuart
Ainger, Nick	Bellingham, Henry
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Benton, Joe
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Beresford, Sir Paul
Aitken, Jonathan	Berry, Dr. Roger
Alexander, Richard	Betts, Clive
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Allen, Graham	Blair, Tony
Alton, David	Booth, Hartley
Amess, David	Boswell, Tim
Ancram, Michael	Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Bowden, Andrew
Arbuthnot, James	Bowis, John
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Boyce, Jimmy
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Boyes, Roland
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Bradley, Keith
Ashton, Joe	Brandreth, Gyles
Aspinwall, Jack	Brazier, Julian
Atkins, Robert	Bright, Graham
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Baldry, Tony	Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bates, Michael	Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Batiste, Spencer	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Battle, John	Burden, Richard
Bayley, Hugh	Burns, Simon
Beckett, Margaret	Burt, Alistair

Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbett, Robin
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gillan, Cheryl
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hall, Mike
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heppell, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McMaster, Gordon
Madel, David
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Mallon, Seamus
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickles, Eric
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redwood, John
Reid, Dr John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*

Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sims, Roger
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spellar, John
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tipping, Paddy
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Wicks, Malcolm
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Galloway, George
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Jessel, Toby
Knapman, Roger
Legg, Barry
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McCrea, Rev William
Madden, Max
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trimble, David
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Winterton and
Mr. Tony Marlow.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 67, Noes 292.

Division No. 118] **[5.07 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cran, James
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Fry, Peter
Galloway, George
Gardiner, Sir George
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hardy, Peter
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Jessel, Toby
Knapman, Roger
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCrea, Rev William
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marlow, Tony
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trimble, David
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wilkinson, John
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Harry Cohen.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*

Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Mallon, Seamus
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Mackay and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert
'(except Article 123 on page 31 of Cm 1934)'.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 127, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert
'(excluding Article G D(10) on page 12 of Cm 1934).'.
No. 129, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert
'(excluding Article G D(12) on page 13 of Cm 1934).'.
No. 186, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert
'except Article 3(i) on page 9 of Cm 1934'.
No. 58, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert
'but not the Protocol concerning Article 119 of the Treaty establishing the European Community'.
No. 27, in page 1, line 13, after 'Community', insert
', with the exception of the Protocol on Social Policy'.

Dr. Cunningham: Amendment No. 7 is a probing amendment which we intend ultimately to withdraw.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No. I shall not give way as I have just begun to speak.

I shall address my remarks to amendment No. 27 on which, in due course, we shall press the Committee to a vote. Amendment No. 27 states:
"Clause 1, page 1, line 13, after 'Community', insert ', with the exception of the Protocol on Social Policy'.
I shall address my remarks to that protocol and the importance to the Labour party of the social chapter.

The Bill keeps the United Kingdom outside the scope of the protocol on social policy, so excluding the United Kingdom from the social chapter. It prevents the people of the United Kingdom from being part of the full social dimension of the European Community. The Bill excludes Britain from provisions which our 11 partners have agreed to facilitate greater protection for employed people in their working conditions, better rights of consultation and information, equality of treatment and opportunity for men and women, and the integration into the labour force of long-term unemployed people, including disabled workers. Those benefits will flow to the citizens of the 11 other members of the Community, but will be denied to the people of our country by the actions of the Conservative Government.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and particularly grateful—as is the Committee—that he has said that amendment No. 7 is a probing one.

Will he give the Committee and those of his hon. Friends who sit below the Gangway the benefit of his view on one issue? He said that the Labour party will press amendment No. 27 to a Division if it is called. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, under the terms of the amendment, United Kingdom law would not conform to the treaty's provisions, so it would be impossible for the United Kingdom to ratify the treaty—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am grateful to my hon. Friends.

We have just seen on the closure motion—thanks to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd)—the majority that exists in the Committee in favour of ratification. Will the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) explain to his hon. Friends and other interested hon. Members why the Labour party intends to press amendment No. 27 to a vote?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, I can simply and willingly explain that to the Committee. As the right hon. Gentleman well knows, I would not move the amendment on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and my other hon. Friends if we did not fully understand its implications. Those implications would be to remove the protocol on social policy, which refers to the exclusion of the social chapter from the treaty. That would require Her Majesty's Government to negotiate with the other 11 Community members.

The solution to the problem would be for an agreement to emerge that folded the social chapter into the treaty, thus benefiting Britain and the British people, as well as the other 11 Community members. Of course I recognise that that would present Her Mjesty's Government with a dilemma, but we have taken the precaution to check that the other 11 member states would be happy for that outcome to obtain.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman admits that there is what he refers to as a problem. Will he confirm that that problem—as he describes it—is that the United Kingdom is not in a position to ratify the treaty? Furthermore, will he give the Committee the information that he says he has on the views of other member states?

Dr. Cunningham: I do not agree with that intervention, any more than I agreed with the right hon. Gentleman's first intervention. The problem is one for Her Majesty's Government, and there is a simple solution to it. The solution would be to include the social chapter in the treaty and approve it and for the citizens of our country to receive all the manifest benefits which flow from the social chapter and which will be enjoyed by the citizens of the other 11 member states.

While we are on the subject, Her Majesty's Government alone—the British Conservative party alone of political parties in the Community—have decided to exclude the social chapter and its benefits from application in the United Kingdom. No other party, in or or out of Government, in the European Community supports the position of Her Majesty's Government. No applicant Government for membership of the European Community supports the position of Her Majesty's Government. The European employers organisation does not support the position of Her Majesty's Government. Therefore, the isolation of the British Conservative Government in Europe on the issue is absolute. They should regard that not as a badge of honour but as a badge of shame against Britain.

Mr. Marlow: I merely make an innocent observation. My right hon. Friend is trying to put the wind up and the frighteners on the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), but I can tell the hon. Member for Copeland that if there is anything that I dislike more than the Maastricht treaty, it is the social contract.

Dr. Cunningham: I am not absolutely fazed by that intervention. Perhaps I should apologise to the Minister and the Committee for a slight error earlier. There is one other political party in Europe that supports the position of the British Conservatives: Mr. Jean-Marie Le Pen and the French neo-facist party. I hope that the Government feel comfortable in his company.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I promise that I shall not intervene further. I shall comment later on the supposed merits of the matter. However, the question remains and the hon. Gentleman must answer it—does the amendment place the British Government in the position of being a non-ratificant? One thing that we wear as a badge of honour is the support of the British people. We obtained the support of the British people, not least because of the exclusion from the provisions of the social protocol which we obtained for Britain. I recommend to the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) that, when we next face the British people, they do not promise to import that pernicious protocol into our law.

5.30 pm

Dr. Cunningham: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is not asking me to apologise for placing the Government in a predicament. I thought that that was one of the principal roles and duties of the Opposition. Of course, the Government will be placed in a predicament—that is exactly our intention. However, we are also offering a clear and unambiguous way out—which is to embrace the social chapter, as every other Government in the European Community have done. That is the purpose of our amendment—a wholly beneficial purpose—which is well intentioned and motivated. It has overwhelming support throughout the European Community and we make no apology for it.

[Dr. Cunningham]

Article 2, paragraph 6, of the social chapter states:

"The provisions of this Article shall not apply to pay, the right of association, the right to strike or the right to impose lock-outs."

Article 3, which provides for agreements to be made between management and labour at the Community level, was promoted by the joint initiative from the employers' organisation UNICE and the European Trades Union Congress. There is no question of such agreements superseding the Commission, the Council of Ministers or member Governments by altering trade union or strike laws.

I have said all that to remove another canard from the Government's argument: that, somehow, if the social chapter were adopted and applied in Britain, it would set back the clock and reverse the decisions of the House on industrial legislation and wage bargaining. That is a wholly false argument, and it always has been.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Earlier in his speech, the hon. Gentleman assured the House that he had the approval of all the other member Governments for the approach that he has adopted on behalf of the Opposition. As that would be a gross interference in domestic politics, which is outside Community regulations, can he explain in detail exactly what he meant?

Dr. Cunningham: As the hon. Gentleman is usually critical of the Labour party for not being sufficiently pro-European, I regard his intervention as pathetic. First, he clearly was not listening to what I said, so he misrepresented my remarks. Secondly, we are confident that other member Governments would be happy to renegotiate the matter to include the social chapter in the treaty. I stand by those remarks.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: No, I shall not give way at the moment.

From the outset, it has been the purpose of the Conservative party and the Government to erect a bogus case, to pretend to slaughter a paper tiger, to perpetrate a squalid fraud on the British people and to promote the Prime Minister as some sort of pathetic hero tilting at the windmills of the distressed minds in his own party on social and employment policy issues. It has been a charade —a squalid fraud—to cover the real impact of the provisions of the social chapter.

I shall revert for a few moments to the social charter, which expresses fundamental principles relating to 12 major themes. They are: free movement of workers based on the principles of equal treatment in access to employment and social protection; employment and pay to be based on the principle of fair remuneration; improved living and working conditions; social protection based on the rules and practices proper to each country; freedom of association in collective bargaining; vocational training; equal treatment for men and women; information, consultation and participation of workers; protection on health and safety in the workplace; protection of children and adolescents; the guarantee of minimum living standards for elderly people; and improved social and professional integration for disabled people. Those are the 12 main objectives of the social charter.

Of course, the charter itself has no force in law, but it provided the initial political impetus for an action programme of specific measures which was drawn up by the European Commission and which was before the Council at its Strasbourg meeting. The social chapter was based on the provisions of the social charter.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Can my hon. Friend confirm that the treaty, as it now stands, not only discriminates against workers in this country, but formalises the discrimination shown within the European Community to immigrant workers? In terms of the free mobility of workers and their families, there are two classes of people—the citizens of Europe and the immigrant workers and their families. That discrimination is formalised in the treaty.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Dr. Cunningham: No. I have already given way four or five times, so the hon. Gentleman can hardly complain if I do not give way now.

Just as they declined to support the social charter, the Government refused to agree to a chapter on social policy being included in the body of the treaty on European union and European economic and monetary union agreed by the European Council in Maastricht in December 1991. The purpose of our amendment is to reverse that decision.

What was said at that time was set out in the protocol, which made Britain's position clear. It stated:

"The United Kingdom . . . shall not take part in the deliberations and the adoption by the Council of Commission proposals made on the basis of this Protocol and the abovementioned Agreement . . . Acts adopted by the Council and any financial consequences other than the administrative costs entailed for the institutions shall not be applicable to the United Kingdom".

In other words, although Britain is opting out and denying the benefits of the chapter to our people, we are still expected to pay our share of the costs of European Community activities.

Mr. Wells: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the difference between him and many other members of the Committee is that we believe that matters of vital concern to all the people of this country are properly and naturally the concern of the House and the country? They should not be imposed on us by the European Community through the social chapter. Is he further aware that if he manages, by chance, to get the social chapter included in the treaty, he will undoubtedly find that there will be no majority among Conservative Members to ratify the treaty, with the result that the whole treaty will be lost?

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with little, or even none, of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I would be more persuaded of the force of his argument if there was some evidence on the Conservative Benches of a liberal approach to social and employment policies. I do not regard the abolition of the wages councils, which provide protection for the poorest and lowest-paid people in our communities, as liberal social and employment policies. Therefore, I do not agree with that part of the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I certainly do not agree with the second part, in which he suggested that somehow decisions on such matters would be taken away from the jurisdiction of this House. If it is

so important to have a level playing field under the Single European Act for business, industry and commercial development, why is it so wrong to have a level playing field in social and employment policies?

The agreement appended to the protocol states, among other things:

> "the Community shall support and complement the activities of the Member States in the following fields:
> —improvement in particular of the working environment to protect workers' health and safety;
> —working conditions;
> —the information and consultation of workers;
> —equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work;
> —the integration of persons excluded from the labour market".

It continued:

> "To this end, the Council may adopt, by means of directives, minimum requirements for gradual implementation, having regard to the conditions and technical rules obtaining in each of the Member States."

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): May I pursue the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes)? The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that he understood that the other 11 countries were happy to renegotiate with regard to the social chapter. But does he have information that the other 11 countries are prepared to restart their entire ratification processes and, in the case of Ireland and France, to hold new referendums to accommodate the hon. Gentleman?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman does not seem to understand what is going on. The other 11 countries have already accepted the social chapter. They do not need to reopen their ratification processes. If he does not understand that, he does not understand much about what has been going on in the past few months in the rest of the Community.

The agreement refers in particular to the need to take measures to promote equal opportunities and to the role that trade union and employers' organisations can play in reaching agreements that help to give effect to the aims of the social chapter.

Finally, on the EC-wide aspects of the matter, the social policy was on the agenda at the Edinburgh summit at the conclusion of the British presidency. We just need to remind the House and our fellow citizens what was decided there. Part A, annex 2, of the conclusions of the Edinburgh summit says:

> "Turning to social policy, the Commission considers that the group of directives based on article 118 of the treaty is too recent to warrant re-examination."

There are no prizes for guessing which member state was asking for re-examination. It goes on:

> "Furthermore, instead of re-examination its priority will be to supplement them by implementing all the provisions of the chapter of the fundamental social rights of workers."

That is the most recent view of our Community partners on this nexus of issues.

The Labour party agrees with our European partners that the primary source of Community strength, the single most important element in our wealth creation, is people —the working men and women of Europe. That is why we see the social chapter as an integral part of the Maastricht treaty. That is why the development of common basic standards for people at work is central to our vision of a future Europe.

As I have already pointed out, we do not want Europe simply to be a marketplace; it must be a developing community. Progress is not just about economic and industrial development; it is about associated social and employment policy developments, too, and social justice. A civilised society is measured not just by its wealth but by the treatment of its citizens.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I agree wholeheartedly that Europe is more than just an economic unit. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that all the noises that we hear from the Conservative Benches on the narrow economic and market issues are usually noises in favour of a level playing field, yet in this one instance Conservative Members are trying to get preferential treatment at the expense of ordinary working people?

Dr. Cunningham: I am delighted to be able to agree absolutely with the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

For people throughout the Community, the social chapter offers the prospect of a platform of basic rights —the right to decent working conditions, the right to be consulted about changes that affect them and the right to protection against bad employers. It places individual employees on a par with their employers, empowering them to demand fair treatment and real participation in the workplace. All that is opposed by the Government and their supporters on the Conservative Benches.

Britain's Conservative Government have chosen to opt out of the social chapter and that is entirely consistent with their indifference to the rights of ordinary people, their disregard for decent working standards and their determination to empower no one but themselves. As I have said already, it is consistent with their callous decision to abolish wages councils, the last remaining defence of many low-paid workers against exploitation.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition did on a previous occasion, I shall quote what Winston Churchill once had to say about that.

> "When you have no organisation, no parity of bargaining, the good employer is undercut by the bad and the bad employer is undercut by the worst. Where these conditions prevail you have not a condition of progress but a condition of progressive degeneration."

Someone on low pay in Britain will now no longer be offered legal protection even at that level. It is the economics of the sweatshop and it should have no place in a civilised society.

5.45 pm

Opting out of the social chapter is saying that we should compete with Taiwan on price rather than compete with Germany or France on quality. We will never attract investment on the basis of low wages; we will attract investment only on the basis of the high skills, proficiency and productivity of our working men and women. The best aids to that efficiency and productivity are good working conditions, safe workplaces, good controls on working practices and health and safety and the involvement of the work force in discussion of those matters.

Opting out of the social chapter goes against that which is clearly understood everywhere else in the Community —that the future has to be in high-quality, high-productivity industry and services. That means training, investment and proper rewards for the people who work in those industries and services.

Labour wants Britain to be able to stand alongside our European partners and say that we are proud of our work force and that we treat them with the respect and dignity

that they have earned and deserve. That is why our major objective for the proceedings on the Maastricht Bill will be to reverse the opt-out on the social chapter.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: If the hon. Gentleman must.

Mr. Marlow: It is a fairly important point. It is the difference between our two parties. The hon. Gentleman seemed to imply that people considering investment in the United Kingdom are not concerned about employment costs. If so, he is living in Mickey Mouse land.

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am not suggesting that at all. I am suggesting that, in addition to employment costs, of course, people considering investment in the United Kingdom are concerned about the ability and skills of our working people. Increasingly, Britain is being left behind, first because of disinterest and, secondly, as a previous Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer said, because our ambition is not a high-tech economy, or a low-tech economy, but a no-tech economy. That was his ambition for British industry.

If the hon. Gentleman thinks that such an approach to the future of our economy, with the kind of balance of payments deficit and public sector borrowing requirement that we have, is the way forward for Britain, he must be living in cloud cuckoo land.

To its credit, the organisation of employers in the EC supports the provisions of the social chapter. In an exchange with my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), speaking for us on employment matters on the issue, the director of social affairs at the UNICE said:

"The procedure in articles 118A and 118B of the annex is a means of recognising the autonomy of the social partners and of introducing an obligation to consult them on any Commission proposals in the social field. It also introduces a mechanism to realise any agreement of the social partners to be used if they so desire.

Our clear understanding is that Articles 118a and 118b cannot be used in any way connected with laws relating to strikes or unions, and in any event we would not agree to any agreement which did have such effect."

That—very clearly and succinctly—blows the Government's whole fraudulent case out of the water. It has been rejected not by the Government's political opponents, or by Governments in other countries, but by the European employers' organisation. That statement by the UNICE was, and is, supported by the Confederation of British Industry: even on home territory. The Government's posture is not supported. Who, then, supports the Government?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The British people.

Dr. Cunningham: We have to keep reminding the right hon. Gentleman that the Government were not elected by the majority of British people, even in the most recent general election. Even that claim does not bear simple examination.

No one supports the Government's position—not any Government of any political persuasion in the Community; not any applicant for Community membership, such as Norway, Sweden, Finland or Austria; not the European employers; not the European Parliament; not even the Conservative Members of the European Parliament. They were obliged to sign a declaration in support of the social chapter on joining the European People's party: therefore, their isolation is virtually complete. Given the attitudes of Mr. Jean-Marie Le Pen, I suspect that they wish that they did not have his support.

Had not the social chapter been denied to the British people, I—along with many of my right hon. and hon. Friends—could have supported the Bill. We shall continue to press, at every opportunity, for Britain's acceptance of the social chapter: it is right for the British people and for our country. A future Labour Government will immediately sign the social charter and move for the implementation of the social chapter in Britain. That is why we shall not jeopardise the future of this aspect of the Maastricht treaty, which is fundamentally important to our European partners, and that is why I intend to press the amendment to a vote.

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): I wish to concentrate on amendment No. 27.

On Second Reading, which seems a very long time ago, I expressed anxiety about the status of the European Court and about its ever-increasing power, which I believe is enhanced by this treaty. Let me say at the outset that I consider the attitude of the Opposition Front Bench to be wholly cynical. Its real reason for wishing to incorporate the social chapter is the fact that it has lost all hope that a socialist party will ever be returned to power in this country. It needs all the assistance that it can find to ensure that someone else can do its dirty work for it.

On Second Reading, I congratulated my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Minister of State on their skilful negotiation of a position that excluded this country from the social chapter. Since then, I have examined the treaty more carefully, and I now believe that the social chapter is no longer relevant. The treaty covers a series of open doors through which many of the intentions of the social chapter may well be introduced. Although I still admire my right hon. Friends' negotiating skills, I do not believe that that is the end of the story.

Under amendment No. 27, the existing provisions on social policy contained in the treaty of Rome would be subject to significant interpretation, according to the new objectives set out in article 2. They include "social cohesion and solidarity". For example, article 118a of the treaty of Rome—which concerns the working environment, and the health and safety of workers—would have to be interpreted in the light of article 2 of the Maastricht treaty, and of article 3j, which specifies

"the strengthening of economic and social cohesion"

as a Community activity. Paragraph 1 of article 118a of the treaty of Rome states:

"Member States shall pay particular attention to encouraging improvements, especially in the working environment as regards the health and safety of workers, and shall set as their objective the harmonisation of conditions in this area, while maintaining the improvements made."

Article 118a is subject to qualified majority voting. The provisions on page 31 of the Maastricht treaty bring majority voting in that context into line with the new common operating procedures of article 189c, which—along with article 189b—specify the way in which qualified majority voting is to be handled.

There is currently much talk of a new Community directive on a 48-hour working week. That directive is based on article 118a, and is therefore likely to be subject to majority voting. If it were agreed, Britain would have to

comply with its provisions or face action against it in the European Court of Justice. Our opt-out from the social chapter will not help us in that regard.

The protocol on social policy clearly states—this is important, because it divorces the social chapter from the main body of the treaty—

"this protocol and . . . Agreement are without prejudice to the provisions of this Treaty, particularly those relating to social policy which constitute an integral part of the 'acquis communautaire.'"

It is clear that whether we have signed up to the social chapter is irrelevant; we are already obligated to the parts of the treaty that we have already signed up to.

If we were taken to the European Court of Justice for failing to comply with that Community directive, how could I reassure business men in my constituency of Chingford that they would not find themselves at a considerable disadvantage as a result of the court's ruling, given the extra cost implications? The court would be likely to follow precedents established by previous rulings.

The court's ruling in the sex discrimination case of Defrenne *v.* SABENA in 1976 is important, as it gives a clear indication of the way in which the court would rule in this instance. On that occasion, the court ruled

"to avoid a situation in which undertakings established in States which have actually implemented the principle of equal pay have suffered a competitive disadvantage in intra-Community competition as compared with undertakings established in States which have not yet eliminated discrimination against women workers".

It is therefore already interpreting in the light of how the majority of the Community is likely to have worked.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he does not accept the conclusion in that case, which provided for equal treatment for men and women throughout the European Community? Is he saying that the court was wrong to decide as it did?

6 pm

Mr. Duncan-Smith: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I am developing a case; I am not judging whether the court was right or wrong in that particular case or with regard to sex discrimination in general. I am trying to prove that the aspects of the treaty which are justiciable from the European Court's point of view will lead the court and other countries to start introducing many of the elements in the social chapter from which we have opted out. I cited the ruling merely as an example of the court's thinking in terms of the acquis communautaire.

The Defrenne decision was based on the same title of the treaty of Rome dealing with social policy as the 48-hour working week directive with which we are threatened. Sex discrimination in fact falls under the following article, article 119.

There is powerful evidence that the court would rule that Britain was enjoying an unfair competitive advantage if it did not comply with the 48-hour directive which was in force in other member states. If there is the slightest doubt, it is wholly removed by title II of the Maastricht treaty, because the European Court of Justice would interpret article 118a under the new objectives of article 2, which are "social cohesion and solidarity". That is an important phase. The new objectives would be subject to interpretation under the commitments to which we have already agreed in article 5 of the treaty of Rome, which is an important and powerful article.

Mr. Marlow: I am perhaps looking to my hon. Friend for legal rather than political advice. The Committee has been told many times that social cohesion has to do with the expenditure of funds in the poorer areas of the Community and nothing to do with social policy. Is my hon. Friend sure that the court would interpret it in that way? Under the new article 118a(2), the impositions under majority voting would have to have regard to the

"conditions and technical rules obtaining in each of the Member States".

To what extent would that be a safeguard?

Mr. Duncan-Smith: My hon. Friend makes an interesting and important point. I believe that "social cohesion" and "solidarity" must be taken together. The European Court must eventually have regard to the spirit underlying all the articles and, bearing in mind what is best for the majority of the Community, decide how the rest are proceeding and why there is some deviation. Essentially, I believe that the answer to my hon. Friend's question is that the court would not necessarily rule in our favour.

I give a specific example of article 5 being interpreted by the court to impose continuing obligations on member states. In Cullut *v.* Centre Leclerk in 1985, the court ruled that member states are allowed to adopt measures which would undermine the effectiveness of the community legislation, even if they do not directly contradict its terms. Therefore, article 5 of the treaty of Rome, although it is not being amended, is of major importance to the debate, because it provides a legal basis on which the general treaty objectives and goals, which many people view as general and undefined, suddenly become very clear and may be converted by a process of interpretation by the European Court of Justice to binding and specific legal rules.

Article 2, as amended by Maastricht, gives much greater precedence to social objectives. Accordingly, the court will give much more weight to social aspects and determinations.

Dr. Godman: I remind the hon. Gentleman of the 15th report of the Select Committee on European Legislation from the 1991-92 Session. It refers to the growing power of the European Court of Justice but points out a new factor. Paragraph 34 on page 49 states:

"The jurisprudence of the Court . . . recognised a right for individuals (in carefully defined circumstances) to sue their Member States in their national courts for damages flowing from non-implementation of obligations intended for their protection."

I can envisage a flood of complaints heading for our courts in England, Wales and Scotland on the basis of the treaty.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman makes a powerful point, which stands on its own. To some extent, I agree that these articles will come back to haunt us because of the great and growing power of the European Court to rule over nation state Parliaments and, necessarily, Governments. I believe that I am succeeding in proving that the text provides a route to the European Court of Justice on social matters.

I list some of the new objectives of article 2 which powerfully prove my point. They include:

"social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and . . . social cohesion and solidarity among Member States".

That is powerful language. In the debate so far, many Members have said that they are general objectives, but I maintain that the general becomes specific once it is bound

[Mr. Duncan-Smith]

by a court which will rule and interpret—and interpret behind closed doors—and issue its interpretation as a statement.

I have already said that the protocol on social policy specifically states that it shall not

"prejudice . . . the provisions of this Treaty, particularly those relating to social policy which constitute an integral part of the 'acquis communautaire'".

Therefore, the route that I have demonstrated leaves the door open for substantial Community interference in social policy, effectively undermining our exclusion from the social chapter.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I have been trying to follow carefully the hon. Gentleman's argument. Does it not lead to the conclusion that, if all the provisions can be secured by the courts or through other mechanisms, there is very little to be lost by including the social provisions for the United Kingdom as for the other 11 countries?

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I disagree fundamentally with the social chapter, and I congratulated my right hon. Friends the Minister and the Prime Minister on their negotiating skills in keeping us out of it. However, having re-read the treaty, I believe that there is an established route for all of the social provisions to be implemented through the European Court. That poses a challenge, although I have not yet shown how that challenge would arise.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is developing an interesting point. Does he agree that it is probably a fair assumption that the 11 parties which intend to proceed with the treaty will have read it very carefully? If they felt that the objectives were achievable under the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act, why does he think that they went to the trouble of making these arrangements—or does he think that he and he alone has espied the route for implementing the objectives under the existing treaty?

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I am not sure whether I alone have espied the route, but I was hoping that my right hon. Friend would be able to prove that I was incorrect. I shall be looking for him to do that at the end of my speech. I could assume a Machiavellian intent on the part of other nations—perhaps they made a big fuss and pushed us to the brink, knowing that they could make a concession but still implement the proposals—but for all 11 countries to think in that way would imply an acquis communautaire which I am not sure necessarily exists.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Whether or not my hon. Friend is the only person to have espied that route, would it not be fair to say that previous British Governments of all complexions have missed the central point of previous legislation amending the treaty of Rome? As my hon. Friend is explaining, that central point is the importance of the preambles and listings of objectives in the legislation. We have sometimes overlooked the combination of the preambles and objectives with some of the detailed wording, because that is not the way in which we go about things. We simply look at the main text of legislation; we do not have a tradition of examining preambles. But other countries have. That is a central point.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Indeed, that has always been my point. In my maiden speech on Second Reading, I said that the European Court of Justice was a more significantly powerful organisation than many of my colleagues on both sides of the House thought, because it had far more latitude than our High Court. If we examine the European Court's rulings, we see that it tends to interpret more according to the spirit of legislation; it looks to the general objectives underlying the words, not necessarily the words alone.

I believe that it was Lord Mackenzie-Stuart who wrote a couple of letters to *The Times* about article 3b. I apologise, Mr. Lofthouse, if I appear to be moving away from the amendment, but what I am saying is related to it. Lord Mackenzie-Stuart said that, although politicians had given the European Court a near-impossible task of interpretation, it would none the less do as it had done in the past and interpret according to what it found in the treaty. It has become clear that the court sees that part of its task as to ensure that the interests of the Community as a whole go forward.

Mr. Marlow: The intervention by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State must have been uncharacteristically naive—because I am sure that he was not dissembling. Is not the reality that the Government have to sell the treaty to a British public who are, to say the least, somewhat sceptical? Among that public are industry, the Institute of Directors and the Confederation of British Industry. It is important for the Government, as it was for Chamberlain when he stepped off the aeroplane, to come back waving a victory—the victory that we have been excluded from the social chapter. Yet the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) thus far has conclusively proved that we have not been excluded from the social chapter at all. It will be interesting to hear what my right hon. Friend the Minister says about it later.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: My hon. Friend's objections stand on their own, and I shall not elaborate on them.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): It is important to enlarge on the argument about the scope of article 2 and the activities of the Community. Where the Commission feels that it can make a proposal which would command the support of a qualified majority of the Council of Ministers, it merely needs a pretext, and can choose the article under which to achieve such a vote. It is inconceivable that the European Court would subsequently rule against a qualified majority in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Indeed. All that, which I have previously stated, underlines the point.

It is never enough simply to prove a route to somewhere. I dare say that it is not difficult to find a route to the European Court of Justice through many parts of the treaty. The key difference is the reason why we may proceed along such a route.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is making an interesting speech, and the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) pointed in the right direction, too. Of course, one of the things that we have learnt is that the Community is a developing process. In the previous debate I tried to clarify the fact that we have seen that there is a desire—understandable, perhaps—on the part of the Commission and its officials to extend their writ into more areas. They sometimes sought

to do that in ways which did not seem proper to us. In various other debates we have attempted to close those gaps.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) raises an important point, and I shall seek to reply to it in detail later. He has made it clear to the House that we abominate the content of the social protocol—I believe that that is common ground amongst Conservative Members. We believe that it would not only undermine but reverse much of what we have achieved in the past decade. If my hon. Friend has identified a route by which the social chapter could be imported into the treaty, that would be a serious matter, and I shall try later to deal in detail with that important question.

6.15 pm

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. This matter needs much consideration, and I hope that it will receive it.

As I was saying, it is not enough simply to prove a route. In legal terms, there are always routes to all sorts of decisions. The key is to prove that there is a reason for those routes to be taken. We must consider all 11 of the nations that were behind the social chapter—much of it was generated in France—and ask why we might be dragged down some of those routes. The answer must surely be that—not in one year's time, perhaps not even in two years' time, but as things develop—it will become clear that the United Kingdom is a low-cost country with much simpler worker-management relationships.

I should applaud that—it will be lauded by all Conservative Members—but France or Holland may say, "It is unfair. The United Kingdom is part of the Community and has signed up to the spirit of all the agreements, yet underneath it all United Kingdom products are becoming very competitive. We are finding it difficult to compete with the British, and they have a right to our market. And it is all because they have no minimum wage and no social objectives, as we have. We can point out many ways in which they are not implementing the agreements."

Those countries would then encourage the Commission to examine the matter and report that the United Kingdom was in contravention of the body of the treaty. They will say that, under articles 2 and 3, in conjunction with article 118a and bearing in mind article 5, there is a good reason for the Council of Ministers to investigate and bring the United Kingdom into line. They could pick us off in one area at a time.

That is a powerful reason why either individual nations or the Commission will push for harmony. That would drive the others forward, with us as part of the process rather than our undermining them, which would otherwise happen—and which I should applaud, but which would be seen as a threat to the other nations.

That is why the other nations will wish to go down that route and challenge us in the European Court. That is why the European Court will, not for the first time, be called to make a judgment on a matter which is now supranational, in an area where we as a Government have distinctly refused to take part. Yet suddenly the European Court will find against us in one area and then another. As qualified majority voting cut in, we should find ourselves in dispute with the other members of the Community. Arguably, that would not be the best way to encourage a decent relationship with them—if that is what people want us to do.

I have tried to demonstrate that the social chapter is already to a greater or lesser extent in the body of the treaty. For Conservative Members the problem is that, although we all applauded the great skills of my right hon. Friends, hidden away underneath everything is not only the route but the reason why we shall be brought to account, whether we like it or not. We shall find that the invidious social provisions will be introduced bit by bit.

Yet again, the nation state will lose its position and its ability to make decisions. Our opt-out of the social chapter will be put on one side. Who here would say—it may be a wiser man than I—that in 10 years' time the opt-out will not be almost forgotten, and we will not already be tightly bound in to many of the social provisions?

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) will probably not agree with what I have to say, but I do not intend to take quite as long as he did.

On many occasions, I have been critical of several aspects of the European Communities, but I am certainly not critical of the approach to the social problems of Europe or the socio-economic management of the Community. A few moments ago the Minister of State expressed opposition to the social charter. He said that it undermines the achievements of the last 10 years. Well, what have we achieved? In 1979, Britain was the fifth wealthiest country in the world; it is now the 15th. In the past 10 years, we have seen wastelands created, industries wiped out and social and economic devastation inflicted on many parts of the country, which is rapidly becoming criminalised. We have become a criminal, impoverished, under-invested and paganised nation. When someone, even in Brussels, offers to help to get us out of the mess, we have evasion, pompous and unjustifiable boasts, such as we have heard from the Minister, and further evidence of the decline in public standards.

In my brief remarks I shall refer to one aspect of the social policy of Europe—the structural funds through RECHAR. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) will recall a debate of about a year ago in which he and I participated. Hon. Members with constituencies in which there are coalfields that have been devastated in the past decade became increasingly concerned about the fact that, although the British Government were receiving resources through the structural fund, we did not seem to be getting any benefit. We had very serious misgivings. We pressed the Government about the matter and, in response, they assured us that the money was flowing to the coalfields.

But then Mr. Bruce Millan, acting responsibly and properly in fulfilment of his duty as a Commissioner, established beyond all doubt that the Government were receiving this money but were not passing it to the coalfields. He said that, as the money was not going to the coalfields, he would not pass it to the British Government. Conservative Member after Conservative Member denounced Mr. Millan, and Ministers said that he was acting irresponsibly. Members of the Government subjected him to the most appalling, irresponsible and dishonest condemnation and criticism. Not a single Member from the Treasury Bench had the guts to admit that Bruce Millan was right.

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

Some hon. Members went to see Ministers about the matter. At one meeting, I pointed out that the Government's claim that the money was being paid to the coalfield areas could not stand up. Let me refer to the way in which I illustrated the point. The Government had worked out their disbursements to local authorities in September of the year in question—two or three years ago—and said that in those disbursements they had allocated the RECHAR money. But it was not until three months after they had calculated the aid for the coalfield areas that the Government found out what the RECHAR money for the following year would be.

We challenged the Minister to consult the right hon. Gentleman who is now President of the Board of Trade but was then at the Department of the Environment, and find out whether he could deny that charge. The response of the right hon. Gentleman was to leak a letter referring to the pressure to which he and his colleagues were being subjected by Labour Members of Parliament who had—he did not use these words—rumbled the Government's approach.

At that point the Government, quietly—very quietly indeed—accepted that Mr. Millan was right. That was after we found out that they had not met Mr. Millan for about 18 months. But they did not tell their friends—or those whom they sometimes assume to be their friends—that Mr. Millan's action was justified. They had spent 12 months or more blackguarding the Commissioner for action that was entirely responsible and proper, but they did not take any significant steps to offer the public apology or expression of regret that was due to our former colleague. Indeed, I know that Conservative Members and Ministers tramped round the country linking Mr. Millan's action with the evils of the so-called social policy. How is it that Germany, France, Spain, Luxembourg and the Netherlands have all passed Britain in the international prosperity tables while they have pursued policies which are acceptable to their peoples but are apparently not to be accepted in this country, which is in rapid economic and social decline?

I assumed that the Government had turned over a new leaf—that they had accepted that Mr. Millan was right and that they would in future pass on the social funds. But, a short while ago, I received from the Minister for Industry a letter whose contents the Committee needs to know, because the Government are about to change their policy as quietly as possible—as quietly as they sought to retrieve their position following the dishonesty about Mr. Millan's intervention.

The letter says:

"You ask about future assistance from European Structural Funds for coalmining areas. RECHAR must be considered together with all the other Structural Funds Community Initiatives . . . Taken together, the Initiatives cannot be shown to have brought the UK more than if the same money had been spent on ordinary . . . programmes."

What the Minister meant was that the initiatives could not be shown to have brought to Britain from Europe any more than had been received before, when the funds were buried in the moneys that allowed the Government to pursue a tax-cutting policy that did not have any economic advantage for the country.

The letter goes on:

"However, the Government shares the view . . . that there have been too many Community Initiatives."

For that reason, the Government will seek to end the RECHAR programme. However, they offer the comforting sop that they will make good use of RECHAR while it lasts. The letter continues:

"the Government will continue to give all due priority to the needs of areas such as South Yorkshire, though you will accept, I am sure, that regions with needs unrelated to coal must also receive their fair share."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) will recognise, even the current Government pretend to accept that the coalfield areas are in particular need. Brussels not only recognised that fact, but sought to do something about it. We were extremely grateful when Mr. Millan sought to compel the Government to do something about it. We had hoped that acceptance of the accuracy Mr. Millan's statements might lead the Government to maintain the provision of these funds for areas like ours, which, had the Government had their way in October, would have seen further blight at enormous public cost. We now have very good grounds to be suspicious of the Government and not at all ungrateful for some of the actions in Brussels.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I thank my hon. Friend for his extremely powerful and knowledgeable argument. I think that no hon. Member knows more about this situation. Can he confirm that the obligations arising from RECHAR and other moneys intended to assist coalfield areas and other declining industrial regions arose as the result of an obligation under the treaty of Paris, which was subsumed within the treaty of Rome, and that the Government not only were duplicitous in their treatment of the RECHAR moneys but also offended against—if they did not actually break—the treaty obligations undertaken when the European Coal and Steel Community was set up, long before the days of European Economic Community and the treaty of Rome?

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is quite right. What we have seen from the Government is a repudiation of some of the basic principles on the basis of which they were eager to enter the Community. Apparently they are eager to remain in the Community so long as it does not affect that small proportion of the British people on whom they believe we all depend—the entrepreneurs. There is a place for the entrepreneur, but there must also be a place for a decent society. The Government have rejected that decency.

I mentioned the hon. Member for Southend, East. He will recall a debate in which we discussed RECHAR. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that his argument was that money should not go to the coalfield areas, but that it should be used to assist all the British people. I am sure that he accepts that, although people who live in places such as Southend are not free from problems, which may be exacerbated if the Government pursue their policy towards British Rail, there are areas in which levels of unemployment, and economic and environmental devastation have risen and have now reached chronic proportions.

6.30 pm

The Government now say that moneys from Europe should assist everyone and not only areas in which there are special needs. I submit that the Government have no sense of reasonable priorities and no understanding of the fact that they are supposed to represent the whole nation. Given that, it is wrong to have Britain in an isolated position in Europe.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Does my hon. Friend accept that there are problems for some local authorities? There is a strong possibility that they will not be able to take up the RECHAR moneys because of cuts in public expenditure. They will not have the moneys to meet their part of the cost of projects that are so important to communities such as my own.

Mr. Hardy: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that I represent a coalfield area, as he does. I know that he has great familiarity with, and knowledge of, such areas. I strongly suspect that, when Ministers in the Department of Employment consider the implications of the 1991 census, they will be astonished. There is excessive complacency about unemployment, and the Government believe their own figures. They are foul in their present form as official measurement, and they are obscene in reality. In areas of high unemployment, the 1991 census will reveal the astonishingly low levels of people in work.

Given that reality, which is not exposed by Government statistics, there is an urgent need for a far greater priority to be given to social and socio-economic policy. It seems astonishing that there is a contemptuous rejection of the social charter, which is more relevant to Britain's needs than it is to the needs of most of our competitor countries, which have not suffered the economic decline that Britain has experienced over the past 10 years.

I am extremely critical of many aspects of Europe, but the social charter is not one of them. Of all the aspects of the treaty, the social charter is the one which we should be eager to espouse. We should not reject it with the rather contemptuous and careless approach which is typical of the Government's attitude.

Mr. Jenkin: This is the first time that I have been called to speak in a debate on the Bill. The present group of amendments allows a fairly wide-ranging debate. Before picking up two or three threads that have already been teased a little by right hon. and hon. Members, I will briefly set out my general attitude to the Bill.

I am pro-Europe and pro-Community and I have always been so. One of the disturbing aspects of the argument on this group of amendments is that I have never before felt the need to protest my pro-Community credentials. I have expressed my misgivings about the treaty on European union and people seem determined to misconstrue my motives.

Why should the social aspects be brought into the Community at all? The true intent of the Maastricht treaty is that it should lead to a federal Europe. Why should a truly separate economic pillar include matters such as social protection and social cohesion and solidarity, especially if our opt-out from the social chapter is to free us from those very activities?

I do not suggest, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of state said, that I want to see nothing more than a market in the Community. I point out the inconsistency in arguing in favour of a union based on well-defined pillars while making changes to the economic pillar which weaken its identity. The indisputable effect of what my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford has already described in his extremely able speech, which included many cogent arguments, is to increase the breadth of the European Economic Community's activities so that the change in name is entirely relevant because it betrays the much expanded scope that was given to the Community at Maastricht.

I shall point out some of the developments that will not be reversed. The Maastricht treaty is determined to maintain what it calls the acquis communautaire. When Ministers speak to Conservative party conferences and publish Conservative party documents in which they claim that the direction of the treaty has been reversed, one can only assume that they have been deeply misinformed.

I take as an example the proposed directive on the 48-hour working week. The directive has been delayed, but the important point about it is that it was completely unforeseen by the Government. Assurances were given to the effect that anyone would have believed that such a directive was impossible to achieve. The Government have, admittedly, reserved their position to go to the European Court to plead that the matter is outside the scope of the powers of the Community, but Ministers have been advised to negotiate the 48-hour working week directive on the basis that they had better agree something because they might otherwise have something even worse imposed on them.

What assurances can Ministers give us this evening that the process is not going to continue, using article 118a, and drawing on the objectives at the beginning of article 2, on the activities in article 3 and on article 5, as demonstrated in the case alluded to by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford?

I draw the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends to another recent development on the social side under the existing treaty of Rome, which is being specifically preserved in the acquis communautaire to which the Maastricht treaty refers. I have here a cutting from the *Observer* of 17 January 1993, which says:

> "The Home Office has 'put on ice' plans to privatise prison education."

Opposition Members may be pleased. However, here we have another part of the social sphere being imposed on the United Kingdom without any warning. The article continues:

> "Kent has won the go-ahead for a High Court judicial review and has been joined in the action by the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education. Natfhe will argue that contracting out is illegal if it does not abide by European Community directive guaranteeing equal rights and conditions for public sector workers whose jobs are transferred to private companies."

Here we have the possibility of a European Community directive, whose scope is being potentially expanded by a European Court ruling, encompassing the entire contracting-out programme and the entire programme of a whole Government Department—the Office of Public Service and Science—and bringing the whole thing to a halt. That is the problem that we are faced with when implementing further competencies in the treaty, regardless of whether we feel that we have opted out of them. I do not wish to detain the Committee longer; I simply wish to ask the Minister to give assurances that the social legislation that the Community seeks to put upon us will be prevented.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I accept—I think that it is widely accepted—one of the burdens of the point that my hon. Friend is making, which is that the Commission, sometimes for perfectly laudable, motives, sometimes not so laudable has sought in the past and will continue to seek, I am sure, to extend its writ into areas where we

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

would not wish it to go. It is my belief, and we are making the case as we go through the Committee, that this treaty inhibits the Commission more than it was inhibited before.

The crucial point is this. I think that my hon. Friend would agree that everything in the protocol that is the subject of the Opposition amendment is unacceptable to him, to me and to most other Conservatives; and even if I were to accept the risk that there will be efforts—of course there will be—to push the ball in another direction, surely he and I would not wish to bring about a position where there is any risk whatever that the opt-out that we have obtained from these provisions is put in jeopardy. That is precisely what Opposition Members are trying to do.

Mr. Jenkin: Whether or not I agree with my right hon. Friend on that point, I wish that the British Government would be honest about the effects of the treaty. We have one assertion after another that black is white and white is black, in defiance of the text of the treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not know whether my hon. Friend was in the Committee when we discussed the last group of amendments to do with training and education. That is a very good example of where the Community has begun to insert itself into an area by simple majority voting; under the terms of this treaty, its ability to do so is restricted and defined and we move up from simple majority to qualified majority voting. That is an advance on the earlier position and it is just one example of the way in which this treaty improves our position from the position under the Single European Act.

Mr. Jenkin: I gave way to my right hon. Friend, expecting him to make a point about the group of amendments that we are discussing at the moment. If there was some specific exclusion clause, apart from the exclusion clause to that protocol, which related to articles 2 and 3, I would feel more reassured, but that is not the case.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that the area which I touched on and to which he has alluded—article 5 of the treaty of Rome—gives significant and powerful support to the case that the European Court will be forced to interpret? Therefore, to some degree, it is irrelevant whether individual nation states or Governments wish a certain thing; what is important is what the view of the European Court will be, particularly in the light of some of the judgments that Lasok and Bridge have produced in their period of recording.

Mr. Jenkin: I agree with my hon. Friend, and that leads me to my concluding point.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend the Minister is trying to cover his nakedness by referring to education. I am afraid that it does not cover anything and the sight is still pretty disagreeable. The Government thought that the Lingua programme was illegal, yet still, under the previous treaty, it was imposed upon us and in the new treaty the Lingua programme is enshrined. This just reinforces the point that my hon. Friend makes: the Government say one thing—they have said one thing before—but the reality is always different.

Mr. Jenkin: I hear the point that my hon. Friend makes.

I conclude by drawing attention to the motives of our European partners. They will wish to make us bear the same burdens of cost as they currently envisage bearing themselves under the social chapter and they will seek whichever way they can to make sure that we bear those costs. Even though we wish to opt out of the 48-hour working week directive—I must congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on doing a very good job of muddying the waters—it is impossible to imagine a situation in which, 11 member states having voted for a particular directive, the court will not rule against us if we continue to defy the directive.

6.45 pm

Mr. Wells: The 48-hour working week to which my hon. Friend refers has been introduced by the Commission under article 118a of the existing treaty, as amended by the Single European Act. The British are disputing that the Commission can do so under that article because we do not believe that it is a matter of health and safety at work. The Maastricht treaty, with its subsidiarity clause, inhibits or begins to slow down the process and asks the Commission and the whole of the Community whether they are right to extend their powers into this domestic legislative arena. Surely, therefore, the Maastricht treaty is an advance in the direction in which my hon. Friend would like the Community to go.

My hon. Friend should have a little more confidence in the European Court sustaining British objections to proceeding on the 48-hour week under article 118a.

Mr. Jenkin: I draw my hon. Friend's attention to articles 2 and 3 of the treaty compared with what is in the existing Rome treaty. We have considerable additions which will widen the scope of the European Court's rulings and widen the competence of the Community, particularly in social affairs. Even though we have opted out of a separate list of social policy objectives, we are still wide open to the 48-hour working week, and perhaps more so, because we will have less defence against the 48-hour working week if we sign up to such matters as

"economic and social cohesion and solidarity among the Member States",

to quote from the treaty.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): In his concern, has my hon. Friend taken on board the fact that 10 out of 12 countries in the European Community have already ratified the treaty, which permits this country to opt out of the entire social chapter? Does he not consider that in those circumstances he might be better advised to be arguing the case alongside the Government instead of against them? If we had had any other Government elected last year, he and I and Front-Bench spokesmen would all be together in opposing what a Labour Government might have produced, which would have included this particular social chapter.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Lady unfortunately missed the cogent and able speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith).

Mrs. Currie: I am asking you.

Mr. Jenkin: I would be very happy to take my hon. Friend through *Hansard* tomorrow morning and point out

the argument. I can give her the answer if she wishes, but I do not wish to detain the Committee longer than necessary. It relates, in summary, to the way in which article 118a can be used now in conjunction with the approval procedures in article 189c, using the objectives laid out in article 2 and the new activities of the treaty laid out in article 3, in conjunction with article 5, where it says that it is against Community law to frustrate the objectives of this treaty. If one takes that as meaningless, have no fear, but the truth of the matter, as we have learnt from the Single European Act, is that the preambles and objectives of those treaties are vital.

The European Court will draw upon the objectives of the treaty to inform its rulings and the Commission knows that. When the Commission initiates legislation in the knowledge that it can get a qualified majority in the Council of Ministers and that the European Court will draw upon the objectives laid out in articles 2 and 3, one can be confident that we are going to find ourselves in a minority. The Government's lawyers will tell Ministers, "You had better agree and sign up to something better than nothing, or you will have the worst imposed upon you."

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend perhaps correct the issue over the 48-hour directive by consulting *Hansard*? Does he appreciate that, when the Minister of State, Department of Employment, was asked about going to the court over the 48-hour directive, his answer was that he would consider doing so if it remained in its present form, but not necessarily if it was changed in some respect?

Is my hon. Friend aware that the negotiations on the 48-hour directive are nearly complete and that one of the agreed parts is that French bakers are exempt from the 48-hour week but British bakers are not? Will my hon. Friend consult the *Hansard* record of yesterday's Question Time and read question No. 2 for the right answer on the 48-hour week being challenged in the court?

Mr. Jenkin: I will certainly consult *Hansard*.

Mrs. Currie: I am most impressed with the way in which my new colleague is approaching the issue, but I put it to him that the broad principles on which he is objecting have been dealt with in earlier debates and were passed with large majorities. The Single European Act, which is the source of much of what he is complaining about, passed through the House some years ago with large majorities. Is my hon. Friend going to stand by his principles, with which many Conservative Members agree, and vote with the Government tonight?

Mr. Jenkin: The contention of the Government and, I presume, of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), is that the Maastricht treaty somehow addresses the concerns that we have come to experience in the Single European Act. My contention and that of a growing number of people in this country is that that is not the case and that every aspect of increased competence in the European Community increases the likelihood that we are going to finish up with laws being imposed upon us which we do not want.

It seems extraordinary to say that we have lessons to learn from the Single European Act and then to grasp tenfold the same mistakes in the Maastricht treaty. The objectives of the treaty are laid out before my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South. If she cares to read them and obtain an understanding of how the legal structures in the Community are likely to work, we might be in a position to avoid making the same mistake.

I have detained the Committee long enough. I thank the Committee for its indulgence.

Mr. Wigley: I am grateful for the opportunity briefly to intervene at this point. This is the first time that I have addressed the Committee on these provisions, and I am glad to do so. My party and I not only support the objective of being a full member of the European Community and playing a full part as a full partner, not as someone who picks and chooses which parts of the package he wants and insists on having exceptions for other parts, but we agree with the objective of amendment No. 7 in order for the social provisions that are available to the other 11 member states to be available also to us in Wales.

I say that for the reason that we in Wales, as has been reflected in election after election, look for a balance of social and economic policy which is different from the balance of social and economic policy that is reflected in the Chamber. Quite frankly, we are more likely to get the social policy that our people in Wales want from the European institutions than we are likely to get from Westminster, Whitehall and the Government who, election after election, are returned to the House of Commons.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am listening to the hon. Gentleman's speech with care, not least because I know that he and his party are very committed to the Maastricht treaty and wish to see it ratified. It seems likely that the amendment will not be voted on for some time. If the amendment were to be carried, the treaty of Rome must be amended, a further intergovernmental conference would have to take place, and then further ratifications would have to take place. It really is playing with fire for anyone to support the official Opposition's amendment.

Mr. Wigley: If the position is as outlined by the Minister of State, that surely is a consideration that he and his Government should have taken on board when they negotiated the way to exclude the social provisions from the treaty. The Government have cobbled together this exclusion for internal party policy, in order to hold together a coalition on the Conservative Benches to overcome the general election that took place in April. It is nasty internal politics and not the objective of what is best not only for the peoples of the islands of Britain but for the development of unity within Europe, which the right hon. Gentleman wants to see as much as I do.

The workings of the single market cannot possibly take place in the fulness of time if 11 member states have a certain minimal provision in social matters that relate very directly to the economy, to the labour force and to the costs of production and manufacture. A minimum provision is required of those 11 members, and there is a 12th member of the European Community that does not have those rules, applying to it and, therefore, as the Government themselves have boasted, is enabled to have a cut-price economy and has tried to obtain a competitive advantage over the other 11 members. We cannot build a united Europe—a Europe in which the 12 member states trust one another, co-operate with one another and work

[Mr. Wigley]

towards common objectives—if that let-out is allowed for one member state in order to obtain a competitive advantage.

Dr. Godman: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) said, among many other things, that, despite the exclusion of the social chapter, the European Court of Justice, given the powers that it has, seemingly, of a supreme court with regard to the 12 nations, could defend the interests of workers and trade unionists in relation to article 118a. The hon. Member for Chingford seemed to suggest that the European Court of Justice could protect and promote the interests of ordinary people, despite the Government's exclusion of the social chapter.

Mr. Wigley: I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) with considerable interest. It was an exceptionally good speech and it was delivered in a manner which was a great credit to the Committee. It was a thoughtful speech. Perhaps we should hear more such speeches. The hon. Gentleman begged the question for himself and for his colleagues—perhaps he will throw it back at us—that, if it is possible to use the courts and other provisions which have been agreed and which would be applicable to us in order to sustain the social provisions that are otherwise dependent upon the chapter from which we are excluded, perhaps there is no need to have the social chapter in it at all. Perhaps we can rely on that.

If that is the case, as I asked him in an intervention, what is the argument against having that full provision so that at least we would know where we stood? It would then be clear cut and we would not have the inevitable uncertainty involved in going to the courts on questions of interpretation.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I shall try to answer that question. Conservative Members abhor the social chapter because we think that it essentially destroys the competitiveness of this country but, from the point of view of those who would wish to have it, it tidies up all the provisions in one clearly identifiable aspect. The hon. Gentleman can see the matter from the other point of view as well as our reluctance to have the social chapter. My point is that, with or without our signature appended to it, most of the provisions will be found in a variety of ways in the body of the treaty.

7 pm

Mr. Wigley: I respect the hon. Gentleman's position. If he and his colleagues were to say that we are not allowed to exclude ourselves from these social provisions, we would be happy not to be members of the open market and the free movement of people, goods and capital with free competition, which has been the basis of development in the European context recently.

To argue that we should be allowed to have our own laws on labour, standards, working conditions, information, consultation of workers, equality between men and women and all the other provisions in the treaty, which would give us a competitive edge over the other 11 member states in the Community, and then expect them to treat us as an equal member does not hold water. We should not be allowed to compete and undercut the other 11 member states in their own marketplace.

Mrs. Currie: That matter is obviously the heart of the debate. Many Government Members think that the social chapter is bad for the whole of Europe. We strongly believe—I certainly do—that the opportunities for employment are diminished by raising the cost of employment. One need look only at a modern factory which is crammed to the eyeballs with equipment to see what the effect might be.

Mr. Wigley: I know that the hon. Lady is a good European. She has aspirations to play a fuller part on the European stage. I am sure that, as a good democrat, she will accept that, if unanimity is as great—if the people and political parties within the 11 member states agree with this—we may well have to accept it in the name of the European Community, which we believe is important, and in the name of the level playing field which we believe is important for the companies which are competing with each other in the marketplace.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): I know that the hon. Gentleman has great experience in industry, and his views must be respected in that regard. In his own words, he has vividly illustrated precisely why it will be intolerable to the other nations which have adopted the social chapter on competition policy grounds. I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said.

The advice which I have received from outside is that our exemption will be so intolerable that the other member states will bring their action on the grounds of competition policy through, first, qualified majority voting in the Commission and, secondly, interpretation of competition in the protocols and elsewhere. Once the French and the Germans wake up to the fact that it is 25 per cent. cheaper to employ British engineers to do the same job, and the effect that that will have on European investment, there will most certainly be such an action.

Mr. Wigley: Yes; and I respect the ministerial background which the hon. Gentleman has in such matters. His argument is that the provisions will come through one door or another because of the imperative of the discrepancy which arises. There will be an imperative on other countries to cut out the unfair competition of which we are taking advantage. I simply say this: let us have it clear. Let us have it on the face of the Act so that we know where we stand. Everyone involved will know that the social provisions are there in black and white and that we agree with them.

I know that the Committee is divided on the question of whether the provisions should be available, given that they were supported and advocated by 11 of the 12 member states across the board in Europe, with the only exceptions being the Conservative party and Le Pen in France. In the name of democracy and in the name of the free competition which the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) and his colleagues have advocated for so many years, surely we must have democratic unanimity if a united Europe means anything at all.

Mr. Llew Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman accept the point made by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) that low wages create full employment? If

that were the case, would not India probably be one of the richest countries in the world, with full employment, and would not Germany be experiencing tremendous poverty and mass unemployment?

Mr. Wigley: I agree wholeheartedly. The future for our manufacturing industry must be based on quality, investment, technological development and being able to compete with German, French, Spanish and Italian industry head on. We should be inventive, take our products to the marketplace, and be able to win in that context. That is the only future on which we can build a high-wage economy and an economy which can sustain the social payments which are essential for our people.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman is advancing the proposition that, if 11 member states believe something to be the case, Britain is bound to agree with it in the end and should agree with it out of community spirit.

I agree that one of the objectives is that the Community should seek consensus wherever it can find it. On that basis, let us take the British abatement. Does the hon. Gentleman argue that, because the other 11 member states disagree with the abatement, the Government should give way on it? On the basis of what the Government have done on the social protocol, surely one of the purposes of democracy is that they sought and received the support of the British people for what they did.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and my hon. Friends can be assured that not just the protocol exempts the United Kingdom from any acts taken under it. We do not hesitate to stand on that position, even if we must stand alone.

Mr. Wigley: I understand that there are times when a principle is so fundamental that a nation must stand alone, whatever the rest of the world is saying. However, I do not believe that our insistence on keeping the social provisions for working people, working conditions, information and equality between men and women is such a fundamental argument that we stand alone against all comers.

As far as the abatement argument is concerned, every country will argue for the best financial deal. It is perfectly natural, and any Government should be doing that. When it comes to the building blocks on which the new open market will be constructed—where fair competition will exist, where there is a level playing field, where company and enterprise compete and where 11 of the 12 member states have one set of rules and the other has another set of rules which gives a competitive edge which hon. Members have talked about and which Ministers have boasted about—how on earth can such provisions remain? It is only a transitional provision, which must crumble within a short period.

Government Members would be more honest if they faced up to that. We must put the treaty's provisions into legislation rather than have some bridging provisions which are convenient for the Conservative party. The Conservative party is leading the British public down the garden path as far as these provisions are concerned. It is selling employees short.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The argument that it is unfair to have a competitive edge is interesting. Is it not the case that that is exactly what trade is about? Trade is about using the competitive advantage. Will we have sunshine everywhere? Will olives grow everywhere? Will there be any difference in the utopian world which the hon. Gentleman is painting, or will there be a competitive edge? Perhaps that is a point in favour of our side.

Mr. Wigley: With respect, we are trying to build a competitive edge in law. A competitive edge is secured by innovation, scientific and technological research and investment in plant and machinery to produce better products, which is needed. We must then recommend those products in the marketplace and get a larger slice of the marketplace.

That is what it is all about. It is not about the whole basis of the Common Market before the European Community existed. The whole basis has been about getting a level playing field. In the Bill we are building a playing field on a slope. Government Members may believe that it is a lasting basis, but I suggest that it is a basis which cannot possibly remain. The basis may last for the duration of the Bill if the Government can cobble together a majority on it, but within a year or two pressures from other countries, possibly through the Chingford route which was referred to—through the courts—will mean that it will not last. It would be more honest for us to face up to that now.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): The hon. Gentleman talks about a common market. Is he aware that industry in Germany—especially engineering industry, as I learned from a visit on Monday—is already conscious that it needs to shed the shackles of the social policy that has been imposed on it formerly by trade unions and now by Maastricht? It will work within Germany to reform those provisions. So I suggest that our competitive edge will last only a short time.

Mr. Wigley: I can well imagine that the cancer in the thought of the Government could spread. When the British Government tell industrialists in Germany that we have a competitive edge over them, that we have cheap labour and that we can undercut them, of course they will say that they do not want the social chapter either. The cancer could run through the whole of Europe. The social provisions which have been built up in Germany, Denmark and other countries could be undermined by the thinking of this reactionary Conservative Government.

The Government wish to increase profits by undermining the rights of employees—rights which have been enshrined in the treaty. The social chapter creates a minimum standard. It is not a straitjacket. It acknowledges that many countries may want to go beyond that standard.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Wigley: I should like to make progress, because I know that other hon. Members want to speak.

I draw it to the attention of the Committee that the social chapter includes a provision which says:

"before submitting proposals in the social policy field, the Commission shall consult management and labour on possible direction of Community action."

Presumably we are excluded from that consultation. The Commission will consult people on both the management and the labour side in 11 member states but will not consult them in the United Kingdom when formulating policy of considerable importance within the Commission.

[Mr. Wigley]

As it is important within the Commission, it will affect policy on many other issues. European social policy will inevitably affect Britain indirectly.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman says that there are great matters of principle. It may have escaped his notice that one of the core debates in Britain in the past decade has been about corporatism and the way in which the corporate approach to industry has damaged our competitiveness and prospects. He may not like it, but Conservative Members wear it as a badge of honour that the policies that we have pursued have produced four election victories for us. If the Labour party wants to import the social protocol into the treaty of Rome, it had better win an election.

Mr. Wigley: I understand the Minister's warnings about the corporate approach. I understand its dangers and the lessons that we must learn from the post-war history of Britain. I was making the point a moment ago that the Commission would develop policies. That right has not been taken away from the Commission. It will develop policies in many areas and will be influenced by the opinion of management and labour in 11 out of the 12 member states. The conclusions reached will inevitably affect Britain.

The provisions of the social chapter also say:

"The Commission shall draw up a report each year on progress in achieving the objectives of Article 1, including the demographic situation in the Community."

The effects of the demographic situation in the Community must be the basis on which regional policy will be developed. Demographic considerations are fundamental to regional policy. The Commission will take information from 11 out of the 12 member states, from which reports will be compiled on the demographic situation in Europe. Those reports will undoubtedly underpin the regional policy pursued by the Commission. We shall miss out. Wales, Scotland and the regions of England will miss out. They desperately need a proactive regional policy to counter the inevitable centralisation that will accompany the creation of the free market.

If we intend to remain in the European Community and play a full part, we must be right in the centre. We must not look for exclusions such as that from the social chapter in an attempt to buy a short-term competitive edge which we know cannot be sustained. It would be far better for us to be in there, advocating the improvement of standards for working people in our industry as well as the industry of Europe. It would be better for us to be there when the Commission develops policies which affect other countries so that our circumstances and needs are taken into account. We must not be regarded for another decade as an offshore island which cannot determine whether or not we want to be part of Europe.

7.15 pm

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): I wish to establish two points. The first is that the amendment is a wrecking amendment to the treaty of Maastricht. The second is that the amendment is undesirable.

When the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) rebutted my intervention, he said that I did not understand the position. The position as I understand it is as follows. Changes were made to the interpretation of the treaty at the Edinburgh summit to allow the Danes to have a second referendum. However, the amendment proposes a change to the body of the treaty. The treaty clearly specifies that Britain will not take part in the deliberations on the provisions of the social chapter or in their implementation. Therefore, the amendment would require the renewal of the ratification procedures in all the other EC member countries. It might require a new referendum in France and Ireland.

I understand the Opposition Front-Bench team saying that the other countries might be in sympathy with us because they supported the social chapter. That might be so, but they would face a severe legal problem. Their peoples and their Parliaments agreed to a specific treaty which did not include Britain in the social chapter.

Mr. Hoon: The hon. Gentleman referred to the referendums in Ireland and France. Does he accept that in their referendums the peoples of France and Ireland ratified not simply the treaty but the protocols?

Mr. Milligan: Precisely. The social chapter is a protocol to the treaty. If the hon. Gentleman reads page 117 he will find the specific protocol. That was the protocol which people in France and Ireland ratified.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Let me assist both my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps they will recall that there was a moment at which the Republic of Ireland had some problems with the proposals on abortion and its constitution. It asked its partners for a minor amendment to one protocol which would have had no effect on any other country. Ireland was denied such an amendment because it would have prompted ratification by all member states. So Opposition Members have no escape: they have tabled a wrecking amendment.

Mr. Milligan: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that clarification. I understand Opposition Members' political point that if they had negotiated the treaty they would have included the social chapter. But they did not. We are dealing with a treaty and the House must either accept it or reject it. The amendment is a wrecking amendment.

The second point that I wish to establish is that the amendment is undesirable. It is inappropriate for the Community to legislate on social matters. The treaty has established the principle of subsidiarity, which is that, wherever possible, issues should be decided at national level. One can put the case for social intervention and regulation of hours and wages, but that is a national decision. It is not appropriate for the Community to act in such matters.

In any case, the social chapter is damaging. Many Opposition Members have spoken of their concern for jobs. Conservative Members are also concerned for jobs. However, the fact is that raising industry's costs by introducing new regulations such as the 48-hour week—which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) said, is a damaging sign of what might come if we accepted the social chapter—would not create jobs. It would damage businesses and especially small businesses. It would be bad for Britain.

There is also an issue of freedom. In my constituency we have two bakeries. Unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is not in the Chamber. He spoke of the exclusion of the French

bakeries. There is no exclusion for British bakeries. The Mr. Kipling plant is in my constituency. As hon. Members may know it produces, "exceedingly good mince pies." British Bakeries is also in my constituency.

People work extremely long hours for not very high wages in those plants, and may work 60 or 70 hours a week in shifts starting at 6 pm and ending at 6 am. They do not work those hours because they like to do so, but because they want to earn money to feed their families. They have the right to work long hours if they choose. It is not right for bureaucrats in Brussels or Whitehall to determine what hours they should work.

The Labour party has always been committed to the principle of free collective bargaining and that is the chant that we have heard so often. Why is that not allowed to apply in this case? If trade union members freely agree that they wish to work long hours, why should a regulation made in Brussels—or a part of the Maastricht treaty, if Opposition Members have their way—be allowed to stop them? That would be a fundamental contradiction of a basic human right? I should be interested to know from the Labour Front Bench whether a Labour Government would allow free collective bargaining to dominate and whether they would allow workers the right to choose to work more than a 48-hour week.

The exclusion of the social chapter has positive advantages to this country as well as removing some negative aspects that might be associated with its adoption. Mr. Delors has said that this country will be a paradise for Japanese investment, which has been one of the few encouraging areas of job creation in recent years. More Japanese investment would be extremely good news for this country and for jobs.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) raised the spectre of our undercutting our continental rivals. What is the danger in that? Surely that is what we must achieve if we want more jobs and increased exports, and if we want to put our balance of payments right.

Mr. Wigley: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that we should undercut them by virtue of our design, efficiency and use of capital, rather than by using legislation to build in the sort of edge that cannot possibly last?

Mr. Milligan: Frankly, I would agree to any edge that would create more jobs and prosperity. I believe that it will last, but even if it does not, let us take advantage of it while we can. I do not see any disadvantages.

The hon. Member for Copeland said that we could compete with Taiwan on price, but that we should be competing with Germany on quality. In the export business, one must compete on both price and quality. Unfortunately, British industry has not always succeeded in competing on quality, which means that we have a greater need to compete on price. The exclusion of the social chapter will bring us positive advantages in crucial export markets.

My hon. Friends the Members for Chingford and for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) said that we were already suffering from the effects of the treaty of Rome, and that the exclusion of the social chapter would not make a great difference. First, we are not debating the treaty of Rome——

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I never said that we were already suffering. I said that the treaty of Rome was empowered to a greater extent by the social policy amendments. We are discussing that treaty because we are discussing amendments to it and there may be a link with the European Court of Justice because of the route that we are choosing to take. Elements of the social chapter may have to be introduced. I was not saying anything else.

Mr. Milligan: I understand my hon. Friend's argument. In his speech, he said that there is a danger that the European Court might interpret the phrase "greater economic and social cohesion" in a way that would be unfavourable to this country. I believe that that phrase has little meaning. One could say that there was a danger that the court could interpret anything to mean something that we do not want it to mean, but we must work on the assumption that the treaty says what it means.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): It is precisely for that reason that I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that the treaty is riddled with socialist engineering and social philosphy. The cohesion funds, which are clearly stated in the treaty and which we are subscribing to, are nothing more or less than socialism in every conceivable respect. Does he not agree that, for that good reason, we have no reason to sign up for many of the provisions in the treaty?

Mr. Milligan: For once, I would entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Yes, the treaty contains social engineering —the social chapter, which we have opted out of, and which we are discussing. If by social engineering he means the phrase greater "economic and social cohesion", then he is reading far too much into it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Milligan: I shall not give way again. I hope that Conservative Members can ally on that issue because we are all agreed that the social chapter, the social charter and the social protocol are damaging to jobs in this country and I hope that we can all find ourselves in the same Lobby on that issue.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): May I begin by declaring an injury, Dame Janet? I have a sprained ankle, but it was caused not by a hostile Euro-sceptic but by an over-enthusiastic Hampstead dog. It means that my speech will be very short and, with your indulgence, I shall have to stand while taking interventions because it is too painful for me to sit down.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Of course, we understand and will waive the usual rules where there is an injury—but not for anyone else.

Mr. Radice: Thank you very much, Dame Janet.

On the Conservative side, the debate has been an argument between the anti and pro-Europeans about whether the social chapter is excluded from the treaty and whether it will be watertight, rather than a debate about the advantages of the social chapter, which says something about the modern Conservative party. I think that I may safely predict that, if either the Heath or the Macmillan Governments had been negotiating the treaty, we would have had the social chapter. Only the modern Conservative party would have opted out in such a way, which says something about what has happened to that party.

Although the social chapter is outside the treaty, it is very much part of the system that the treaty sets up,

[Mr. Radice]

because member states, except for the United Kingdom, accepted that social progress for people is as important as the free movement of goods, services and capital, and that is a good principle.

As the President of the Commission, Jacques Delors, rightly said, no one falls in love with the single market. If one wants a European Community which has the support of the people it must have a social dimension. Indeed, the Government recognise the force of that argument, because they are slightly worried about it. I have heard the Minister who is responsible for European affairs saying that the Government are in favour of the European Community having a social dimension. However, when they are offered the prospect of one, they opt out, and that is their problem. Other countries are in favour of the social dimension.

I sometimes think that Conservative Members cannot have read the social protocol.

Mr. Duncan-Smith *indicated assent.*

Mr. Radice: I am not sure whether I shall continue to carry the hon. Gentleman with me.

What is so terrible about article 2.1, which states:

"the Community shall support and complement the activities of the Member States in the following fields:
—improvement . . . of the working environment to protect workers' health and safety;
—working conditions"?

What is wrong with that? Are they against it? Are they against having more

"information and consultation of workers"?

Are they against more

"equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work"?

Are they against

"the integration of persons excluded from the labour market"?

They should tell their constituents if they are, because we did not hear anything about that during the general election.

Conservative Members may be against those issues on which the Council will act unanimously, which are

"social security and social protection of workers; protection of workers where their employment contract is terminated; representation and collective defence of the interests of workers and employers."

Perhaps they are worried about them.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman and I are standing at the same time; let us hope that we will still be at the end of the Committee. Although many Conservative Members approve of the protections to which the hon. Gentleman just referred, we object to being told by Brussels how to provide them. The matters under consideration are much better dealt with locally, at the factory level, by management and trade unions or employees.

7.30 pm

Mr. Radice: I am grateful for that intervention, because it allows me to say that the purpose of the social protocol is to establish minimum standards. It does not lay down how certain things should be done, or how far matters should go. It establishes minimum standards.

The old canard is that that protocol will apply to pay, the right of association, the right to strike or the right to impose lock-outs, but those matters are specifically excluded from it. It is about time that Conservative Members who talk so much about the protocol actually read it, because that would be very useful.

Mrs. Currie: Someone in France who is trying to keep a business going and to employ people may want to reduce his work force when times are difficult, but he finds that it is almost impossible to make people redundant in such circumstances. What happens is that the entire business must close and everyone has to be made redundant. Many business men who are running small companies feel that that is one of the reasons that the French unemployment rate is much higher than our own. One of the reasons why we object to that rule and to such a minimum standard is that it does not improve working conditions but reduces the number of jobs available.

Mr. Radice: I know that the hon. Lady has connections with France, but so do I, and I do not believe that the situation is as she describes. It is true that perhaps one or two employers complain about certain minimum conditions being imposed upon them, but those complaints are heard across Europe. If we are to have a decent Europe, we need to impose some minimum conditions. [HON. MEMBERS: "Who is 'we'?"] The European Community.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, within the European Parliament, the European People's party is in favour of the social chapter? That party includes many Conservative Members of the European Parliament. Apparently they are enthusiastic about the proposals, and they have expressed their views through the EPP.

Mr. Radice: The hon. Gentleman has made an extraordinarily good point and his hon. Friends should dwell upon that, because they are the odd ones out. The Christian Democrats of Europe do not share Conservative Members' extraordinary view about what should happen.

Mr. Wigley: I should not like any credence to be given to the point made by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). Therefore, it is important to draw attention to article 2(2) of the protocol, which states:

"directives shall avoid imposing administrative, financial and legal constraints in a way which would hold back the creation and development of small and medium-sized undertakings."

Mr. Radice: It is a pity that the hon. Lady was not listening, because that was a devastating riposte to her intervention, which I wish I had used. However, I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has drawn our attention to it.

The second argument in favour of the social chapter is that of the level playing field, which was put extremely well by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). The argument is simple: if one has a level playing field for goods, services and capital, one needs a single labour market with common employment conditions. It is about fair competition. The other European countries accept that, and they do not see why we should try to gain a competitive advantage in a morally repugnant manner.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Is my hon. Friend aware that it is the stated intention of some of the larger firms that, if it comes to lay-offs, they will lay people off in this country first—precisely for the reasons outlined by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South—because that is so much easier given our employment conditions?

Mr. Radice: That is a telling point.

The Government reject the argument for the social dimension—in practice if not in theory. They also reject the level playing field argument, because they have a particular model of the future Britain. They want it to be the sweatshop of Europe—the country and the economy that employs cheap labour and is unregulated. That argument was well put by Lord Ridley, who wants us to be the Hong Kong of Euurope. It would not be a good model to follow, because it is morally reprehensible and is doomed to failure. I do not believe that we would be able to compete by offering cheap labour in comparison with other countries. If we have a future, it is as a high-wage, high-tech, high-quality economy. That is the way in which we can compete. We would not be able to compete by adopting the model that has been put forward by those on the Conservative Benches—it is unattractive, and it is doomed to failure.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The hon. Gentleman is making a persuasive case and it may be of interest to him, taking both sides of his argument, to know that one of the subsidiaries of one of the largest companies in this country has just closed a factory in Taiwan and reopened it in Manchester. I am rather in favour of repatriating jobs from abroad.

Mr. Radice: So am I, but I do not know the circumstances of that decision. I should like to consider it more closely before deciding whether it proved the hon. Gentleman's case or mine.

One or two Conservative Members argued powerfully that the opt-out may not prove to be watertight. As the hon. Member for Chingford sadi, the Maastricht treaty has reformed and amended the treaty of Rome and it could be used to introduce the elements of the social protocol. I know that that possibility has been denied by the Minister, but that serious point must be considered. In any case, the other countries will not allow us to continue to retain our advantage over them. It is no good thinking, therefore, that the existing social protocol, with our opt-out, will survive. When one has private conversations with Ministers, it is interesting to note that they share that view.

Mr. Dykes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way while still standing up, which he has done courageously. He is well known as a good European and a fair-minded parliamentarian. Without embarrassing him, I should like to commend his excellent book on attitudes in Britain towards foreigners. It has done a great service to the Community, and I hope that more people will read it.

The hon. Gentleman has sought to compare our attitude to the treaty with that of other countries. He also said that the hon. Member for Copeland made a good speech—that is his opinion, but I do not believe that it is shared by those on the Conservative Benches. Was he not shocked by the reaction of his hon. Friend, who represents the official Opposition, to the extremely important constitutional and technical point made by my right hon. Friend the Minister? He said that, if the Opposition amendment were carried tonight, it would not be possible for us to ratify the treaty. No Foreign Office Minister would say that unless he had been given expert constitutional advice from his officials at the Department.

In riposte to that point—and in anticipation thereof, almost—the shadow spokesman on foreign affairs made an astonishing assertion, about which I am still shocked —as, I am sure, is the hon. Gentleman, as a fair-minded person. The hon. Member for Copeland said that all the other member states—presumably he had consulted them officially through their Governments, because there would be no point consulting their opposition parties—would be quite happy with the procedure he had outlined of slipping back into the treaty, once the amendment had been passed. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is totally impossible, impracticable, and unacceptable constitutionally? Will the hon. Gentleman comment on that matter, which is just as important as all those flaccid assertions?

Mr. Radice: The hon. Gentleman is trying to create an alibi for why he will not be voting with us. I know that the Government are trying to obtain support among possible doubters because they know that they are vulnerable on the amendment. I do not believe that it would be impossible to devise a mechanism to which we could quickly adhere, particularly as all the other countries are so enthusiastic for us to join the protocol, were it passed.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: In line with what I said earlier, if within the body of the treaty that is judiciable by the European Court of Justice, there are areas where the social provisions can be introduced because the intention of the majority of nations exists, does the hon. Gentleman agree that what others refer to as general language in titles II and III, can now be seen as specific and clear?

Mr. Radice: I agree with that. Might that not be one way forward were the amendment to be carried? It might be one way in which the Commission and the other member states could move to ensure that we were able to adhere to the social protocol—I do not know. Given that everyone is in favour of it, I do not believe that it would be impossible to devise such a mechanism. The European Community is good at devising such mechanisms, provided that there is a consensus.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Radice: Yes, but this must be the last time, as it is not fair to other hon. Members who wish to speak.

Mr. Paice: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, as I have tried to intervene several times.

I refer to the level playing field that the hon. Gentleman described and his belief that, in one way or another, the rest of the Community will not allow us to get away with the treaty as it stands. The protocol is only a framework of objectives. It clearly states that directive regulations will have to follow from it. Some 13 months have already passed since the treaty was agreed and, in that time, the recession has deepened throughout the Community in different ways.

The belief has become much stronger, not only among industry in many parts of the Community, but among politicians in the Community, that overweening social legislation in the labour market is counter-productive and that much of the protocol may never happen. By the time that the Commission brings forward the directives and regulations that it envisages, the attitude may have

[Mr. Paice]

hardened, so that many of the other 11 member states will then be saying that the protocol seemed a good idea at the time, but they do not want it now.

Mr. Radice: I do not know whether that that will be the case. If it is, what is so terrifying about our amendment and the social protocol? As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, it merely lays down some general principles. That is why some of the Conservative propaganda has been so incredibly exaggerated. The Government know perfectly well that the protocol sets down principles. The hon. Gentleman should have a word with Tory central office to tone it down.

Mr. Paice: Has the hon. Gentleman ever tried to do that?

Mr. Michael Spicer: I want to be absolutely clear about what the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has said. Am I right in thinking that he will be voting for amendment No. 27? I imagine that there are reasons why he may not wish to do so.

Mr. Radice: Of course I shall vote for it. The hon. Gentleman is being ridiculous. *[Interruption.]* With great respect, Dame Janet——

The Second Deputy Chairman: It strikes me that the hon. Gentleman is in order.

7.45 pm

Mr. Radice: The hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) made a foolish point—I know that it may be important to him. If we can persuade him to vote with us, I do not mind on what grounds he does so—I want him to vote with us.

I shall give some advice to the pro-Maastricht Conservatives: if they wish the Bill to have a swift passage, they should vote for the social chapter. One of the unattractive parts of our political system is its divisive nature. There is a pro-Maastricht majority in the House of Commons, but the Conservative Government have prevented that majority from emerging because they have not been prepared to take the Opposition with them. That contrasts with what has happened in Federal Germany, where the Social Democratic party has been consulted by the Government, the Christian Democratic Union. SPD concerns about the treaty have been taken into account and brought together into a national consensus.

That has not happened in this country. On the contrary, on almost every occasion the Conservative Government have been divisive and tried to gain party advantage out of the European issue. That was a great mistake, made to the detriment of this country. I appeal to some Conservative Members—who freely offer their advice to Labour Members—that if the Government will not take the action, it is up to the pro-European Conservatives. They also have responsibilities and if they are so keen on Europe, they should vote for the amendment—not tonight, but soon.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The hon. Gentleman has made an interesting point about the process of opposition and government. Is he attributing the frequency with which the Opposition change their mind on Europe to that process?

Mr. Enright: The Minister is at it again.

Mr. Radice: Exactly—the Government try to make party advantage. I am not trying to do so. It would be a refreshing change if, for once in the Committee, the Government did not try to make party advantage. Perhaps we should follow the example set by the anti-Europeans—at least they do not make advantage out of each other. The two sets of anti-Europeans get together. It might be a good idea if there was more consensus among those who support the Maastricht treaty.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

The Second Deputy Chairman: I think that the hon. Gentleman has concluded his speech. I call Mr. George Walden.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I have to make a convoluted point. It will probably come out in a simple way, because when I try to make a simple point it comes out convoluted. My speech has to be convoluted because it was designed for yesterday's debate on culture, but I must mentally switch it into the context of the social chapter.

The social chapter symbolises why the Maastricht treaty is misconceived. There is no escaping the fact that social legislation, as conceived in countries like France and Germany, is of a broadly corporate nature. I am not making a party political point, as I believe that the French, who have a completely different tradition from this country in matters of state, society and politics, have every right to that corporate tradition.

The French have every right to take an entirely different approach to matters of culture, as we discussed yesterday. That approach is, broadly, from the top down. That is true of the social chapter, where everything is regulated among the workers, employers and state. That is fine by me. I certainly do not want to deprecate that country, partly because I love it, partly because what the French do is up to them, and partly because they have not been unsuccessful in many spheres. However, our tradition—and those of some other European countries—is not the same as the French tradition.

I believe that I know not only where the social chapter of the Maastricht Bill originated but where other sections originated: in the fertile minds of some extremely intelligent, estimable, social democratic rather than socialist Frenchmen. They have every right to conceive of their Europe, but they have absolutely no right to thrust it on us. I draw a careful distinction between what can and does work in continental countries, with their distinct traditions, and what will not work in this country. Indeed, it is undesirable that it should work here, because it is not our way of thinking or the way that we do things, whether in social matters, in culture or in education.

I am not demonising Mr. Delors, who I know and greatly respect. I used to discuss these matters with him in the 1970s. He and his then party—he was a social democrat, but moving to the socialists—had a vision of Europe. They were frank about it. They wanted a socialist France—a certain idea of France, as they put it—and to extend it to other countries. Socialist Spain and Italy were to be part of the Community, as was Britain, which at that time also had a socialist Government. It was a social democratic and socialist political vision.

Mr. Radice: Of course the treaty is supported by social democrats and socialists throughout Europe, but we would be the first to say that it is not all our own work. It is rather absurd to suggest that the treaty comes entirely from the mind of Mr. Delors. There are other important forces in favour of the treaty, especially the Christian Democrats and the group to which the Conservative party in the European Parliament belongs. They support it because it is in their tradition.

Mr. Walden: The hon. Gentleman makes his point. I accept that I am dealing, of necessity, in generalities because we are discussing 12 different countries and many different cultures, which is the problem with the treaty. Geenerally speaking, the social chapter, as with so many other chapters—indeed, the whole treaty—is misconceived because it attempts to do the impossible and the undesirable.

I shall give one concrete example of why it is impossible and to show my enormous flexibility of mind on this matter. The social chapter says that there should be worker representation. Who in their right mind could be against that? We could not possibly be against voluntary worker representation, agreed within the firm with the bosses. That is something that the Tories have successfully encouraged, escpecially in small firms. Rather than having things imposed by unions, people get together around a table and sort them out for themselves.

That tradition has been alive and well in Germany for many years. It has functioned well and has helped the Germans. However, it has happened against an entirely different social and historical background from that which, unfortunately, prevails in Britain. Let us face it: we go back to the 18th century and class animosity. That is why I am strongly opposed to the imposition of worker representation within our antiquated union framework.

Mrs. Currie: I am glad that my hon. Friend has made the point that he, like me, is opposed to the compulsory imposition of such rules. Does he accept that those wonderful labour relations laws in Germany have had one significant effect—that its unit manufacturing costs for similar products in similar businesses to those in the United Kingdom are twice as high there as they are here?

Mr. Walden: I am pleased that my hon. Friend made that point because it leads on naturally to another point, which I shall make later.

This chapter of the treaty, like many others, pushes co-operation in Europe way beyond what is necessary or desirable. The end result will be to weaken Europe, and that is what really worries me about the Bill. Maastricht will impose impossible strains and confusions on Europe that will work against cohesion and co-operation and, in the longer term, give rise to the sort of nationalism to which we are all opposed.

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) asked how anyone could be against improving the working environment. No one is. However, I invite him to meet a constituent of mine, Mr. Alf Baxendale of Cementone in Buckingham, and discuss with him the pile of papers that he has that tell him, for example, how many cans of paint his employees can lift at one go. If the Commission were given more powers in that area, there would be a great deal more of that sort of thing and the lives of Mr. Baxendale and many other employers, both small and large, would become impossible.

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend's assertion mean that he rejects the health and safety regulations, which are very strict on such matters, that are already either implicit in or built in to the treaty?

Mr. Walden: No. I gave an example of how bureaucratic matters can get out of hand under existing legislation. I strongly believe, as do the Government, that they would become farcically out of hand if the social chapter was accepted and the Commission was thereby given even more scope to interfere in the affairs of Mr. Baxendale and other employers.

I recognise the fact that the Government have opted out of the chapter. They may say that that therefore weakens my point about it being symbolic of a misconceived treaty, which is the way that I regard Maastricht, but there is a limit to how many chapters from which the Government can opt out. The Maastricht treaty is littered with parallel problems to those of the social chapter, culture, which we discussed last night, being one.

We must not forget that it has been only during the last couple of years that we have decided, possibly wrongly, to have a Minister responsible for culture. Why? It is because we have a wholly different approach to culture from that of other countries. In France, the Culture Minister is one of the top Ministers, active across the board. That does not mean that that makes France worse than Britain. France has Beaubourg. I quite like Beaubourg and I quite like the way France does things, but I would not want to emulate it either in cultural or social matters. That is what is wrong with the treaty; it tries to homogenise all sorts of cultures —economic, cultural, social and so on. That cannot and should not be done—*[Interruption.]* Before my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) gets carried away, I shall deal with her point and develop it.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The hon. Gentleman is talking rubbish. When I was a Minister I negotiated several directives. I found that most of the countries were doing much the same thing at the same time. We agreed directives which did not thrust things down other people's throats but which involved harmonisation.

Is the hon. Gentleman saying that people in the north of Italy who speak German will have homogeneity forced on them? Surely, whatever people's language or culture, they should have cultural rights as they move around Europe. That is the current problem in the former Yugoslavia, where people have not learnt to live with the different rights to religion, language and script within one large continent.

Mr. Walden: The hon. Gentleman has two problems —one of language and one of logic. If he can think of no better criticism than to say "rubbish", perhaps he should study the education section of the treaty.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that European Governments were doing all these things in parallel anyway. My whole point is that there is no need artificially to harmonise them and that it could be dangerous to do so. Most sensible things are already being done by broadly sensible countries under the impetus of their own social needs. Therefore, generally, the hon. Gentleman has been making my point.

8 pm

I come back to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South—competition. While we are discussing the Bill, whether education or culture yesterday or the social chapter that will not go through because the Government will not accept it today, many things are happening in the world. We have Iraq, Bosnia and a new American President. All sorts of things are happening in the world, while we are wasting the time of the House and the Government, wasting the efforts of Europe and dissipating the international influence of Europe by this introverted, nit-picking nonsense that the treaty represents.

While we are discussing the social chapter here and how, from the Opposition's point of view, we will put up and regulate the cost of British and European business even more thereby stifling competition, what, to choose but one example, is happening in southern China? Shanghai had a 20 per cent. growth rate last year. One may not like the regime—few of us do; I do not—but we will have to contend with what is going on there in a big way during the next few years.

I talked to one business man recently who told me that he bought not complicated but good lathes from Shanghai for less than the price of the components in Britain. That is the sort of thing that we in Britain and Europe will have to face. Meanwhile, the Opposition and Europe are talking about ways to put even greater trammels on our industry and impede its competitiveness even more.

Mr. Enright: Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that we should be putting our wage levels and human rights on a par with the southern Chinese? If so, I would deny absolutely everything that he said.

Mr. Walden: What does one say to that sort of remark? It is so silly. I was trying to make a perfectly serious point. If the hon. Gentleman is asking me whether I am in favour —my God, how boring and laborious this is—of British wages and working conditions being the same as those in Canton or Shanghai, guess what the answer is—no, I am not. Satisfied?

I think that I have just about said everything that I wanted to say.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend will have heard our right hon. Friend the Minister telling colleagues, "It doesn't matter. It isn't going to happen. Let's vote for it anyhow."

Mr. Walden: I am perfectly serious when I say that the best thing that could happen for Britain and Europe would be for Maastricht not to happen. What concerns me, and where I sympathise strongly with the Government, is that I do not want any sort of overt clash with Europe, British isolation and all the rest of it. What I would like to see is the treaty run slowly and decorously into the sands.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I hope that the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) will pardon me if I do not directly follow his argument—convoluted or otherwise, although in the end it came down, as he said at the beginning, to the simple proposition that we are different. It is a proposition which is often heard on the other side of the argument.

It is said that we in Britain are different and unique and do not have the same social and economic culture, so things like Maastricht will not work. I do not agree with that, but I return to the social chapter, which has produced as much confrontation between the two main parties as anything else in the Maastricht treaty. Labour has been consistently, firmly and solidly in favour of it, and the Conservatives have been equally consistently, firmly and solidly against it.

In many ways, I rather agree with the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), who made what we would all agree was an excellent contribution. It seems that the confrontation is rather out of proportion, because the social chapter in the treaty of Rome—which, after all, is the basic treaty to which we adhered in 1973—is not that different from the social chapter in the Maastricht treaty. Much of it is exactly the same. Article 118 of the treaty of Rome clearly states that the Commission will have the task of promoting close co-operation in

> "—employment,
> —labour legislation and working conditions,
> —occupational and continuation training,
> —social security,
> —protection against occupational accidents and diseases,
> —the law as to trade unions, and collective bargaining"—

and so on, and so on.

That has been the position since 1973. In some respects, the Maastricht treaty limits the treaty of Rome in the social sphere. The social chapter of the Maastricht treaty states that it seeks

"the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions, proper social protection, dialogue between management and labour, the development of human resources".

It also mentions the need to

"take account of the diverse forms of national practices, in particular in the field of contractual relations, and the need to maintain the competitiveness of the Community economy."

I find it difficult to understand what everyone is getting so worked up about. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) quoted article 2, paragraph 2 of the Maastricht treaty which says:

"the Council may adopt, by means of directives, minimum requirements for gradual implementation"—

and so on. One finds pretty well the same stuff in the treaty of Rome. It says:

"The Commission, on a proposal, may, acting by means of a qualified majority vote . . . minimum requirements for gradual limitation."

All the stuff about equal pay for men and women is practically the same in the treaty of Rome as in the Maastricht treaty. Therefore, I find it difficult to understand why there is such a noise about it. Quite apart from the plain arguments about right and wrong—to the hon. Member for Buckingham I would say that in politics simple arguments about right and wrong are often the most potent——

Mr. Walden: Does the hon. Gentleman mean that the simple answer to my argument is that he is right and I am wrong?

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes.

The Liberal Democrats position on the social chapter has been clear and sustained. In our manifesto at the last election, we stated:

"We will renounce Britain's social chapter opt-out and argue for a more flexible framework of social policy across the Community. The EC should set down minimum standards of health and safety and employee rights, leaving national governments and enterprises to decide how to meet them."

That, broadly, is what one finds in the social chapter.

For Liberals, the Community must have a social dimension. We could not believe in anything other than a

Community which accepts the need to set down basic standards for workers' rights in the form of a social chapter, although there can always be legitimate debate about the precise nature of its content. It is a wide area within which there are bound to be disagreements about ways and means.

At the end of the 20th century I find it extraordinary to listen to Conservative Members portraying social policy as a handicap. An hon. Lady who has just disappeared—I do not know her constituency, but certainly she does not believe in tailoring her dress to her political view, because she was attired in bright red—spoke, in a telling phrase of "shedding the shackles of social policy". Others said that the social policy would reduce our competitive capacity. That was the argument used by mine owners in the last century to justify sending little children down the mines.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would contain himself. Indeed, it would be greatly to the benefit of all hon. Members if he contained himself more often. Nevertheless, I will give way to him. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not too many times, please."] Unfortunately, I believe that one of the good things about the Chamber is the way in which hon. Members can interrupt each other, and the fact that hon. Members are not allowed to get away with saying certain things—although that creates risks for me sometimes.

Before I give way to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), let me finish what I was saying. It is extraordinary that we should consider ourselves so different—perhaps it would be more appropriate to say "so backward"—that we cannot contemplate introducing the same protections and conditions for workers as France, Germany the Netherlands or any other Community country. I consider that nonsense.

Mr. Cash: I was intrigued—especially in view of the hon. Gentleman's party's historical background—to hear him refer to workers' conditions, and to the days of child slave labour. Disraeli laid enormous emphasis on the requirement for proper social conditions: that was one of the key factors that led to his great Administration, and the One Nation group in the Conservative party has always taken him as its mentor. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a respectable Conservative tradition that runs in the same direction as his argument?

Sir Russell Johnston: If the hon. Gentleman is saying that there are respectable Conservatives as well as non-respectable Conservatives, I agree. Many Conservative Members—unlike the hon. Gentleman—support the Maastricht treaty; many Conservative Members of the European Parliament support the social chapter, and the whole concept of social cohesion in the Community. One feature of the Conservative party is that much of its policy can be ordered à la carte. I suppose that that has certain advantages.

Both the hon. Member for Copeland and the Minister of State, in several interventions, raised the possible effect of removing the protocol on social policy on ratification. That is relevant to amendment No. 27. I must be frank: although I do not think that it will create any dilemma for us, there is no point in pretending that that is not a possibility, and I therefore feel that it should be addressed directly.

From the outset, the Liberal Democrats have made their reservations about the Maastricht treaty well known. It is not perfect; it does not advance the Community in the federal direction that I favour. Nevertheless, we believe that the treaty must be ratified. Its rejection would strike a severe blow at both European integration and the overall stability of the continent. It was for that reason that, amid much criticism, we voted with the Government during the paving debate.

I shall not rehearse the details of our argument; basically, we acted as we did because we believed that it was necessary to progress to consideration of the Bill. Although it is true that the Government were busy using that debate as the means for a vote of confidence for their supporters—and, to an extent, the Opposition—the fact is that, had they lost, they would have engineered a genuine vote of confidence the following day and, with the support of the Euro-sceptics, they would have remained in office.

Our priority, now as then, is not to keep the Government in office—pleasant and amiable though the present Minister may be—but to bring about genuine progress towards the earliest possible ratification of the treaty. I see no reason for us to change that stance. Like the hon. Member for Copeland, we have taken legal advice on the impact of cancelling the United Kingdom's opt-out from the social chapter on the other 11 member states and the Community's procedures. The advice that we have received from our partner Liberal Democratic parties in other European countries, and in the European Parliament, suggests a consistency of legal opinion across a number of countries which is at variance with the views expressed by the Government—and, indeed, by the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) in various interventions.

8.15 pm

Our advice suggests that, while such a cancellation would theoretically require a new intergovernmental conference, might theoretically require re-ratifications and —in the event of an intergovernmental conference—might result in other member states' calling for additional changes to the treaty, making that the excuse that would lead to, as it were, a bleeding of the accord, such a consequence seems most unlikely. All the other member states have accepted the social chapter, and a decision by Britain to adhere to it would present them with no political problems. After all, they have already tried very hard to persuade us to do so.

There is a precedent. In 1972, when Norway decided not to join the Community, the text of the Act concerning the conditions of accession and the adjustments to the treaty had to be modified. Theoretically, that required an intergovernmental conference; in practice, however, it was implemented by a simple Council decision—an ordinary Community legal instrument, binding in its entirety on those to whom it was addressed.

The problem is here, in this country. It lies in the Government's well set out but inflexible position—I do not suggest that they have deceived anyone—and the way in which a defeat of the United Kingdom opt-out would affect them. Such a defeat certainly seems possible, even likely. It does not require a high standard of numeracy to work out that, if Labour and the Liberal Democrats combined with the nationalist parties—and probably the Irish—the Government's fate would rest on the decision of the dissident group within the Conservative party: the

Euro-sceptics. Although in the past—and, indeed, during this Committee stage—many of them have been extremely vocal in their condemnation of the social chapter, their priority is clearly the defeat of the Bill, and I am sure that they would not hesitate to cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war.

The Euro-sceptics would vote for the social chapter not because they support it, but in the belief that it would provide a means of preventing the treaty's ratification. But would it? That is the central question. If I were persuaded that ratification would be impossible if the protocol on social policy were removed, it would not be inconsistent for me to vote against amendment No. 27—no more inconsistent than our support on Second Reading for the Bill minus the social chapter, or our support for the Government in regard to the paving motion. If the United Kingdom does not ratify the treaty, it will collapse, and with it the new social chapter. As I have said, however, I do not believe that we are facing that possibility yet.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman, as, indeed, is the whole House. It will not surprise him to learn that I consider it unlikely that any Conservative Member would find it possible to support the social protocol; that, however, is a matter for my hon. Friends.

The hon. Gentleman knows that the social protocol is an integral part of the treaty of Rome. We shall be party to that protocol even if the arrangements of the 11, which are attached to it, do not apply to the United Kingdom. It follows that if the amendment were carried, United Kingdom law would not conform to the provisions of the treaty so we could not ratify it. Thereafter, an intergovernmental conference would have to take place.

The hon. Gentleman may not have been present when I mentioned this before, but when the Irish Government were confronted with a technical point on a protocol relating entirely to abortion—one which did not affect any other member state's ability to ratify—they were denied the opportunity of a 30-second intergovernmental conference to make that amendment, because other member states feared the consequences for the future of the treaty if a new intergovernmental conference were held.

It is true that under article 236 of the treaty of Rome, once an intergovernmental conference has taken place to amend the treaty, the amendment

"shall enter into force after being ratified by all Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional rules."

Whatever disagreements we may have about the direction in which we wish the European Community to go, I think that there will be common ground between me and the Liberal Democrats we should not wish to subject the Community again to the six months through which the Community has recently lived—the Danish and French referendums and other demarches. Therefore, I was pleased to hear what the hon. Gentleman said, and I hope that he will continue to reflect on these issues.

Sir Russell Johnston: I have nothing to add, but my only comment on what the Minister said is that the advice we have thus far been given does not accord with what he said. However, I shall consider it carefully.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Where does the hon. Gentleman's party stand—will it vote for or against amendment No. 27?

Sir Russell Johnston: I have just told the Committee, and there is no point in repeating myself. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to speak to the Committee.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I apologise for having been absent for an hour—I was in Committee Room 19 addressing a European teach-in for the Bermondsey Conservative Association. That explains my absence, although I have been here for the rest of the debates.

Not for the first time, the Minister of State has put us in a difficult position. We know that he is a difficult person, but people like me, who are worried about the implications of the Maastricht treaty and horrified about the decision not to allow the people to have their say, were astonished to hear the Minister say at the beginning that if this amendment, proposed by the Labour party, was to be accepted, it would not be possible for the Government to ratify the treaty. That leaves us in a difficult position.

Until I heard this debate, I was inclined to abstain in the vote, because all the nonsense about the social chapter and the great debates between our two parties are basically bogus. Conservative Members are telling their constituents that, if the social chapter is accepted, the red brigade will take over, trade union laws will be changed and we shall again have a red revolution in the United Kingdom. However, Labour hon. Members are saying that, if we do not have a social chapter, British workers will continue to be ground into the dust by the nasty employers because we shall not have the right to protect them.

I appreciate that, although those words were not used in the excellent speech of the Labour Front-Bench spokesman, in Essex Labour supporters have been saying that openly, even in places such as that represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). Such views have, to some extent, been reflected in today's debate.

It was made abundantly clear in two excellent speeches by two of my younger hon. Friends—one of whom was the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin)—that the debate is based on bogus rubbish. It is clear that a huge amount of legislation relating to social affairs has already been passed. If hon. Members were wise enough to go to the Library, they would find a long list of trade union legislation and legislation on the rights of people which has already been passed.

For example, under the social action programme of the European Community, as of 1 May 1992, of the 50 proposals contained in the programme, 38 have been published and, of those, 21 had been agreed. They relate to a wide range of matters affecting the rights of people, the rights of women and opportunities for employment.

Let us consider the astonishing 48-hour week directive. Baroness Thatcher must be appalled that part of the Single European Act for which she fought so hard—I voted against it because I was doubtful about it—is being used to promote that directive. As some hon. Members may know, yesterday I asked the Minister of State, Department of Employment what we are going to do about it because it is being implemented under the, health and safety conventions of the Single European Act. I was told that, if the directive remained unchanged, the Government would consider going to the European Court. Most of it has already been discussed and agreed, including the remarkable paragraph which states that French bakers should be exempt from the 48-hour week but that British

bakers should not. When I inquired why that had been agreed, I was told that it was part of the bargaining process.

Two facts have emerged. First, it is almost certain that the 48-hour week directive would be supported by the European Court if the Government were to challenge it —that does not seem to be in doubt—and we are bargaining like mad to get something which is broadly acceptable. Therefore, if the Minister considers it absolutely terrible and frightful, he should think again, because most of it will happen anyway.

The Minister may ask why, if that is so, did anyone bother to include that particular protocol? The reason why the social chapter was wanted was basically one of presentation. The European Community is constantly increasing its power. The court, the Commission and some of the members who do not scrutinise measures adequately are adding to its powers all the time. The sad fact is that today we have not heard one example of the type of legislation which might be introduced under the social chapter but could not be introduced under existing legislation. Therefore, the whole argument is bogus. It will not make a great difference whether we have a social charter.

I wish that hon. Members would have the courage to face what is happening. We must remember that articles 2 and 3 of the treaty will add enormously to the legislation on which the European Court can rule as being relevant for the European Community. We should also not forget the possibility that the exclusion of the United Kingdom might cause problems in fair trading across frontiers. Some of the legal people whom I have consulted and who have written me letters have said that a case could be made for saying that we are in breach of that aspect of the treaty. However, that is pretty irrelevant.

Whether or not we have a social charter will make precious little difference. The social charter excludes many areas of activity about which particular concern has been expressed. If Conservative hon. Members are doubtful about the dangers of current legislation, they should consider the details of the 48-hour week directive, which is horrifying.

There is always the possibility—although I would not suggest that it might be true—that the Minister of State is wrong in saying that, if we have a social chapter and get rid of the protocol, we must therefore scrap the treaty. I do not say that because he is in the habit of being wrong, but Ministers can sometimes be badly advised when they have to give urgent advice. However, if what he said is correct, we would have another opportunity to consider the issue. If the amendment were passed, we still have Report stage during which issues can be reviewed.

The Minister should be aware that there is a large groundswell of opinion in the Conservative party—it has been supported by two excellent speeches tonight—to the effect that, sadly, the process has been going through, is going through and will continue to go through under previous legislation. The social chapter will make precious little difference.

8.30 pm

However, tonight hon. Members will have to vote on whether we want to promote the ratification of Maastricht. I would love there to be a referendum for the people—but I know that if I so much as mention the word I shall be told that I cannot talk about that because it will be discussed later.

As the Minister of State has said clearly and precisely that if the social chapter is included we cannot ratify the treaty, hon. Members will appreciate that that is what we shall be voting on tonight. Having made that idea abundantly clear, the Minister of State may want to say now that it is not as simple as that. The Government may wish to say that, because of the uncertainty, there may be a case for allowing the people of Britain to make up their minds for themselves. As always, the Minister of State endeavours to be helpful to all hon. Members. He tries to put facts clearly and precisely before them, but he should be aware that although it is nice and pleasant when he makes the position so clear, in doing so he has created problems in the minds of hon. Members such as myself.

I do not want to give additional powers——

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) agonising. Over the years I have heard him agonising quite a lot. What he is saying is interesting and valuable to the House, but may I make it clear that, because of the rules of order, we shall not vote this evening on the crucial issue over which, rightly, he is apprehensive. We shall reach the vote on amendment No. 27 at a much later stage. However, I endorse the hon. Gentleman's apprehensions, and welcome his support, if such support is possible, for amendment No. 27.

Sir Teddy Taylor: That is the problem. I appreciate that we shall not vote on amendment No. 27 tonight. We are all aware of that; we try to follow matters—although I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. But how does that help us? It will make it more difficult. We shall have to talk to more people. We shall have to talk to our constituents and tell them that we are in an impossible position. We have voted against giving extra power to the EC—and extra cash, too. As the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) is well aware, the proposals concerned involve giving more cash to Europe—more European expenditure. In my view, that is wasted money and jobs in Britain will be destroyed.

All the examples that we have seen of the EC spending money—the common agricultural policy, among other things—have destroyed jobs and wasted money. It would be infinitely better if all the EC expenditure plans, subsidies, seminars and all those great conferences which Foreign Office officials attend, were abolished, and instead we sent aeroplanes to Europe to drop £10 notes at random. The money would be far more effectively directed than it is now.

I do not want the EC to take control of educational and cultural policy, as it does now. I am happy to be a Conservative and to say that the EC wastes money on fraudulent schemes.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: To help my hon. Friend to develop the argument whether, if the amendment were passed, it would destroy the process of ratifying Maastricht—that is an important concept to establish—may I add that the protocol would simply allow the other 11 countries which signed it to use the administration of the EC after Maastricht is ratified to put those arrangements into effect? If that connection were broken, the process of ratification must come to a halt. There would then have to

[Mr. Duncan-Smith]

be an immediate intergovernmental conference, because the whole set-up would have to be reconfigured and pushed back out for ratification. That is quite clear; most legal minds would come to that conclusion.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I had been doubtful about what the Minister of State said—not because I doubt him as a person, but because the Foreign Office sometimes says things and then has to revise them. But my hon. Friend's support removes that doubt and that makes my problem even greater.

Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen may laugh at what I say, and they may attribute my actions to all kinds of causes. But I have nothing to gain and nothing to lose from all this. I am a chap who has been here a long time and I have no ambitions. But I have seen more misery, unemployment, and horror in Southend on Sea over the past year than I have ever seen in my life—and I have spent most of my time in this place representing a Scottish constituency. Things are terrible. When I think of the money wasted on the EC, on fraud, and on forcing up food prices artificially; when I think of the horrors of the EC's loss of trade throughout the world, and the way in which step by step it is ceasing to compete in the world; when I think of the growing unemployment, I want to stop more money and more power going to the EC.

As has rightly been said, we have listened to the arguments year after year. In fairness I must say that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is one of the most conscientious Members of the House. He is always here—and he, too, has heard time and again people saying, "Perhaps things are not right. Just give the EC a bit more power. Let them sit round a table and allow them to control things, and somehow things will get better." Instead, things got worse and worse and worse.

Our trade with Europe is getting worse, and the amount that we pay into Europe is growing. The burdens on the poor people of Britain are getting infinitely worse. We must remember that the people who suffer from all this are not Members of Parliament, who have decent salaries and sometimes other incomes, too, but the poor people. It is they who are losing their jobs and cannot get them back. They are paying an extra £17·50 a week for their food, and the £4 membership fee. All this matters a great deal to them.

When the Government introduced the Maastricht treaty, I said, "No, this is wrong—wrong for Southend and wrong for Britain." All kinds of terrible pressures were put upon us, but I said no. I could not care less what they do —I shall vote against Maastricht because it is wrong.

I think that the amendment is bogus nonsense. I do not believe that the social chapter will make any great difference. But then the Minister, supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), who clarified the situation, says that if the amendment is accepted the treaty cannot be ratified. The treaty will be gone; it will be finished and they will have to start again. That gives me hope and expectation. I am delighted that, because of the rules of order, we shall not vote on the amendment tonight, and I hope that all hon. Members will think carefully about how to vote when the occasion arises. They will not be voting simply on the social chapter or the protocol; they will be voting whether they want to ratify the treaty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North made a brilliant speech earlier today, in which he made his position absolutely clear. What he said clarified again the fact that we are dealing with something terribly important and significant. We shall vote on whether we ratify Maastricht.

Fortunately, there are several days, perhaps even several weeks, before we have to make the decision, but I hope that hon. Members will appreciate what they are voting about. We shall not be voting for the nonsense of party propaganda; we shall not vote for those silly Tories who say that red revolution will come from the social chapter; we shall not vote for stupid socialists who say that without the social chapter the employers will take over and screw down the workers. We shall be voting on the ratification of Maastricht. In those circumstances, I hope that all hon. Members will think most carefully and prudently before deciding how to cast their votes.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I should like to address the industrial aspects of amendment No. 7.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) has made a point that is quite different from those made by most other Conservative Members. Most Tory Members have said that the reason for opting out of the social dimension is to protect British industry from the so-called burdens of the social chapter. Another argument has also been used: that if we were to increase the costs of industry, inward investment would probably be curtailed. I think that both those arguments are wrong, and my opinion in that regard is based on my own 25 years' experience in industry and commerce before I became a Member of Parliament. Matters are far more complex than these arguments suggest.

There is also the political dimension, which, in reality, has been excluded for the purpose of holding parts of the Conservative party together during the passage of the Bill. In other words, at the back of all this there is a cosmetic exercise.

The history of the Government's policy for industry, shows that it has been absolutely disastrous. The capacity of British industry has been reduced drastically, and the development of high-tech industries in particular has been impaired by lack of Government help. Investment in manufacturing industry in this country has been very poor, leaving it not only reduced in size but also in many cases out of date. The monetarist views that we had during the 1980s were based on the argument that the return from investment in British industry would be pretty low—3 or 4 per cent.—whereas in other sectors of the economy the return would be far greater. Thus, British industry was largely neglected.

There is no point in Conservative Members' thinking that, if we get an opt-out built into the legislation, nothing else will be needed for British industry. That is wrong. The package that we need is a complex one, but it certainly includes investment incentives. We need a well trained work force, we need people in the right places at the right time, and we need demand in the economy. There is a shortage of good policies for industry.

A good social policy for industry can result in greater profitability. The notion that simple reduction of costs is the only route to profitability is quite often fallacious. Much depends on what sort of industry one is in.

A few days ago, I had a meeting with a number of

directors of BP. Many of the things that the social contract refers to are already done by such companies. They say, "What on earth are Members of Parliament talking about? These practices already exist in most modern, profitable, efficient industries." The assumption—it is one that has been made many times today—is that, on aggregate, low labour costs result in greater profits. That is a highly questionable assumption.

Let us take the high-tech industries. What one needs in the case of computers, information technology networks, and so on—value-added industries that can be highly profitable—is good working conditions and a work force who are well educated and well trained. In addition, there is a need for excellent management so that investment will be sensible and will yield good results. It is absurd to suggest that people working in industry should be screwed down by poor conditions. I suppose one could argue that in some cases—low-tech or no-tech industries—keeping workers in appalling conditions might work. But that is not where Britain ought to go. I want to see development in the high-tech area, which will lead to far greater prosperity and to reversal of the decline that we have had for so many years.

The European market is one of the most sophisticated, and certainly, with 350 million people, the largest in the world, and it provides extraordinary opportunity for Britain. It is nothing short of absurd to argue that the social conditions under which people so crucial to the well-being of the country are employed should be impaired.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Surely the argument concerning the social chapter is about why the Opposition seek to have some other organisation bring in elements of what they want, as they no longer believe that they themselves are capable of doing so, whereas Conservative Members believe that it is for us to take those decisions.

8.45 pm

Mr. Randall: I do not think that that is the question at all. Our future is unquestionably in Europe. Industry, particularly some high-tech industries with very high development costs, including the costs involved in putting out new products, tends to cross national boundaries to a large extent. However, most jobs will be created not in the bigger industries but in the smaller and medium-sized industries. Article 2(2) refers to the directives that will be necessary to implement these social policies:

> "Such directives shall avoid imposing administrative, financial and legal constraints in a way which would hold back the creation and development of small and medium-sized undertakings."

That makes sense; I can live with it.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): Does the hon. Gentleman think that social spending in this country would be higher under the social chapter than it would be if these matters were left to ourselves?

Mr. Randall: I am not sure. The question is whether, if there were higher costs, investment would be profitable. What I am saying is that investment in the types of industry in which Britain desperately needs to be involved in the future could be good. As I cannot assess the scale, I cannot give a definite answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question.

There is, for instance, the question of existing practices. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) made the point that many of these things are under way in any case. I am not fearful of improving the conditions and the productivity of people. Essentially that is what we are on about. We want British industry to be productive. Undertakings that are productive can compete in the value-added areas that, in turn, will create great prosperity.

Earlier there was a reference to China. I was in China a couple of months ago. In the area north of Hong Kong —in fact, throughout China—the aggregate growth rate of that great country is about 16 per cent. Indeed, down in the Hong Kong area it is about 20 per cent. There is no inflation, and there is no great debt. In addition, there is political stability, despite Tiananmen square and all that. But we shall not be competing with those people. As the average wage there is about £1,000 a year, it would be impossible for us to do so. That is out of the question. Our niche is in the high-tech areas where worker conditions, including training, must be enhanced.

I want to say something about inward investment. Today we have heard the phoney argument that businesses —for example, from Taiwan—that want to invest in this country are willing to come only because wages are very low. I do not believe that to be the case. A business will invest in Britain if it can do so profitably. What will determine profitability is the kind of work force that is available, as well as opportunities to market products in this country and throughout the Community. The idea that imposing a social dimension on British industry will result in inward investment plunging is nothing short of absurd.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I was amazed to hear what the hon. Gentleman said a moment ago. He said that, because cost levels in the far east market were driven by the low wage levels there, western Europe and Britain in particular could give up competing with the far east. He implied that we should therefore set up walls round Europe and that we should just dabble around within them. That is the hon. Gentleman's logic, which is the logic of the social provisions. That makes no sense. We are a world trading nation and we should continue to be so.

Mr. Randall: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to draw that conclusion from what I said. I was talking about low-tech or no-tech areas such as textiles—making T-shirts or lace tablecloths—in which there is terrific labour intensity. One can buy such goods in China which are nothing short of exquisite. If we tried to make similar products in a British factory, we could not compete. I do not believe we should focus our attention on such areas.

I regret that during the 1980s, especially when Lord Lawson was Chancellor of the Exchequer, there was a lot of talk about us being, not high-tech or low-tech, but no-tech. We were attempting to compete in that area, which was not what we should have been doing. In that area, one is competing against countries where the wage costs may be one tenth of what they are in this country. It is absurd to contemplate that.

What we should do is co-operate with such countries in joint ventures and work with them on high-technology projects. That is how things work in practice. I will not

[Mr. Randall]

pursue that point in greater depth. I hope that I have undermined the two key points made this evening by Conservative Members.

For the United Kingdom to opt out from the protocol, as amendment No. 127 would require, is wrong. All the elements of the policy are described on page 118 of the treaty, so I shall not attempt to summarise them. Any good business man would naturally and obviously want to implement those elements in practice. Improved working conditions and dialogue between management and labour are essential. If business people are not doing that these days, heaven forbid—they are dinosaurs and do not deserve to succeed. There is a two-way street involving the attitude of the work force as well as the attitude of management. Article 2.2 involves the gradual implementation of all the provisions. The implementation will not be carried out in a way that will inhibit business.

The Government's track record on industry is absolutely appalling. We have heard comments about the abolition of the wages councils. We are the odd ones out in Europe in terms of the implementation of this element of policy, and I regret that very much. I wish that we could all vote for that element of policy when we divide on amendment No. 127. That would be for the well-being of this country, for the well-being of our industrial base, for the well-being of the people and for prosperity in the future.

Mr. Cash: I was somewhat puzzled by some of the remarks made by the Minister of State about the implications of the matters we are discussing in the context of ratification of the treaty. In considering the nature of the opt-out purportedly given to the Danish Government and people, it struck me that enormous emphasis was given to ensuring that a system is devised by way of the so-called "informal" decision which would preclude the necessity for ratification. I mentioned earlier that Chancellor Kohl had made that very point. Apparently it has been claimed that ratification would not be required.

The provisions deal with economic and monetary union, among other things, which are most firmly within the aegis of the Court of Justice and appear prima facie to affect the treaty of Rome. There is a serious question—I put it at that level at the moment—about the nature of the distinction made by the Minister of State on the question of ratification vis-a-vis the social chapter on the one hand and the questions I am raising vis-a-vis the Danish so-called "opt-outs" and the issue of ratification as respects the treaty of Rome on the other.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is perfectly clear, not just from the legal advice from the Council secretariat but from the legal advice of the Foreign Ministries of every other member state that the Danish decision is such that it will not require re-ratification. The decision that must be made by Conservative Members has nothing to do with ratification. The decision that must be made is clear.

The social protocol, in a sense, enshrines everything that the Conservative party has fought against and won over the past decade. That is why the Opposition seek to import it into the treaty. The decision for Conservative Members is nothing to do with whether this amendment affects ratification. That is a matter for Opposition Members who claim to be in favour of ratification of Maastricht. Our decision is simple. I think I had better leave it at that.

Mr. Cash: That may be as well. Some of us believe that there are profound and deep strains—indeed rich seams—of socialism which run through the Maastricht treaty. The cohesion funds are one example. I know that my right hon. Friend fought hard to keep them out—*[Interruption.]* He did not try to keep them out. He was obviously encouraging member states to keep them in. None the less, such arrangements are deeply socialist. There are many other aspects of the treaty which correspond to the social engineering to which my right hon. Friend referred just now and which we have been opposing for so long.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is right in one sense—we have had this debate across the Floor of the House on several occasions. Each political party represented here would seek to use the treaty to pursue the same political ends that it seeks to pursue in the United Kingdom. Of course Opposition Members would seek to use it as an instrument for socialism; we seek to use it as an instrument for advancing the policies of the free and open market. As regards this narrow amendment, however—my hon. Friend and all of us on this side of the House must speak for ourselves—it would be extremely difficult for any Conservative Member to justify, in relation to our own party and to the basis on which we have conducted ourselves for the past decade, supporting the amendment moved by the Labour party.

Mr. Cash: I am simply making the point that I made just now about the European People's party, into which our own Conservative MEPs are subsumed by the agreement made on 11 April 1991, with the chairman of the Conservative party writing to Wilfried Martens, requesting membership, and clearly stating that the request for the incorporation of Conservative MEPs within the membership of the European People's party had the full support of the Prime Minister, no less; it could bear some examination in this context. As I understand it—I am open to correction—the European People's party, so closely related to Egon Klepsch and all these worthy Christian Democrats——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I had hoped to have an evening when I would not have to call the hon. Gentleman to order, but what he is saying has very little to do with the social fund or the amendment before us.

Mr. Cash: The Minister of State was making a point about the question of our party——

The Chairman: Order. The Minister of State was replying to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Cash: The question of what this particular provision does in respect of the political decisions that we make on the Government side of the House can be put very simply. That is what we are talking about. The European People's party has this view. It is a view shared by the Christian Democrats. I recall a conversation in June or July 1990 with an eminent Conservative who told me that, in the context of matters of this kind, it would be as well for people such as myself to understand that we lived somewhat in the past, that what we required now was a

grey man's Europe, something administrative that we could just deliver, and that this would be in the interests of everyone in the United Kingdom. I remember that conversation very well. Perhaps the Minister of State remembers it too.

9 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend has given us the view of Mr. Egon Klepsch and the European People's party, but he will agree with me, will he not, that there is no doubt about the view of the Conservative party in the United Kingdom in this matter?

Mr. Cash: Without a shadow of doubt, so far as we are tied into the European People's party, as we are, it presents serious questions about the extent to which one can serve two masters.

Mr. Biffen: If my hon. Friend is going to conduct this valuable task of evaluating the range of opposition to and support for the social chapter, one should put on record the fact that in this Chamber my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) has regretted that the Government have not signed up for the social chapter.

Mr. Cash: I am indebted to my right hon. Friend for reminding me of that extremely important statement, and I am delighted to know that it is now well and truly on the record, because it tells us a great deal about what is going on.

Mr. Jenkin: Am I not right in saying that the National Union of the Conservative Party, or some other Conservative party body, accepts as an appointee a representative of the European People's party, which is committed to a federal Europe?

Mr. Cash: Yes, and that body is very determined to see a federal constitution brought in.

I want to get back to amendment No. 27. It would be misleading to describe this protocol as an opt-out for the United Kingdom from the social chapter. The whole thing works differently, because the social chapter is not part of the Maastricht treaty; instead, it is a separate agreement between the other 11 member states. In fact, the United Kingdom is not actually a party to it, and deletion of the protocol would not make the United Kingdom a party to it.

The effect of the protocol is simply to allow the other 11, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) pointed out in an intervention, to make use of the Community institutions for administering their social agreement. The effect of the protocol is therefore that the 11 would no longer have permission to use the Community institutions for the administration of their social agreement.

There are further and wider effects of carrying the amendment. I see the Minister of State shaking his head, but—before another distinguished lawyer tries to develop an argument in an intervention—I am sure that he will appreciate that many of these matters depend on interpretation. Indeed, the extent to which the provisions of the social charter as they apply to the other 11 and the relationship of those provisions in law to what we have already acceded to under article 118a and so on of the Single European Act needs to be considered in this context. For example, the 48-hour working week has already reappeared in another guise, notwithstanding the fact that it is supposed to be a part of the social chapter.

I have asked Ministers, not over the past few weeks but repeatedly, even when the process was being negotiated, why we did not get these matters sorted out by amending and improving the Single European Act, as I have said with respect to many other provisions in the Maastricht treaty, in advance of the conclusions that were arrived at which have led to the difficulties that I see the Minister of State and the Government suffering from in respect of the social chapter.

Had we, for example, given ourselves the power by negotiation, or at least sought to give ourselves the power, to challenge what are blatantly ultra vires arrangements in respect of provisions in the Single European Act by procedural means such as an action for a declaration—I have repeatedly put this to Ministers—we could have avoided all the difficulties of subsequent interpretation when everything has been sewn up. We could end up with only a hope that we might be able to manage to get a little bit of a concession out of the argument at the end of the day. By the use of the existing powers, but without the opportunity to challenge them in the courts, we are put in an impossible position. That is effectively where we stand in this matter.

If article 118a within the Single European Act is used, in respect not merely of the 48-hour working week but of a range of other matters, we will find precious little difference between what is contained in the extended use of the existing legislative base and what is in the social chapter, anyway. My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford has already made that point.

If the amendment were agreed, the other 11 member states would no longer have permission to use the Community institutions to administer their social agreement. They would need to amend that agreement to set up their own institutions separate from the Community institutions, and the Maastricht treaty would almost certainly need to go back to an intergovernmental conference.

Much of the enthusiasm that I have heard from Conservative Members and, to some extent, from Opposition Members has come from that group of Members of Parliament who believe in what I generally describe as Disraelian politics. I have always been a great devotee of Disraelian politics. I have always believed in the social dimension. Indeed, even in the early 1960s I belonged to an organisation that was almost entirely devoted to the memory of Disraeli, for a very good reason.

There is nothing incongruous in having policies that are a mixture of some of the liberal policies of the late 19th century—the desire of people such as Bright to ensure that people in factories had proper conditions, and Disraeli's determination to improve the lot of trade unionists and people working in deprived circumstances in factories. In fact, Bright and Disraeli worked out a relationship—effectively a coalition—to ensure that the Reform Act 1867 went through. That Act gave us our democracy, and it is being undermined by the treaty. I profoundly believe that provisions of the sort in the social chapter have a resonance for those in the Conservative party and the One Nation group.

Mr. Wells: Can my hon. Friend explain the result of his arguments tonight? As I understand it, he said that article

[Mr. Wells]

118a, which was agreed in the Single European Act, will introduce a large measure of legislation of the sort that he anticipates under the social protocol dealing with the social chapter.

Is my hon. Friend arguing that we should include the social chapter in the current treaty because we will get it under article 118a or that we should embrace what our negotiators in Maastricht tried to do, which was to exclude the social chapter, so that we can put a stop to the events under article 118a which my hon. Friend and I resent?

Mr. Cash: I simply say that the provision, as with so many other provisions in the treaty, is like looking in a hall of mirrors. It relates to interpretation, assertion and whatever appears to be the sort of gearing and spin that people want to put on it at a given time. I am left with the severest doubts about the arguments that have been presented on the subject over time. I remain as doubtful about those arguments as I could be about anything.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My hon. Friend will remember clearly that, when the Single European Act was going through this Parliament, we were given reassurances about matters that would not be affected by that Act and the advantages of it to the United Kingdom. Sadly, experience has shown, as it did with the 1972 proposals, that the outcome is different from what we were told in debates. That is why we are cynical today.

Mr. Cash: We have the continual problem of the shifting sands of argument and interpretation on these matters. I conclude simply by saying that one constantly finds that the arguments are distorted by the hall of mirrors, just as I find with the provisions of the treaty.

The same sort of confusion and uncertainty are created by our finding that the argument is put forward based on a good interpretation of the provisions in the social chapter by Ministers for the purposes of the United Kingdom, the Conservative party and its representatives in Parliament. The people whom I strongly supported when I was campaigning in the European elections in 1987 and who have joined the European People's party, adopt completely different positions. One cannot serve two masters. That is the point on which I am happy to conclude.

9.15 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): The first thing that needs to be said about the social chapter is that it contains nothing new in principle. Sometimes, when one hears Conservative Ministers talking about the social chapter, one would think that it contained agreements dreamed up by the Labour party and the Trades Union Congress over beer and sandwiches. But the European Community has always had a social dimension. That social dimension was clearly set out in the treaty of Rome. The Community has always sought to balance the centralising tendencies of the single market by protecting the interests of individuals directly affected by it.

Therefore, it is not surprising as we debate the social chapter today that the European Community, as it moves steadily towards the completion of the single market, should seek to strengthen the social dimension. I am almost tempted to say that such a process is historically inevitable, but I suspect that I had better not.

I assume that the Government agree with articles 117 to 122 of the treaty of Rome. They contain a series of social provisions. Article 117 says:

"Member States hereby agree upon the necessity to promote improvement of the living and working conditions of labour."

Article 118 calls for close co-operation in employment, labour law and working conditions. That also includes vocational training, social security, prevention of occupational accidents and diseases, occupational hygiene, the right of association and collective bargaining between employers and workers. That is all in the treaty of Rome. It is not a bad summary of what can be found if one looks at the detail of the social chapter. It has all been decided and agreed before by Conservative Ministers.

Even as recently as in the Single European Act, the Government accepted the competence of the European Community to introduce new European legislation dealing specifically with social issues. For example, article 118A of the Single European Act deals with new legislation on health and safety. Once again, the Government were happy and comfortable in approving European Community competence on social matters.

A fundamental misunderstanding by the Government of the implication of the Single European Act has got them into their present difficulty with the social chapter. The Government failed to appreciate how close was the connection between the creation of a single market and the consequential social protection that every other European country sees as the inevitable consequence of that single market.

Article 100A of the Single European Act was deliberately drafted to cover

"the establishment and functioning of the internal market."

That is not only the rules required to create a single market, but the consequences of that single market. In the context of the social chapter, it means the consequences for people. The social chapter simply sets out in more detail the consequences of that single market as it affects individuals throughout the European Community.

It was perhaps only when the Government woke up to those consequences and to what they had agreed in the Single European Act that Margaret Thatcher, as she then was, started being difficult. When the Heads of Government signed the Community charter of the fundamental social rights of workers in December 1989, only the United Kingdom Government found it impossible to accept a list of fundamental rights affecting freedom of movement—something to which the Government had already agreed by accepting the treaty of Rome—employment, working conditions, equal treatment for men and women, the protection of children, protection of the elderly and protection of the disabled.

I am sure that, if hon. Members tried to draw up a list of worthy causes, they probably could not do any better than the social charter. It would be difficult to imagine a set of people more deserving of protection and assistance. Yet, way back in December 1989, the Government found it impossible to accept that list, which forms the basis of the social chapter.

My argument therefore is that the list in the fundamental charter is already extensively covered by existing obligations under the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act and has been accepted by all the other European Community Governments—

Governments of the left, coalition Governments of the centre and Governments of the right—not once, but on a number of occasions.

Why do the Conservative Government in the United Kingdom find it so difficult to go along with the views of their parliamentary allies in the European Parliament and their political allies on the continent? The German Christian Democrats have been among the most enthusiastic supporters of the social chapter, as has every other major political party on the centre right of the political spectrum in the Community.

We have heard a great deal from the Conservatives about their commitment to Europe. We also heard a great deal about it when the Conservative Members of the European Parliament joined the European People's party. Tonight there has been some discussion of the fact that it is okay for Conservative Members of the European Parliament to support the social chapter because they are part of the European People's party in the European Parliament and it is permissible.

It will be interesting to find out the position of the Conservative party during the next European elections, which are not too far away in June 1994. The Conservatives will put up candidates and clearly they will be asked for their view of the social chapter. What will be the answer? Will they say that Conservative Members of the European Parliament have consistently supported the social chapter in that Parliament and that therefore it is okay to vote Conservative, or will they give the answer that we have heard this evening—that the Conservatives are against the social chapter and that they will all vote against it? They cannot have it both ways and say in the House that they are against the social chapter, yet allow their Members of the European Parliament to vote in favour of it consistently.

Mr. Wells: I venture to suggest that the difference between the hon. Gentleman's view and that of the Conservative party is not that we disagree about making certain that the social conditions of the workplace are properly conducted and that there are fair wages and working conditions, but that we believe that those matters should be determined at national level—or perhaps not even at national level. We believe, as the Labour party used to believe, that they should be settled between an employer and an employee, represented by his trade union and by free collective bargaining. What is at stake is whether such matters should be determined at supra-national level, disregarding the cultural and local conditions that apply in the workplace and make for harmonious management-worker relationships. It would be disastrous to lay down laws on such matters at international level.

Mr. Hoon: I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman would deal with my argument about the apparent discrepancy between the views of Conservative Members of the European Parliament and their counterparts here.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Hoon: To be fair to the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), I should try to answer his question. The answer can be found in the documents that I mentioned: the treaty of Rome, the Single European Act and the social chapter, which does not achieve what the hon. Gentleman suggests. The social chapter does not prescribe all the terms and conditions affecting relations between employers and employees, but seeks to set out a framework, which is guaranteed at an international level. As more multinational corporations operate throughout the Community, the need for consistent standards will become inevitable. That was the point of my earlier argument. If we have a single market, it must regulate activities across all that market, on behalf of employees and businesses. That is the point of the social chapter.

Mr. Wells: When the Single European Act was introduced, we thought exactly as the hon. Gentleman describes: that it contained general statements of intent which would be settled in detail at local as well as national level. What has happened is that enthusiasts in the Community have, time and again, extended the meaning of articles 117, 118a and so on to which the hon. Gentleman referred. It was at that point that my colleagues and I on the Select Committee on European Legislation and others began to smell a rat and say that we should halt and go no further. We cannot agree to the social charter, and therefore we cannot agree to the social protocol.

Mr. Hoon: The difficulty with the hon. Gentleman's argument is that the enthusiasts to which he refers are the European Commission. It has the sole right of initiative to make law. There are two British Commissioners, one of whom is a Conservative, and they and their colleagues are responsible for putting forward legislative proposals. Those proposals are then discussed in the European Parliament and, ultimately, a decision is taken by the Council of Ministers—a Conservative Minister is, at all times, a member of that Council.

We are not talking about an alien body trying to impose things on the United Kingdom, but such is the language often used by Conservative Members. We are talking about Britain playing its full and effective role in the creation of the single market.

I had always assumed that Conservative Members saw the benefits of the single market in terms of benefits for business. They must accept, however, that it follows that those benefits must be extended to all those who work for those businesses. One cannot simply say that one will take advantage of the single market in favour of businesses and will not extend those benefits to their employees.

Mr. Bill Walker: I sought to intervene earlier when the hon. Gentleman drew attention to the fact that it would seem that Conservative Members of the European Parliament are not always in tune with the policies of the British Conservative party and Government. Can he reassure me that Labour Members of the European Parliament have always supported Opposition Front-Bench policy?

Mr. Hoon: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. In any political party there is a range of views, but I am sure that he would agree that there is something different between occasional disagreements over policy and something as fundamental as the social chapter. After all, his Government spent an extraordinary amount of time and invested too much political capital in opting out of the social chapter. They clearly thought that it was important and that it was in the national interests, as we have heard over and over again. In June 1994 the Conservative party will ask people to vote for its candidates in the elections to

[Mr. Hoon]

the European Parliament and I do not think that it is unreasonable for people to ask what those candidates stand for. They should know whether they stand for the policies of the European People's party or for those of the Conservative party of the United Kingdom.

The Chairman: Order. I do not think that electioneering comes under the terms of amendment No. 7.

Mr. Hoon: I was temporarily carried away by the enthusiasm of Conservative Members.

There is a difference between the attitude of continental businesses and Governments to the social chapter and that of the British Conservative Government. We have been told tonight and on countless previous occasions that the reason why the British Government are so keen to opt out of the social chapter is that it makes British business uncompetitive. Why is it that German, French and Italian companies appear to have no difficulty in accepting its provisions? There is no pressure on the Governments of those countries to opt out of the social chapter, but many of them are what we would describe as Conservative ones —they are supposed to share the philosophy of the British Conservative party. The reality is that those European businesses recognise the practical advantages of the social chapter to their operations. They know that without the guarantees of basic standards of social protection, their businesses could be fundamentally undermined in a single market by the deliberate driving down of such standards. Multinational corporations could play off one country against another.

German companies know full well that in a truly single market there will be a temptation for capital to move to those countries where the costs of business are lowest. That might well mean—*[Laughter.]* Conservative Members should hear my argument before gleefully seizing on the point that I am making. At present, the costs of doing business are lowest in countries like Greece and Portugal, where wage rates and standards of social protection are significantly lower than elsewhere in the Community.

9.30 pm

The German Christian Democrats—the political allies of the Conservative party—have accepted those arguments. That is precisely why they are so much in favour of the social chapter. They know that if one allows capital to move to countries like Greece and Portugal, the only way in which it is possible to compete for such investment is to continue the spiralling down of standards that that would necessarily involve. It caused some glee among those on the Government Front Bench when I made that point, but I think that British people would be interested to know whether the policy of the British Government in opposing the social chapter is designed to drive down levels of social protection, wages and the benefits available to employees to the levels that pertain in Greece and Portugal.

Is the argument against the social chapter that we want to compete for inward investment by reducing standards and wages to make us the cheapest place in Europe to do business? If that is the argument, it should be spelt out more clearly than it has been. If the Government want to turn Britain into an offshore economy, they should say so clearly. If they object to the social chapter because they want the lowest social standards in Europe because, at present, conducting business here is more costly than in Portugal and Greece, it is incumbent on the Conservative party to say so clearly.

Some support for the Government's position has occasionally come from employers' organisations. We have heard such organisations cited in the arguments of Conservative Members. Those organisations claim that it is impossible for them to meet the cost of the social chapter in the United Kingdom, but those same organisations—often the same companies—have operations in France, Germany and Italy. The same companies that complain bitterly that, in the United Kingdom, they cannot afford the social chapter, can apparently afford those costs in Germany, France and Italy. I have never been able to understand the difference and why it is that a multinational corporation can cheerfully apply the standards of the social chapter in Germany, Italy or France, but not in the United Kingdom.

We are witnessing the creation of a double standard, which means that those same multinational corporations, when negotiating terms and conditions with their work force on the continent, adopt a different approach from that which they take with their work force in the United Kingdom. Such a double standard will create significant legal confusion among the contracts of employment of those in the United Kingdom and those elsewhere.

The Government's refusal to accept the social chapter creates a curious legal position. By refusing to endorse that section of the Maastricht treaty dealing with the social dimension, the other 11 countries gave themselves an option. They could accept that, because they could not obtain unanimity on that part of the treaty, it should disappear. If some of the arguments made earlier were correct and there is already a groundswell of opinion on the continent against the social chapter, presumably those other countries would have decided that if all 12 member states could not agree to the social chapter, that part of the treaty should fall. However, that has not happened.

In agreeing to the social protocol, those countries demonstrated their determination to make that part of the Maastricht treaty law. They went to the trouble of agreeing a protocol that bound 11 member states rather than all 12. They need not have done so. In the past, they would probably have quietly abandoned the process. If the arguments made earlier in today's debate were true and there was real opposition to the social chapter, those countries should have done that. Instead, 11 countries, rather than all 12, agreed to bind themselves under the social protocol.

What does that mean in practical legal terms? It is that those 11 countries can make legislation under the terms of the protocol which will be binding and effective in those 11 member states. Presumably, it will not be binding or effective in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Garnier: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, despite the fact that the social chapter will be enforced only in the 11 countries that have agreed to it, if our Parliament thought that the principles in the social chapter would be good for this country we could pass a Bill to incorporate them into British law? Just because we have not agreed to the social chapter at the same time as the 11 other countries does not mean that we are forbidden to introduce similar domestic legislation. I am sure that the

hon. Gentleman would support such legislation, although we might disagree about forcing it on this country. His argument is based on a false premise.

Mr. Hoon: I accept that the Government could introduce such legislation, but that would rather defeat the purpose of opting out of the social chapter in the first place. If the Government intended to do that, presumably they would do so through the institutions of the European Community. That is what the other 11 member states wanted and expected the Government to do.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): If what the hon. Gentleman says is true, can he explain why Sir Michael Agnus of the CBI has said that 60 per cent. of all inward investment into the EC during the past 10 years has come to this country precisely because we do not have the sort of rules and regulations favoured by the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Hoon: That argument cannot be sustained on any rational basis. The figure of 60 per cent. has not been worked out in any sensible way. The hon. Gentleman misses the point of what the single market and the European Community is all about. It is not about inward investment to one member state; it is about creating a consistent legal approach across the Community. The Conservative party has argued enthusiastically for the creation of the single market because it says that it is good for the very business described by the hon. Gentleman. Conservative Members cannot claim that somehow or other, because it is good for business, those benefits should not be extended elsewhere. That argument has caused the Conservative party the greatest difficulty. It failed to understand the implications of the single market for those self-same businesses, many of which have operations thoughout the Community.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I want to clarify what I said earlier. I meant to say that 60 per cent. of all Japanese and American inward investment in the Community came to this country. Is it not a fact that if we are to compete as an advanced western economy and if we are to create the maximum number of jobs, which I am sure the hon. Gentleman and the Labour party want, we must have a high-productivity and high-wage economy? The only way to achieve that is by reducing the barriers of trade, not by increasing them, which is what the social chapter would force on this country.

Mr. Hoon: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I want this country to be an advanced western economy. My concern is that by objecting to the social chapter on the ground that we want to reduce the costs of employing people—which is really the argument—we will not become an advanced western economy because we will be competing with poorest countries of western Europe and, indeed, the world. How will we develop the training, education and skills required if the Government are constantly preoccupied with driving down the standards that we need to improve if we are to become an advanced western economy?

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): It is clear that there is concern about competitiveness. This country is nothing like as strong and as competitive as it should be. There is an obvious contradiction in the Government's policy. They felt that they could not accept a social chapter that would raise costs for British industry —that is inevitable as it would lead to an improvement in working conditions—because at the time they were committed to a fixed exchange rate and therefore could not make any alteration in relative costs by allowing the exchange rate to adjust itself to increasing costs. Is not that the real reason? Therefore, now that the Government have abandoned the exchange rate mechanism, surely their whole argument in favour of not accepting the social charter has collapsed.

Mr. Hoon: As ever, I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. However, I suspect that if I were to answer his question fully and talk about the exchange rate mechanism, you, Mr. Morris, would rebuke me once again for straying from the subject of debate. Therefore, I shall resist that temptation.

I have talked about the Government's double standards. They have consistently argued against the creation of a two-speed Europe. But, in conclusion, I invite right hon. and hon. Members to consider the legal regime that has been created in the EC as a result of opting out of the social chapter. We shall now have a two-speed Europe where other countries will be able, by virtue of the social protocol, to move ahead more quickly to protect their employees and their people, passing legislation that will apply in 11 of the member states, creating in the process not simply a two-speed Europe but a two-tier Europe with two separate legal systems within European law, one for Britain and one for the remaining members of the EC.

If Conservative Memberrs are puzzled about that argument, I shall develop it a little. Presumably, when new European law is made under the social protocol, it will bind only the 11 member states that have signed the social protocol. They will pass new legislation which will become binding within their own jurisdictions.

If there is then a legal dispute over the interpretation of a new directive or regulation, whatever it happens to be, the European Court of Justice will ultimately be responsible for interpreting EC legislation. Its decisions are binding on all EC member states by virtue of the treaty of Rome. Its decisions are binding on the United Kingdom by virtue of the European Communities Act 1972.

European Court decisions are usually a synthesis of a variety of different European legal materials. They will look at the treaties, at regulations and directives and at decided cases. They will then interpret the new directive under the social protocol and try to reach a decision on the case before them.

But in reaching that decision, where do we in the United Kingdom look for our case law? Do we look at all European Court decisions that do not involve the social protocol and say that that is European law in the United Kingdom, or do we look, as lawyers on the continent will look, at all the European Court decisions?

How can the Government agree when there are two separate legal jurisdictions? How do we decide what legal protection is available to citizens of the EC when there are two different standards based on the interpretation of legislation made under the social protocol? It is legal and constitutional nonsense to suggest that that can occur, but that is the reality of what the Government have achieved by opting out of the social protocol.

Mr. Marlow: One reason why hon. Members are told that they should agree to the Maastricht treaty is that, if

[Mr. Marlow]

we do not, and there is no Maastricht treaty, the other 11 will put their own Maastricht treaty together, excluding us. The the United Kingdom is a signatory to the treaty of Rome, which will still exist. Therefore, there cannot be a Maastricht treaty of 11 against the treaty of Rome, for exactly the same reason as the hon. Gentleman is putting forward.

Mr. Hoon: That is really the argument that I was developing in the specific area of the social protocol. There will be legislation under the social protocol which will be interpreted by the European Court of Justice, which will produce decisions. I invite the Minister when he replies to comment on the British Government's position. What exactly will they do when a case is decided by the European Court of Justice that has implications——

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Would it be out of order to be put in a position of knowing what sort of discussion is currently going on with respect to the procedures that are being followed in the House and the movement towards the 10 o'clock motion——

The Chairman: Order. The Chair is not interested in movements in the Chamber, as long as they do not interfere with what goes on between the Chair and the hon. Member who is speaking.

9.45 pm

Mr. Hoon: I have talked about the position of a citizen on the continent who is concerned about the implications of the social protocol, or legislation made under it. It follows, however, that a United Kingdom citizen—working, perhaps, for a multinational corporation, with counterparts in other Community countries—might feel understandably aggrieved if his or her rights in relation to the employer were significantly different from those of employees in exactly the same position, in a country that had agreed legislation under the protocol.

Dr. Godman: It appears that the European Court of Justice, in terms of the Maastricht treaty, will have the jurisprudence to deal with precisely such complaints. An individual citizen will have the right to take his or her Government to court—a domestic court, that is—if he or she, and his or her legal advisers, believe that the Government concerned are failing to protect his or her interests.

Mr. Hoon: That, to date, has been the position in principle and it will remain the position until the Maastricht treaty and the social protocol come into force. But what will happen if a new directive is agreed under the social protocol and the United Kingdom citizen feels that his or her rights may be covered by that protocol? If we advise such people to take their cases to the European Court of Justice, the Government are likely to tell us that they are not bound by the directive. Clearly, the rights of United Kingdom citizens will be second rate in comparison with those of continental citizens.

Mr. Shore: That being so, is not it almost certain that appeals would be made to the European Court and the British position would be undermined?

Mr. Hoon: Unfortunately, I am not in a position to answer for the Government. I doubt, however, whether the Government will concede that, if a United Kingdom citizen takes to the European Court a case based on a directive passed under the social protocol, the case can be decided by the European Court on the basis of that directive. The Government will say, "We opted out of the social chapter and did not sign the social protocol; therefore, the European Court of Justice has no jurisdiction in this case."

Dr. Godman: May I put the social chapter to one side for a moment and refer my hon. Friend to directives established under the aegis of article 118a of the Single European Act? Surely such directives would allow an individual citizen, or a trade union, to take the Government to the European Court.

Is not it interesting that, in all his interventions, the Minister of State has chosen to ignore the growing power of the European Court of Justice and the power that is to be given to it?

Mr. Hoon: The Government have not opted out of article 118a. They cannot do so now; they accepted it when they signed up to the Single European Act.

My hon. Friend has made a fair point. It is interesting to note that article 118a will cover much the same areas as the social policy protocol in the treaty. Further interesting confusion will result if the citizen whom I have described challenges a directive under the social protocol. What will be the Government's reaction? In most cases dealt with by the European Court of Justice, not just one case or directive is cited, but a series of cases or directives. How do we disentangle the part of the European Court's decision which is outside the social protocol from that which is inside? How will it work in the United Kingdom?

The Government are creating a confused legal situation and are undermining the constitution and coherence of the European Community. They claim to be at the heart of Europe, but they are doing fundamental damage to the coherence of the Community; they have confused its constitution and are now producing a confused and confusing legal situation. They are failing in their duty to United Kingdom citizens.

Mr. Garnier: I begin by referring to an issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan). The amendment and those who support it are in essence seeking to do nothing other than destroy the treaty. I am sure that I shall be corrected if I am wrong, but I believe that one must ratify the treaty as a whole or not at all.

Now that the negotiators have provided the House and the country with one treaty to be considered as a whole, it is not open to us to say that we like one bit and not another, that we shall take one bit and leave another. We must consider the document as a whole. The treaty includes the agreement on social policy concluded between member states of the European Community with the exception of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The treaty of Maastricht contains the protocol that opts us out of the social chapter. We must not believe that there is one treaty for the 11 and one for us—it is one treaty. It just so happens—thank goodness—that, having negotiated at Maastricht in December 1991, my right hon.

Friends the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor were able to bring to the House a treaty which does not contain the social chapter.

I assure the House that the textile workers in my constituency are gratified that we shall not have to suffer under the imposition of provisions that may be attractive to the other 11 but which are wholly foreign and unnecessary to us and, I believe, destructive of the economy of the east midlands. By bringing the Maastricht treaty into English law, the Bill provides that domestic decisions take precedence over the social chapter. We do not have to do what the other 11 member states wish to do.

Article 1 of the agreement on social policy states:

"The Community and the Member States shall have as their objectives the promotion of employment,"—

a very fine thing—

"improved living and working conditions,"—

again, very fine aims—

"proper social protection, dialogue between management and labour, the development of human resources with a view to lasting high employment and the combating of exclusion",

whatever that means. It continues:

"To this end the Community and the Member States shall implement measures which take account of the diverse forms of national practices, in particular in the field of contractual relations,"——

Dr. Godman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garnier: I shall finish the sentence. Article 1 concludes its list of objectives thus:

"and the need to maintain the competitiveness of the Community economy."

They are no doubt wonderful objectives, but we have not agreed to them being included in the treaty. However, we do not need to prevent the other 11 member states from agreeing them. It is fortunate for us that we have not agreed to them on this side of the English channel.

Dr. Godman: I ask this question with no hidden motive: was the hon. Gentleman present to hear his hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith)? If he was, he will have heard his hon. Friend say that the European Court of Justice may level out some of the bumps to be found here in the exclusion of the social charter. He suggested that under article 118a individuals or organisations may be able to approach the European Court of Justice to ensure that they are treated similarly to the way in which individuals or organisations in the other 11 countries are treated.

Mr. Garnier: The short answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that, sadly, I was not here while my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford was speaking. No doubt I shall have the advantage of reading my hon. Friend's speech tomorrow morning.

I shall continue to deal with what the treaty actually says. As I said, it must be remembered that the treaty is to be looked at as one document. As far as the United Kingdom is concerned, it does not contain the agreement on the social chapter which the other 11 member states have signed.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The hon. Gentleman read out a list of what he described as wonderful things. Surely that description was not genuine. I reckon that that list contains simple, decent honest aspirations for the working folk of Great Britain. Surely such things should not be described as wonderful; people should be entitled to them.

Mr. Garnier: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said a moment earlier, perhaps he would not have said that. The aspirations that the other 11 countries have agreed should form part of the treaty may well be shared by many British people, for all we know. But the difference between us and the other 11 countries is that I believe that such matters should be decided domestically, not through the Maastricht treaty.

I argue from an unashamedly Tory point of view. I fully accept that the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), being a full-blown socialist—*[Interruption.]*—or a full-blown something else, may well have other views. He may wish the EC and the Commission to interfere in the shape of his doorknobs and everything else. But neither I nor my constituents want the Commission to interfere in domestic employment law or the other matters set out in the protocol.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend accept that much of our health and safety legislation, for example, is extremely good—well ahead of standards set elsewhere in Europe? Would not the Commission and the Council of Ministers be wise to consider the way in which we do things, instead of trying to impose other people's rules on us? Should they not accept that the way in which we do things should be the model for the rest of Europe?

Mr. Garnier: Not only do I agree with my hon. Friend, but I can think of no better person than her to go across to Europe to inform people exactly what we do here.

Mr. Enright: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garnier: May I continue for one more moment?

As I said, my approach to the treaty is unashamedly Tory—and I am happy to say that that was also the approach of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his colleagues at the Maastricht negotiations. What is more, our approach is also one of unashamed British national self-interest. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps we are hearing oohs and aahs from the Opposition because they are ashamed of being British, and rather ashamed of what the Government have done to advance the self-interest of this country.

Paragraph 1 of article 2 of the protocol suggests that

"With a view to achieving the objectives of Article 1",

which I have already mentioned,

"the Community shall support and complement the activities of the Member States in the following fields:

—improvement in particular of the working environment to protect workers' health and safety".

As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has said, the British Parliament has already passed health and safety legislation well in advance of anything we can see elsewhere. Paragraph 1 of article 2 says:

"With a view to achieving the objectives of Article 1, the Community shall support and complement the activities of the Member States in the following fields".

Mr. Marlow *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put; *but* THE CHAIRMAN *withheld his assent and declined then to put that Question.*

Mr. Garnier: I repeat what paragraph 1 of article 2 says:

"With a view to achieving the objectives of Article 1, the Community shall support and complement the activities of the Member States"—

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee to report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

PETITION

10 pm

Noise

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): I am pleased to present, on behalf of myself and my hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice), a petition calling upon this House to introduce new legislation to replace the ineffective enforcement procedures currently operative in England and Wales with regard to noise pollution and nuisance. The petition is from about 4,000 residents of the London borough of Lewisham and beyond, and it states:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House introduce new legislation to establish a new offence of night noise nuisance, accompanied by a minimum fine of £500 for noise nuisance occurring between the hours 9 pm and 7 am, and institute a full review of the practical issues of noise law enforcement, involving local authority environmental health officers and police officers directly involved in noise abatement work and members of groups representing the victims of noise pollution.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Defence Industries (Redundancies)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): British manufacturing industry is absolutely vital to our future if we are to be a successful trading nation. Two recessions in the past decade have caused enormous damage to our manufacturing base, and some of our finest companies have been forced to sack thousands of skilled workers—workers the country can ill afford to lose.

Within manufacturing, the engineering industry in particular has been badly hit. Until recently, one important sector of engineering largely escaped the ravages of the past 13 years—the defence sector, which in many ways represents the very best, the finest, of British engineering, with world-class design, development and production facilities, and with the finest skilled work force of its kind in Europe. Sadly, this vital sector of engineering is now at risk as a result of what I have to describe as the haphazard and random cuts being forced through by the Treasury. These cuts not only threaten huge additional redundancies amongst defence workers but also, I believe, call into question the maintenance of Britain's strategic defence industries and the ability of a future British Government to call upon our indigenous defence industrial base to meet our national defence requirements.

I do not believe that these are exaggerated claims. Redundancies announced recently by defence contractors largely make the point. In recent months we have had the declaration of 4,000 redundancies at Lucas Industries, 3,000 at British Aerospace and the closure of the works at Hatfield, nearly 600 at Rolls-Royce Aero Engines in Coventry, 400 at Marconi Underwater Systems, nearly 1,000 at Cammell Laird, and the closure of one of the finest British shipyards. Some 1,300 jobs have been lost recently at Royal Ordnance plc, 1,200 jobs have been lost recently at Swan Hunter on the Tyne and 400 jobs were recently lost in my constituency at the Vickers shipyard in Barrow.

The list is dismal and it spells misery and insecurity for thousands of defence workers and their families. The combined total of job losses in the defence industries over the past two years reaches the staggering total of almost 80,000.

Let us consider some of the consequences of those redundancies in the defence communities. Some of the findings are truly startling. In my constituency, the consequences and effects of unemployment have already had a devastating impact. The number of people claiming sickness benefit is rising rapidly in my constituency—twice as fast as in other comparable towns in the northern region. The figure has risen by 30 per cent. in the past 18 months. There are almost 100 new claims for sickness benefit every week, which is three times the national average. Stress-related illnesses have risen and the suicide rate has increased fivefold among young men in my constituency. More tranquillisers are prescribed in my constituency than anywhere else in Cumbria.

Why should defence workers be forced to pay the price for the peace dividend? Their contribution to the nation's defence has always been exemplary. Now that the cold war is over—hon. Members of all parties welcome that—it is completely unacceptable that their service to the nation is being rewarded in this way. It is being rewarded by unemployment and ill health, as the experience in my constituency has clearly shown.

The Opposition recognise the need for defence spending to reflect the new security requirements of Britain and of our NATO allies. I am sure that that is common ground between us. My criticism of the Government is that there is no sign and as yet no evidence that they have appreciated the need for strategic planning in phasing down present levels of defence spending or that they have any coherent approach towards dealing with the surplus capacity in the industry.

We may have arrived at the kernel of the problem. It is not true to say that there is surplus capacity in the defence industries. I argue that we now have released capacity. We have under-utilised capacity in this sector of the engineering base. It is tragic that the Government are not able to develop any coherent policy for dealing with the extra capacity in the defence industries. With imagination and resolve, that under-utilised capacity could be saved for the benefit of the United Kingdom engineering and manufacturing industries and, most importantly, for the long-term future of many defence-dependent communities.

Two years after "Options for Change", there are significant redundancies in the defence industrial base of Britain. Major redundancies are still to come. It has been estimated that as many as 125,000 further defence workers will lose their jobs over the next five years. That is appalling. To date, the Government have shown no strategic ability to plan for the future of the British defence industrial base.

There is a real risk that we are coming close to a melt-down. Strategically important British defence companies are shedding workers at an alarming rate. European defence companies are not shedding workers in the same numbers as British defence companies are.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I commend the hon. Gentleman on choosing this subject for his Adjournment debate tonight. He briefly mentioned Royal Ordnance. Is he aware that I have a small arms manufacturing capacity at Radway Green in my constituency? Is he aware that it is a strategically important industry? If the Government do not provide orders for that factory, we shall not be able to manufacture small arms ammunition any more in this country; we shall have to rely on being supplied from overseas. Is he aware of the importance of orders coming to Radway Green so that the factory can plan its production and capacity for the future?

Mr. Hutton: I absolutely agree with the hon. Lady. There is no doubt that Royal Ordnance lies at the centre of Britain's defence industry; it is impossible to imagine an indigenous defence industry in this country without a buoyant and vibrant Royal Ordnance, with sufficient orders and employing the skilled workers in their factories. In particular, I know the importance of the establishment in the hon. Lady's constituency. So we are in complete agreement about the significance of Royal Ordnance and its central role in Britain's defence industries.

It is worth pointing out—I am sure that the hon. Lady is fully aware of this—that there have been more than 10,000 redundancies at Royal Ordnance since it was privatised in 1987, despite significant improvements in

[Mr. Hutton]

productivity and the increased ability of Royal Ordnance to turn orders into deliveries in a short time. I hope to deal with Royal Ordnance in greater detail shortly.

We are in a serious situation. As I have said, we are close to a melt-down, and I stick to that. The British defence industry has suffered significant and heavy losses of its key, skilled industrial work force, particularly Barrow and Furness where we have lost more than 6,500 workers from the VSEL shipyard since October 1990. My understanding of the redundancies from Vickers leads me to conclude that it is the most important and highly skilled engineering workers who are the casualties of the heavy job losses from that work force. It is impossible to imagine shipyards like VSEL and Swan Hunter on the Tyne being able to survive into the next century while sustaining the present high level of redundancies amongst its key industrial workers.

In the context of Royal Ordnance, it is very important that there is a speedy renewal of the ammunition and equipment purchasing agreement. In the past five years, Royal Ordnance has demonstrated its ability to change, and it is worth pointing out that there is full co-operation between the trade unions at Royal Ordnance and the management of the company in trying to achieve some of the new targets facing them in very difficult trading circumstances.

Therefore, I hope that the Minister can give some assurance tonight to the House and to many thousands of workers throughout the country that a speedy renewal of the agreement is imminent because, without it, there is a real fear among the Royal Ordnance work force of further substantial and, I believe, unjustified redundancies. As the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) has made clear, that will result in an increased reliance by the British armed forces on equipment and supplies from foreign contractors. On defence grounds, quite apart from social and employment considerations, that is an extremely unhealthy situation for the British armed forces to find themselves in.

I hope that the Minister can also make some clearer commitment to the House tonight about the state of various important naval procurement decisions that need to be taken without further delay, and, in particular, three decisions that many Opposition Members expect shortly —the launch platform helicopter vessel and the two launch platform docks.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): May I take this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend not just on his selection of this topic for debate on the Adjournment but on the way in which he has addressed the concerns of many people in many constituencies and not just those of his own constituency, Barrow and Furness. Having said that, I make no apology for addressing my remarks solely to Swan Hunter, in my constituency of Wallsend. My hon. Friend referred to the helicopter carrier that we are all aware is a vital order. It is particularly vital to the future well-being of Swan Hunter. Swan Hunter has sought to diversify into the merchant shipbuilding sector but has been denied access to European Community intervention funding; it must, therefore, rely on Ministry of Defence orders.

We know that, for the Royal Navy, the helicopter carrier is a top priority. It is also a top priority for the people of the north-east, and we want an indication from the Minister tonight that the order will be placed as soon as possible, because we are confident that it will be won by Swan Hunter and thereby keep jobs in Wallsend and bring new hope to the riverside communities on the Tyne.

Mr. Hutton: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Swan Hunter shipyard on the Tyne is without doubt a centre of world-class engineering excellence. Many of my hon. Friend's constituents will be anxiously awaiting what the Minister has to say about the landing platform helicopter order.

It is also worth bearing in mind the importance to the Navy and to what is left of the British naval shipbuilding industry of the orders for landing platform docks. That matter is of concern to my constituents, as too is the order for the batch 2 Trafalgars. Many of my hon. Friends and I are concerned that one of the changes resulting from "Options for Change" is the substantial reductions in the number of submarines serving in the Royal Navy. Many hon. Members will be concerned that 12 SSNs—nuclear-powered submarines—might not be sufficient for the Royal Navy in future.

Will the Minister give an assurance that the very minimum order for the Batch 2 Trafalgars will be sufficient to replace all the aging Swiftsure class of SSNs? That is a matter of great and direct interest to the future prosperity of my constituents. Without any doubt, the VSEL shipyard in Barrow is the finest manufacturer of submarines in the world.

In addition to those decisions on naval procurement decisions, there should be some help for companies that now find themselves without any MOD work at all or with declining volumes of MOD work. I have noted the responses that the Minister's right hon. Friends have given in response to questions in the House on this matter, but it is not good enough for the Ministry of Defence to say that it is up to defence contractors to respond to their changing needs on their own without any assistance from the Ministry of Defence or other Government Departments.

Many of those suppliers have provided equipment for the defence of this country, often at very short notice—for example, during the Falklands crisis. It is not the proper reward for the service that those companies have rendered to the country over many decades for Ministers now to say that it is up to those private companies to sort out the problem on their own. Those companies have been sole suppliers for the MOD, often for decades—for generations in many cases, as is the case with the shipyard in Barrow. They therefore look to the Ministry of Defence and, legitimately, to the Government to provide them with practical assistance at this moment.

There is a crisis for many important engineering defence contractors. We simply cannot make many of those necessary changes and adjustments on our own. I ask the Minister to consider seriously that it is not a reasonable response for him and his right hon. Friends consistently to say to defence contractors such as VSEL in Barrow, "You are on your own." People in my constituency do not consider that that is anything like a sufficient response from the Government.

The Minister and his Department should be developing a policy in conjunction with other Government

Departments to manage the painful process of change before irreversible damage is done to the foundations of Britain's engineering defence industries.

10.17 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) for raising this subject and also for giving me a short period—I promise—in which to make one important point. I shall be brief, because the Minister will want to respond to a number of points. The issue that I raise is the state of the royal ordnance factories, and in particular two outstanding contracts which, quite frankly, the Government have dithered over for a considerable period. The first issue is the L106, which is the contract for fuses. Last week, I visited Chorley and Blackburn factories. The management and the work force there as well as at other factories throughout the country are desperately worried. The management of Royal Ordnance factories and their workers and I expect an extremely early announcement. I hope that the Minister is able to respond tonight.

On the L106, if the Minister provides only a contract or a tender for a 12-month period, it will place Royal Ordnance plc at a tremendous disadvantage as it will have to spread the load of reduced expenditure and reduced purchasing over a five-year period at least to avoid the worst effects of the decline in defence procurement for the RAF.

The second and more general issue is an even greater scandal. It is the replacement for the explosives, propellants and related products agreement five-year contract which was placed with Royal Ordnance just after privatisation about five years ago. In other words, for five years the Government have had the full knowledge that the contract will finish in March. Anyone who knows the industry is well aware of the importance of putting a contract out to tender early. Royal Ordnance plc is not frightened of competition.

The contract should be for another five years to give Royal Ordnance the opportunity to compete on an even playing field. It should also be comprehensive, as was the EPREP contract. That would give Royal Ordnance the opportunity to tender for a range of ammunition. If the contract is short term and for specific pieces of ammunition, rather than comprehensive, Royal Ordnance will be placed at a disadvantage to its foreign competitors.

The hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) mentioned the difficulties which her factory at Radway Green will face. There is a reduction in the demand for ammunition from that factory of more than 70 per cent. We cannot possibly expect a Royal Ordnance factory to base its future projections merely on next year's figures. When there is a 73 per cent. reduction in the demand for ammunition and no comprehensive, long-term offer for a range of ammunition over five years is put out to tender, Royal Ordnance will be competitive.

I am sure that I speak for hon. Members on both sides of the House when I say that the Minister should be able to give a definite response to our questions. In one case there have been delays for months. In another case, the Government have had five years in which to decide what they will do. If they do not know now, they will never know.

10.22 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): As is traditional on these adjournment debates, I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) on his good fortune in raising such an important subject for debate today. The hon. Gentleman represents a higher proportion of constituents who are involved in the defence industries than any other hon. Member in the House. He has certainly been a most assiduous and energetic Member in championing their cause in debates and in representations to Ministers.

Some of the points which the hon. Gentleman made verged on the exaggerated and the melodramatic. It was totally uncharacteristic to hear such a tremendous trumpeting, even from the new, modern Labour party, of the need to spend taxpayers' money on defence in the ways suggested by the hon. Gentleman. I should not be surprised. The first time that I heard of the hon. Gentleman was during the election campaign when, with a great flash of excitement, he described the Opposition spokesman on defence as ignorant and ill-informed.

Dr. Reid: Not defence, foreign affairs.

Mr. Aitken: It was the Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs. There was a small choice in rotten apples, as Shakespeare used to say. The particular rotten apple to which the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) was referring was the Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs. On one occasion when the Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs was speaking on defence matters, he got it entirely wrong and was condemned.

One would not think that one was addressing a party which had voted at its national conference for swingeing cuts in defence expenditure which would be equivalent to £6 billion. There is a remarkable difference between the quiet voice in the Adjournment debate of an hon. Member representing defence constituencies and the noisy voice of the Labour party conference bellowing for greater cuts.

Mr. Hutton: Surely the Minister is not saying that I have a quiet voice on such matters. He described comments which I made previously in another context.

Mr. Aitken: I certainly do not accuse the hon. Gentleman of inconsistency. I was simply saying that there are great splits and inconsistencies in the Labour party. I also suggested that there was a touch of exaggeration in some of the language he used.

It is not correct to say that a meltdown is taking place in our defence industries. The hon. Gentleman painted a picture of suicides, tranquillisers and a meltdown. The reality is that our defence industries face difficult times. With the changed security environment, we must reduce our defence budget by some 10 per cent. over three years. That is a serious reduction, but it is not such a dramatic reduction as that with which many other industries have had to cope.

As some compensation for those industries, we have a booming defence export side. British companies are showing satisfactory successes around the world. They now secure some 20 per cent. of the world export market, which is equivalent to about £4·5 billion a year. If one adds together our total domestic defence spending of some £9 billion on equipment and the burgeoning success of our exports at £4·5 billion, that is a £13·5 billion-a-year defence

[Mr. Aitken]

industry, which is a long way from a meltdown creating suicides and the melodramatic scenario sketched by the hon. Gentleman. Having said that, of course there are real problems. Several perfectly valid and fair points were raised tonight and I shall do my best to answer them in the short time that remains to me.

I was asked several questions about Royal Ordnance. In addition to the points made by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) raised a valid point. She came to see me with several of our hon. Friends and made some effective representations, to which I listened carefully.

Royal Ordnance is a fine British company which has been given the benefit of the explosives, propellants and related products agreement for the past few years. I have considerable sympathy with the difficult position that it will face as expenditure on defence equipment reduces by some 10·5 per cent. in the next three years. The force levels on which our planning is based mean that a reduction in ammunition orders is unavoidable.

A rationalisation of the facilities of Royal Ordnance was recently announced by the company. That is a matter for the company, but I have noted that British Aerospace has said that it remains committed to a strategy of extending the scope of its presence in the defence market, with Royal Ordnance playing the lead role in the land systems sector. I am sure that, if Royal Ordnance continues to make good progress in increasing its competitiveness, its products will continue to win orders from both the Ministry of Defence, its domestic customer, and overseas customers.

On the specific question of the EPREP agreement, I informed the House on 8 December that we did not intend to negotiate a successor agreement. The EPREP agreement was acknowledged from the start to be an interim agreement designed to give the newly privatised company a degree of certainty about its future business for five years. That was done so that it could achieve economies by rationalising and modernising its factories. That policy has been successful. It is now time for my Department to move, as was always the intention, to fully commercial arrangements with the company in accordance with our long-standing procurement policies.

To this end, as I said in the House on 24 November, we have investigated the possibility of placing longer-term ammunition contracts. That is the very point which the hon. Member for Motherwell, North raised today. I am pleased to announce to the House that I have decided to follow that route. The Ministry of Defence contracts bulletin to be published on 3 February will include details of a package of ammunition requirements for delivery over a five-year period from 1993 to 1998. I expect that the majority of those orders will be won by competition.

The quest for value for money remains at the centre of our approach, but the longer-term contracts will help to secure the armed forces' sources of supply of key types of ammunition, as well as giving industry and particularly Royal Ordnance much greater confidence and greater opportunities to plan ahead with security. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton and other hon. Members who have raised the matter will be encouraged that we have moved in the direction that they sought.

Next, I was asked about some naval orders. The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) asked me for the current position on the landing platform helicopter, which I acknowledge is of great interest to the fine company of Swan Hunter, many of the employees of which work in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Tenders for the LPH were received by 1 October last year. An announcement of the outcome of the tender exercise will be made following the full evaluation of the tenders received. That is not likely to be before the autumn this year. That is the normal time that it takes to evaluate such major tenders. That amount of time is needed because we must make a proper evaluation to ensure fair competition and best value for money.

I am afraid that it is highly unlikely that the order will be advanced. The LPH is expected to enter service in the second half of the decade.

Mr. Byers: The Minister will understand the importance of the timing of the order. I hear what he says about the need to evaluate properly the tenders that have been received. May I urge him to make haste in evaluating the tenders. It is important to Swan Hunter that the date is brought forward, if possible from autumn this year. Will he give an undertaking that he will at least consider the possibility of proceeding with greater haste in order to bring forward the placing of the order?

Mr. Aitken: I shall consider the hon. Gentleman's request, because it is fair. We have a duty to be fair to other competitors, but I know of the great importance of the order to the shipbuilding industry and to Swan Hunter and we shall do what we can, although I cannot hold out any great hope at this stage of making unduly remarkable, or particularly rapid progress.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): Will the Minister confirm, once and for all, that the Government will definitely make that order and that it will be for a new-build vessel?

Mr. Aitken: No Defence Minister can announce an order in advance of consideration of the tenders and of studying the financial position of the Ministry of Defence's budget at that moment. We have entered into the tender process in good faith and I have no reason to be anything other than positive about it.

I think that I have dealt with the LPH situation. I was also asked about the submarine force, which is of particular interest to the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness, who is the Member of Parliament for the great Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Ltd. As he is aware, the Government are determined that the principles of competition and sound procurement practice will apply to the future order of submarines. We are already planning for the replacement of the Swiftsures and VSEL has completed its contract for design option studies for a second batch of Trafalgars, known as the batch 2 T class, or sometimes B2TC, and we are considering the results of those studies.

Under sound procurement practice we must place a contract with a capable prime contractor and we think that that practice should be applied to the programme. We need and intend to have an adequate submarine force for the 21st century and we envisage the batch 2 Trafalgar class playing a crucial role in that process. We are now evaluating the studies produced by VSEL.

After some sound remarks about shipbuilding and Royal Ordnance, the hon. Gentleman switched to a familiar litany of the need for practical assistance—which decoded, means taxpayer's money—for defence diversification policy. I have to be very cautious and hesitant here, because the swords into ploughshares policy that the Labour party has espoused at various stages is not the business of Government or of taxpayer's money. The question of how we should respond to diversification——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-eight minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 21 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 28 January 1993.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Inward Investment

1. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the levels of investment from abroad in 1991-92.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins): In 1991-92, 430 new jobs were promoted from new green field investment, with negotiations under way on a number of additional projects. I am delighted that announcements about some of these additional projects have since been made and that others can be expected shortly.

Mr. Arnold: Given the unfortunate perception abroad of the situation in Northern Ireland, is not it important that approaches to foreign investors be made on a co-operative and in many ways a joint basis? In view of that, will my hon. Friend comment on the recent initiatives in that regard by the hon. Members of Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) and for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron)?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right. The hon. Gentlemen to whom he refers will know the success of their trip. It highlights the fact that the communities can work together and the importance of investment from other parts of the world and shows that aims that are important to the whole Province can be achieved by parliamentary colleagues as well as those in industry.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister enlarge on his answer? We welcome the 400 new jobs. Were they created by new firms or are the expansion of existing firms? How many foreign investment firms folded in Northern Ireland in 1992?

Mr. Atkins: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a detailed answer to his second question withour prior notice, but I shall, of course, write to him with the details. As everyone is aware, during the recession Northern Ireland, like everywhere else, has had a hard time. Not as many jobs were created in 1991-92 as one would have wished, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that in the latter part of last year and already in the early part of this year good news has been announced. I have hopes of more in the future.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the Minister appreciate the extent of the deprivation and unemployment in my constituency? Does he accept that it will take tremendous Government help and initiative to encourage people from abroad to come to the Province and especially to the west of the Province? Will he assure the House that, to that end, he will give every encouragement and assistance to hon. Members?

Mr. Atkins: Of course, I assure the hon. Gentleman that we will not let up in our attempt to get investment to all parts of Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman will recall that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was in the hon. Gentleman's constituency recently and I have fond memories of that visit there. I shall continue to do my best not only for the hon. Gentleman's constituency but for all the Northern Ireland constituencies.

Mr. McGrady: The Minister will be aware that inward investment should be available to all areas of Northern Ireland. I draw his attention to the novelty by which, in the past three years, of 875 first visits only 10 were to South Down. That is less than 1 per cent. If we are to have equal opportunity and fair employment, new inward investment must, as far as possible, be directed to the rural areas. Does he agree that the excuse that inward investment inquiries require urbanised areas does not hold water because South Down is only 10 miles from the centre of Belfast and the docks, and the southern half has a new modern dock facility of its own?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman never lets up in fighting his corner for his patch and quite right, too. That is true of all Northern Ireland Members. I am aware of his concern and I have taken it up with the Industrial Development Board. The hon. Gentleman is an understanding chap who appreciates these matters and knows that it is sometimes difficult to attract companies to rural areas, even those as beautiful as his constituency. We take his caution to heart. I know that the hon. Gentleman does an enormous amount of work trying to establish a link with Chicago and I have hopes that we may be able to attract companies from that great city to his constituency. I am happy to help the hon. Gentleman in achieving his objectives.

Political Initiatives

2. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on new political initiatives in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The Northern Ireland parties that participated in last year's talks agreed with the two Governments that further dialogue was desirable and necessary. I am continuing informal consultations with party leaders about the way ahead. I expect to meet Mr. Dick Spring, Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs in the new Irish Government, tomorrow. There is important unfinished business to be addressed.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Secretary of State ever get in touch with the United Nations about sorting out the problems in Northern Ireland? Every time that I am in the Chamber for Foreign Office questions, I hear that Britain is poking its nose into or is supporting peacekeeping forces in several countries throughout the world, including Croatia, Bosnia, Somalia and Iraq. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman ever consider that one fine day someone might suggest, now that Clinton has been elected, that the United Nations should sort out the problems in Northern Ireland? What would be the right hon. and learned Gentleman's answer?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman is an occasional supporter of United Nations intervention and now he suggests that it should intervene in Northern Ireland. I am a strong supporter of the human rights that the United Nations was founded to preserve. It is because I am determined to uphold the human rights denied to so many people by the terrorists that I support the British Government's policy in the way that I do. I believe that with the support of the people of Northern Ireland, there will be no need to trouble the United Nations or anybody else.

Mr. Peter Robinson: In his controversial speech in Coleraine, the Secretary of State described Government policy as being that of a facilitator—they would facilitate Northern Ireland remaining in the United Kingdom if that were its wish, but with equal joy and alacrity they would support a united Ireland if that were the wish of the people of Northern Ireland. Will the Secretary of State come down off the fence long enough to say whether his is still a Unionist party?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have sometimes thought that the controversy associated with my speech in Coleraine is a manufactured one. Nothing of substance in that speech had not been said by my distinguished predecessor at least two years ago. There was nothing in my remarks concerning the Union to occasion surprise to anyone. I said that as long as the greater number of people living in Northern Ireland wanted to continue being a part of the United Kingdom, that would be warmly, solemnly and sincerely respected and upheld. If, on the other hand, the day should come when the majority wanted some other citizenship, the British Government would not stand in the way. I find it difficult to see any point of principle that would be supported in the House which would lead to a contrary conclusion.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Secretary of State agree that during the previous round of talks on the political future of Northern Ireland, we pretty well exhausted the process whereby all parties sit round one table and that the next stage must inevitably be a bilateral approach? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman further agree that at the very end of the previous talks, the Ulster Unionist party put a fair and generous proposal on the table which has yet to be addressed and to receive a response from the Irish Government? Is not it the Secretary of State's wish that the Irish Government should respond positively to the matters that were placed before them? Until they do, it will be extremely difficult to move any process forward.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There were times when I thought that the process was exhausting ourselves, but I do not believe that we exhausted the opportunities for meeting all together round a table. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that much useful work was done in a more informal format towards the end. It is certainly true that the hon. Gentleman's party put forward a paper on 9 November and the hon. Gentleman heard me say a moment ago that we have unfinished business to address.

Sir James Kilfedder: The Irish Foreign Minister, Dick Spring—who has a distinguished record as a rugby player—has now become a powerhouse in Dublin politics. When the Secretary of State meets Mr. Spring tomorrow, will he welcome Mr. Spring's promise of a new dawn in relations with Northern Ireland, while urging him not to make it a false dawn that would give further encouragement to the IRA and any other terrorists in Northern Ireland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I do not believe that any member of the new Irish Government wishes to give any encouragement to the IRA. In that regard, the Irish Government are absolutely in line with Her Majesty's Government. I am greatly looking forward to tomorrow's meeting; I think that I had better leave it to take place, rather than going with extracts from what Mr. Spring or anyone else may have said particularly in mind.

Mr. Mallon: The Secretary of State will agree that much solid and analytical work was done during the recent talks. We all welcome that. Does the Secretary of State also agree, however, that, if we are to achieve a far-reaching, comprehensive agreement that will bring permanent peace to Northern Ireland, we must face the real, positive, intractable problems?

May I suggest that, in any future talks, those problems are put at the top of the agenda and faced head on? We should not put them lower down on the agenda and hope that they will go away. If we take such action, we shall be starting from a positive viewpoint, rather than simply postponing the day when a further end will come to further talks, thus inflicting more damage on the whole political psyche in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The good sense of the hon. Gentleman's remarks augurs well for future talks and for the contribution that he himself will make.

Mr. Hunter: May we be more specific? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that more flexibility on the part of the Government of the Republic regarding articles 2 and 3 would greatly help the prospect of a resumption of meaningful constitutional talks? If so, will he make specific reference to that in his dialogue with the Government of the Republic?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who takes a close interest in the Province. Having just endorsed the principle enunciated by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), I think that I would be unwise to allow myself to be led into discussion of particular applications of that principle; but I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. McNamara: I am sure that the House appreciates the wisdom of that last comment. We do not want to start discussing the Government of Ireland Act 1920.

Does the Secretary of State expect, following tomorrow's meeting with Mr. Spring, to be able to announce the date of the next intergovernmental conference? Will he be able to discuss with Mr. Spring not only the unfinished business to which he referred, but a firm programme of work in regard to the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government stand by the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which provides for intergovernmental conferences at frequent and regular intervals. I do not doubt that we shall arrange for such a conference to take place at an early stage.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One of the most welcome political initiatives is the letter that the Prime Minister sent to the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party about the events that took place in Derry just over 20 years ago. Would not it be a welcome move towards justice—even in retrospect—for my right hon. and learned Friend to announce at some stage that those people should not have been shot and that, following the shooting, the tribunal should not have allowed any slur or cloud to remain over them?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: We are approaching the anniversary of a very sad occasion. I am afraid that the history of Ireland is littered with occasions of great sadness which—because they involve deaths—cause regret to all sensible people. I think it unwise, however, to reopen discussion of matters that were subject to a judicial inquiry many years ago and I do not propose to do so.

Travel Links

3. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to improve travel links between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: Over the period 1989-93 almost £180 million will have been spent on improvements to Northern Ireland's ports, airports, railway and roads systems, with the primary objective of improving Northern Ireland's transport links with the rest of the United Kingdom and the continent. The Northern Ireland transportation operational programme, which is administered by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, is contributing £120 million towards these works by way of grant from the European regional development fund.

Ms. Hoey: The Minister will agree that it is becoming increasingly difficult for people in Northern Ireland to travel to the rest of the United Kingdom because of the expense involved and the lack of sea crossings. Most people have to travel by air. Does the Minister agree that it is nonsense that I should pay £198 return to go to Belfast with British Airways while, on the same day, someone else pays £196 return to travel to Boston with Virgin Atlantic Airways and Richard Branson? Might not it be a good idea to call in Richard Branson to sit round a table with British Airways and British Midland to work out a cheaper fare to Belfast, so that people can travel more easily to and from the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Atkins: I have considerable sympathy with the hon. Lady's remarks in the context of air fares both regional and international—a matter with which I had something to do when I was a Minister with responsibility for transport in Great Britain. It is a difficult problem because to reduce fares one needs the agreement of other countries as well as the country from which one wishes to fly. I do not entirely agree with the hon. Lady that transportation between Great Britain and Northern Ireland has deteriorated—indeed, the SeaCat service from Belfast to Stranraer is now so popular that the company has announced that it will be introducing another such service in the spring to meet the demand. That is a sign that not all links are quite as difficult as the hon. Lady suggests.

Cross-border Co-operation

4. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will arrange to meet representatives of the new Government of the Republic of Ireland to discuss cross-border co-operation.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I look forward to meeting the Tanaiste and Foreign Minister, Mr. Spring, tomorrow.

Mr. Canavan: Is not it self-evident that the best form of cross-border co-operation would be to work for the creation of conditions that led to the disappearance of the border? Will the Secretary of State make it absolutely clear that he will restart a meaningful dialogue in that respect, involving all parties interested in a non-violent solution? Will he also make it absolutely clear that if any party or parties should threaten to boycott the talks, meaningful dialogue will nevertheless proceed? I say that because any party unwilling to participate in democratic debate should not have a veto on democratic constitutional change.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman knows that I wish talks to take place. I take comfort from the fact that, at the conclusion of the previous talks on 10 November, all parties agreed with the statement of the independent chairman that the objectives were valid and achievable and that it was desirable and necessary that further talks should take place. I am very glad about that.

As to working for the removal of the border, I am afraid that that is a proposition whose simplicity—not to say its quality of being simplistic—has in the past characterised rather too many English ideas for the solution of Irish problems.

Mr. Molyneaux: As British subjects have been under fire from the territory of the Republic, will the Secretary of State place at the top of his agenda for his meeting with Mr. Spring the need for greatly increased security co-operation along the frontier—especially at a time when there is much misunderstanding about the removal of certain controls and frontiers elsewhere in Europe?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The right hon. Gentleman refers to the disgraceful incident at Mullan bridge in County Fermanagh a fortnight or so ago. It is right to recall that, on that occasion, there was close co-operation between the Garda Siochana and the Royal Ulster Constabulary and that, shortly after the incident, a man was arrested by the Garda Siochana in connection with it.

There is close co-operation although, of course, it can always be improved. That is one of the matters that I am looking forward to discussing—as we generally do—at the intergovernmental conferences. I agree that there is much misunderstanding about the effect of the Single European Act and the arrival of the single market. That has no bearing on the need for really close security control over crossing points at the border.

Dr. Hendron: When the Secretary of State meets Mr. Dick Spring and other members of the Irish Government, will he use those meetings to try to encourage some of the top 500 companies in the Republic to set up in Northern Ireland and, in particular, in deprived areas such as west and north Belfast?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly support all ideas for investment in Northern Ireland. I was very surprised at how little trade to and fro, between north and south, there had been until quite recent years. That situation is improving and I want to encourage it.

Mr. Stott: To follow the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), the Secretary of State will be aware that the whole of the island of Ireland has category 1 status and that the Republic of Ireland has access to the cohesion fund. Given that the internal market in Europe is now fully operational, what proposals will the Secretary of State be making to the Government of the Republic so that the whole of the island of Ireland can benefit from the new arrangements and not suffer as a consequence of its peripherality to mainland Europe?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Objective 1 status is extremely important and I am very pleased that our representations resulted in that status being retained for Northern Ireland. Although Northern Ireland is peripheral to the mainland of Europe, it none the less represents just as effective a gateway to the common market as any location, for example, in the centre of France or Germany. There is much to be said for co-operation between the Republic and the United Kingdom to ensure that we get the best advantage from our common membership of the European Community. That lies behind a very important part of our policy.

Statutory Development Plans

6. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress in having up-to-date statutory development plans for all areas.

Mr. Atkins: With the exception of the Craigavon district council area and the rural areas of Newtownabbey and Castlereagh, all parts of Northern Ireland are covered by statutory development plans. A plan for the Newtownabbey area is being prepared at present and it is intended to start work on plans for the Craigavon and Castlereagh areas later this year.

Mr. Trimble: We have had a statutory framework for town and country planning in Northern Ireland for 20 years. However, as the Minister said, there is still no statutory development plan in Craigavon. Does the Minister agree that informal, non-statutory plans of dubious standing are no substitute and that we need a formal plan as soon as possible with a clear Government commitment to the development of Craigavon and especially the regeneration of Lurgan town centre?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman has been assiduous in representing the cause of his constituents, particularly following the damage to Lurgan after that dreadful bomb. He has been to see me and, as he knows, I have met representatives of the council. I am very conscious of the deficiency to which I referred in my main answer and I will do what I can to ensure that the problems of the hon. Gentleman's constituents, and of Lurgan in particular, are addressed as soon as possible.

Home Ownership

7. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the level of home ownership in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: By the end of May 1992, the total number of owner-occupied properties was 358,500 or 66 per cent. of the total housing stock. More than 52,000 of those owner-occupiers have bought their houses from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive under its voluntary sales scheme while a further 11,800 have entered home-ownership through the co-ownership scheme operated by the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association.

Mr. Marshall: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on that answer which demonstrates that Government policies have enabled many people to enjoy home ownership for whom 15 years ago it was only a dream? Does he agree with me, however, that, important as home ownership is, it is also important to help those in the lowest income groups? Will he therefore welcome the additional finance made available to the Northern Ireland Office for that purpose?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right to point to the increase in home ownership. In 1986, not very long ago, the figure was 59 per cent., so a rise of seven per cent. to 66 per cent. is quite noticeable. My hon. Friend's point about the Northern Ireland tranche of the £750 million made available by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is very important. It is in the process of providing homes for those in desperate need and will, to an extent, help the Housing Executive in its treatment of this particularly intractable problem.

Political Talks

8. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest talks he has had with Ministers in the Irish Republic concerning progress in the political talks relating to Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am meeting Mr. Spring tomorrow.

Mr. Winnick: The whole House will welcome the fact that these talks are to take place, and one hopes that further discussions will take place with the new Irish Government. When they do, will both Governments make it clear how they deplore the continued killings such as, for example, that of the woman last weekend in Northern Ireland who was murdered for no other reason than that she happened to be a Catholic and those of the many who are murdered for no other reason than that they happen to be Protestant? Is not such ethnic cleansing as unacceptable and as much a crime against humanity as what is happening, albeit on a far larger scale, in what was Yugoslavia?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman, who is invariably humane and balanced in his interest in Northern Ireland, is absolutely right: the killings that take place, whether caused by terrorists from one quarter of the community or another, are inexcusable, indefensible and fundamentally inhumane, and I do not doubt that my colleagues in the Government of the Republic take precisely the same view and will express it. What we must do is bear down, through the Royal Ulster Constabulary and with the Army in support, upon all organisations that are committed to the use of violence to gain political ends and always call upon people in the community to have the courage to come forward and, when they have the information, to tell the RUC what they know. These people will be defeated in the end, not simply by the security forces but by the people of Northern Ireland—and defeated they will be.

Mr. Bellingham: Will my right hon. and learned Friend be raising with the new Irish Foreign Minister the point about articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution? Will he agree with me that until these two articles are reviewed, the chance of political talks succeeding is very slim?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I do not wish to be drawn into speculation about the chances of success or failure. I think that the whole House wants these talks to succeed and recognises that, in the matters to be discussed, articles 2 and 3 will play an important part.

Mr. William Ross: Surely the Secretary of State will now realise that the expression that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed is no more than a bit of flotsam left behind the talks that ended last year, so that there is now no reason why progress should not be made where progress is easily possible.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman has always taken a rather uncharacteristically morose view about the talks process, or so it seems to me; it is not a view which was shared by those taking part—and I am sorry that he was not of their number. I think that all the participants will want to consult together as to how best to take the talks forward, what formation and so forth, but I do not think that we will share the hon. Gentleman's rather gloomy view.

Water and Sewerage

9. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what capital investment was spent on water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland during each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Atkins: The capital investment for new construction and improvement on water services during the years in question was £13·9 million, £16·2 million, £20·6 million and £21 million respectively. The corresponding figures for sewerage services were £12·6 million, £12·4 million, £12·4 million and £16·2 million.

Mr. Forsythe: I thank the Minister for his information, but, in view of the well-known and total outrage at the idea of privatisting water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland, may I assure him that while, during all the talks, cross-community support could not be found for many things, in this case there will be total cross-community opposition to any proposals to privatise water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Atkins: I am not unaware of the hon. Gentleman's view on this matter, or indeed of the views of other hon. Members from Northern Ireland. As he knows, the Government commitment is that we will privatise as soon as practicable—by 1995 or 1996—but, of course, no firm decisions have been taken on the detail and I am open to consider any views that hon. Gentlemen may wish to put about the methods by which we privatise the water service.

Mr. McNamara: Nevertheless, can the Minister confirm that the proposed sale will be a trade sale—that is, that the people of Northern Ireland will not have the opportunity to buy individual shares if they should so wish? Will he, after he has given figures to the House of the amount of public investment that has already gone into the water and sewage industry, indicate to the House that, in terms of moneys being charged, this valuable Northern Ireland asset will not be sold for less than £500 million?

Mr. Atkins: I cannot confirm what the hon. Gentleman implies, that any decision at all has been made on the method of sale. We are still awaiting the feasibility study and when we get the results of that we shall be in a better position to judge. We have already said that we will consult. So far as capital investment is concerned, we have a rolling programme of investment, as required not only by the European Economic Community but by the need to modernise and bring up to date. We are committed to spending, over the next three years, £49 million, £79 million and £83 million in total on these most important services.

Electricity Supply

10. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the regulator for electricity in Northern Ireland will prepare a report on how he envisages supply competition to being available to large users within Northern Ireland after the transitional introductory period of the new bulk supply tariff; and if he will make a statement on the report provided to him by the regulator.

Mr. Atkins: The Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland has complete responsibility for the development of competition in the supply of electricity. I have therefore arranged for him to write to the hon. Gentleman directly on this matter.

Mr. Beggs: I shall await with interest the reply that is on the horizon. Is the Minister aware of just how serious the situation is, in that the higher electricity costs facing large

users threaten the viability of some companies, which may be forced to relocate to Great Britain? With the resultant job losses, that would be disastrous. Will he take note of the fact that the failure by the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Scotland to extend the Non-fossil Fuel Obligation Renewables Order 1991 to Northern Ireland and Scotland is preventing expansion and job creation in my own constituency, where a company has an outstanding record in manufacturing hydro-generating plant?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman has raised this matter with me on numerous occasions and he knows what the Government's view is. I hope that he realises just how sympathetic the Government are to the concern that he expresses. I have also been in constant contact with a number of the large users in the Province, who have represented their concerns to me in terms not only of their own businesses, but of potential inward investment or development of the particular processes to which he refers. I can assure him that I shall continue to take this matter most seriously and to consider it as a matter of importance to ensure that the concerns that he represents are addressed in any way possible.

Lady Olga Maitland: What assurances will my hon. Friend give to the major users of electricity in Northern Ireland that the new price regime will not undermine the profitability of their businesses?

Mr. Atkins: It is fair to say that the large users in Northern Ireland have benefited from the arrangements over many years, but they have been paid for by domestic and smaller commercial users, to their detriment. Clearly, therefore, the resolution of this difficult imbalance has caused some heartburn among the very large users, but is pleasing those further down the scale. As I have indicated, I am very concerned about this matter and I have represented those views, as put to me by hon. Members and industrialists, to my colleagues within the Department of Trade and Industry. I hope that in due course we may be able to see some alleviation of the position, but in the short term it is still a difficult problem.

Mr. Foulkes: If the Minister is genuinely worried about the high cost of electricity in Northern Ireland, why is he promoting the interconnector with Scotland, which will provide high-cost electricity, instead of the Ballymoney lignite proposal or Kilroot phase II which will provide much cheaper electricity as well as jobs in Northern Ireland? Is it not the Minister's job to provide cheap electricity as well as jobs in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Atkins: I would say to the hon. Gentleman, who has waged war on this issue with a great lack of success so far, largely because he flies in the face of the facts, that Kilroot phase II was tendered for against the lignite and lignite lost because of its not being the right price. The lignite to which the hon. Gentleman referred would take much longer to develop than is his contention and would not be available to meet the shortfall of power to which he referred.

The hon. Gentleman should be aware of the environmental consequences of building a substantial opencast mine in the middle of Ballymoney with the effects on the water table, the roads and the environment. It is convenient for the hon. Gentleman to sit there representing a seat in Scotland and tell Northern Ireland that it should scour its countryside for the benefit of his constituents.

Terrorism

11. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to counter terrorist activities; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): Since my right hon. and learned Friend answered a similar question on 26 November 1992, there have been nine deaths as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland, including eight civilians and one soldier from the Royal Irish Regiment.

The determination of the Government and the security forces is unequivocal: terrorism will be defeated through the vigorous, impartial and effective actions—within the law—of the police, supported by the army and the general public. The security forces continue to deter and prevent many attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Mr. Thurnham: Can my hon. Friend confirm that security co-operation with the Republic has improved since—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will resume his seat. One of his colleagues is on his feet.

Mr. Thurnham: Can my hon. Friend confirm that security co-operation with the Republic has improved since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Will he ensure that the terrorists never win, despite the attitude of the Labour party?

Mr. Mates: I do not speak for the Labour party. Many Labour Members are as determined as the Government to resist all forms of terrorism within the United Kingdom and anywhere else.

To answer the first question, I can confirm that there has been a major improvement in security co-operation between the forces of law and order, north and south, on the island of Ireland since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The agreement has resulted in several major successes against the terrorists, their finances and some of the rackets that they run as well as against those who plot to bomb and kill.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the Minister accept that terrorism is defeated by security policies and political leadership from the Government? Does he recognise that there has been a rapid increase in loyalist terrorist violence every year since the imposition of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985? Last year, loyalist terrorists killed more people than the republican terrorists. Does the Minister accept that the controversial speech made by the Secretary of State in Coleraine in December has done nothing to reduce support for loyalist terrorism, which we condemn?

Mr. Mates: No, I do not accept that my right hon. and learned Friend's speech could in any way have been interpreted as giving any comfort to terrorists from either side of the divide. I confirm that there is simply no military solution to the problem. There must be a political progress, which is why my right hon. and learned Friend

has made such superhuman efforts to achieve some form of progress between the political parties. Those efforts are due to continue throughout this year.

I agree strongly with the right hon. Gentleman that the upsurge in loyalist violence—the fact that the loyalists are becoming more ruthless when they pick their targets at random and murder people simply because of the religion they hold, without having anything whatever to do with any form of paramilitary organisations—is worrying. The Chief Constable is concerned about it and is taking steps to arrest those people and bring them to justice. We will continue to support him in all that he does.

Local Authorities

12. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to increase the responsibilities of local authorities in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have no plans to address this in isolation. I believe, however, that there is considerable scope to transfer greater responsibility to locally elected representatives in Northern Ireland. Any proposals regarding regional or local government would need to be widely acceptable and accordingly are best considered in the context of further political talks.

Mrs. Gorman: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that all planning applications in Northern Ireland have to be referred to the Secretary of State or to the Northern Ireland Office, whether it is for a chicken shed, a conservatory or whatever? Does he agree that local councillors in Northern Ireland—increasing numbers of whom are Conservative, incidentally—would like to be able to settle such matters locally because they relate to local domestic disputes?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly agree with my hon. Friend. It is absolutely absurd that planning matters of relatively slight importance in the overall scheme of things should be dealt with by Ministers at Stormont. I should like to be the last Secretary of State charged with that responsibility. However, one cannot deal with that aspect of political advance in isolation. If it is to work, it has to be founded on a basis that is widely acceptable. That is why I believe that it should be considered in the context of the political talks.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 January.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Prime Minister aware that the murderous attacks on Iraq, which he supported, have killed at least 45 Iraqis—who were themselves innocent of any violation of international law—have made international lepers of Britain and the United States and have, in the eyes of the democratic opposition in Iraq, served only to strengthen the position of the tyrant Saddam? Does he understand that the crimes that he has committed against innocent Iraqi people may have been undertaken in his name, but were not in my name or in the name, I believe, of the vast majority of the British people?

The Prime Minister: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. From the expressions on the faces of most of his right hon. and hon. Friends, neither do they.

Mr. Faber: Given that yesterday was the inauguration of President Clinton, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the United States remain our strongest ally, as indeed we do theirs? Will he take this opportunity to reaffirm that the special relationship is greatly valued by Britain, as President Clinton has already done?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can certainly confirm that to my hon. Friend. There has been a very close relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States for many years. It is a practical relationship, quite apart from the political and military relationship. For example, the United Kingdom is the world's largest overseas investor in the United States and our exports to the United States last year were some £12 billion. I know that President Clinton will have the good wishes of the entire House and I know that he knows that he can look to this country and this Government as firm friends of the United States.

Mr. John Smith: In view of the horrendous rise in unemployment announced today—almost 61,000 in one month—when will the right hon. Gentleman recognise that his economic policies have failed the nation and are now blighting the lives of millions of British families?

The Prime Minister: Today's figures on unemployment are clearly deeply disappointing. They reflect the job losses in the pipeline that were announced last autumn and have now come through. I do not doubt the concern about unemployment that the right hon. and learned Gentleman voices, for I share that concern; so does everyone on this side of the House. We wish to see unemployment falling and people getting back into secure and lasting jobs. That is my objective, just as much as it is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's. But there must be a dual strategy for long-lasting solutions to unemployment. First, there must be solid foundations for economic recovery—low inflation predominantly among them—and secondly, wide-ranging help for the unemployed. That is in place.

Mr. John Smith: The Prime Minister expresses concern for the unemployed, but is he not the same right hon. Gentleman who told us that if it is not hurting it is not working? Is he not the Prime Minister whose first reaction to the announcement of the pit closures was that they had to be closed "cleanly and quickly", and whose Chancellor believes that unemployment is a "price well worth paying"? How can we believe that his expressions of concern are genuine when we take all those factors into account?

The Prime Minister: One of the principal causes of unemployment in countries around the world as well as here is the difficulty faced with inflation. It is this Government who have had the courage to stick with policies to get inflation down, and the reality is, despite all his rhetoric neither the right hon. and learned Gentleman nor his hon. Friends have set out a coherent policy for dealing with unemployment. When they produced their phoney budget, they knew that it was a budget that would

increase taxes and put up jobs. The right hon. and learned Gentleman still has not responded to the question that he could not answer on Tuesday. How much money would his new tax on windfall profits raise? If he cannot tell us, how can he make the claims for it that he does? Can he guarantee that it will last only a year? No, he cannot. The fact of the matter is that he has no policies other than to complain about the Government, and no idea how to deal with the economy or unemployment.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that the nation is tired of feeble and lame excuses? It is also tired of the right hon. Gentleman blaming everyone in the world but himself. When, at long last, will he give the attack on unemployment the priority that the nation demands?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has to accept economic reality. He should recognise that economic reality requires that you get inflation down and competitiveness up and those are the policies that we are pursuing. He should recognise also the effect of his policies: crushing profits does not create jobs; tax structures that drive away inward investment do not create jobs; piling burdens on business does not create jobs; the social chapter will not create jobs. Those are the policies of the Labour party; they are policies which would deliberately drive up unemployment and not create the conditions for lasting employment.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Further to what my right hon. Friend said, does he agree that one of the best ways of helping British industry would be to cut the red tape bureaucracy and regulation with which it has been overburdened for far too long? Does he agree that a new deregulation drive would help industry to create new jobs?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about the consistent need persistently to bring down the level of regulation and red tape. The more we can rid business of red tape and regulation, the more British business can get on with creating wealth and generating new jobs. As my hon. Friend will have heard last week in the House, I propose to hold a seminar at the beginning of February—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. The Prime Minister must be heard. We cannot—*[Interruption.]* We cannot make progress—*[Interruption.]* I like good humour, but there are times when we have to keep quiet and listen. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: —at which every Department in Whitehall would come along with regulations that Opposition Members would support and which we propose to remove from business to increase competitiveness.

Q2. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gapes: In the light of today's report by the Employment Select Committee, will the Prime Minister apologise to the House, to the British people and to the miners for saying on 16 October that it was better to sack 30,000 mine workers "quickly and cleanly" than to institute a full review of the pit closure programme?

The Prime Minister: I think that the way in which the hon. Gentleman phrases his question tells us a great deal about him. What we are seeking to do is to create a viable coal industry with a fitter future. The hon. Gentleman might recall how many mining jobs were lost under Labour Governments, for there were more lost than there ever have been under Conservative Governments—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Having asked his question, the hon. Gentleman should not bawl and shout from a sedentary position.

Q3. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pawsey: Is my right hon. Friend aware that 642 schools have already applied and balloted for grant-maintained status? Does he agree that that is a formidable expression of public and parental opinion? What advice does he give to Opposition Members who persist in their ill-conceived hostility to grant-maintained schools?

The Prime Minister: In fact, as at the end of last afternoon there were 648—another six have decided to become grant maintained. That is because parents are increasingly seeing the benefit of independence from local authority control. They are voting for grant-maintained schools in increasing numbers and the reason for that is entirely clear. Since opting out they have discovered that they can employ more staff, take on more pupils, enhance special needs provision and provide more books, because they have the freedom to put the money in the classroom where it belongs, and are not subjected to unnecessary control from county hall.

Q4. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marshall: Does not the Prime Minister realise the catastrophic consequences for unemployment if either Devonport or Rosyth dockyards closes? As well as the folly to the nation of concentrating defence work on one site, does he accept that 18,000 jobs are at risk in Rosyth, and that there is a solution that will keep both dockyards open? Does he agree that that solution is to give Devonport the surface ship work that it does best and to give Rosyth the submarine work that it does best? Will he support that solution? If not, why not?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman belongs to a party, many of whom would abolish nuclear weapons, and nearly all of whom would dramatically reduce defence expenditure. I think that the hon. Gentleman should bear that in mind before he criticises this Government for their defence policies.

Q5. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mans: Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that his Chancellor of the Exchequer has no intention in his Budget of introducing a windfall tax on the privatised utilities, as that would deal a body blow to the 10 million people in this country who have invested in those utilities and would discourage the wider share ownership that we all want in the future?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly offer that assurance to my hon. Friend. As he rightly says, there are 10 million shareholders, many with very limited shareholdings, with a stake in the utility industries in this country. We understand that it is investment which ultimately creates jobs and that taxation on investment destroys jobs.

Q7. **Dr. Berry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Berry: May I draw the Prime Minister's attention to early-day motion 330, which calls for the early introduction of a Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill? Is the Prime Minister aware that this early-day motion has substantial cross-party support—in fact, the greatest volume of support of any early-day motion submitted this Session? Does he accept that disabled people want action —very speedy action—and can he confirm that he will respond positively to the early-day motion?

The Prime Minister: For a year I was, of course, the Minister of State responsible for disability, and I am well aware of the Government's excellent record in increasing the benefits for disabled people and providing a much wider range of facilities for them. That is a record unmatched by any other party in the House.

Q8. **Mr. French:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. French: Is my right hon. Friend aware that this country's privatisation programme has been widely applauded and copied in many parts of the world? Can he confirm that, notwithstanding the current criticisms of the British Rail proposals, he will forge ahead with the privatisation programme and will bring forward other candidates, including the Post Office, at an early date?

The Prime Minister: We propose to proceed not only with the programme of privatisation but with programmes of more contracting out and more market testing. In the current year Government work worth about £1·5 billion will be market tested and, where appropriate, put out to the private sector if that sector can deal with it more efficiently.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 25 JANUARY—Second Reading of the National Lottery etc. Bill.

Money resolution (No. 2) relating to the Education Bill.

Money resolution (No. 2) and Ways and Means resolution (No. 2) relating to the Housing and Urban Development Bill.

TUESDAY 26 JANUARY—Opposition Day (9th allotted day). There will be a debate described as "The Crisis in the National Health Service" on an Opposition motion.

Motion relating to financial assistance to SCA Aylesford Ltd.

Motion on the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Oil and Chemical Pollution of Fish) Order.

WEDNESDAY 27 JANUARY—Progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, eighth day.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Described as progress.

Mr. Newton: I shall give the hon. Gentleman that one, and continue with the business statement:

THURSDAY 28 JANUARY—Further progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, ninth day.

FRIDAY 29 JANUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 1 FEBRUARY—Yet more progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, tenth day.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet on Wednesday 27 January at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows:

Standing Committee A—Document No. 8066/92 relating to the creation of a combined transport network.

Standing Committee B—Document No. 8403/92 relating to the utilisation of immovable property on a timeshare basis.

[Wednesday 27 January:
European Standing Committee A
Relevant European Community Document
8066/92 Combined Transport
Relevant Report of the European Legislation Committee
HC 79-x (1992-93)
European Standing Committee B
Relevant European Community Document
8403/92 Timeshare
Relevant Report of the European Legislation Committee
HC 79-vi (1992-93).]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

It is becoming apparent that, with the concentration of parliamentary time on the Maastricht Bill, there is a growing danger that other matters of considerable importance will be neglected. I remind the right hon. Gentleman, for example, that both sides of the House have an interest in an early debate on the revenue support grant, and Opposition Members at least had anticipated that that debate might take place before the end of January, particularly in view of the predicted job losses in local authorities of all political shades.

I should like to press the right hon. Gentleman for an assurance that there will be a debate, in Government time, on the full public expenditure programme—a debate that we should normally expect to be scheduled for the near future.

Will the Leader of the House please ensure that there will be an early statement on the reorganisation of health authorities? This seems to be taking place almost by the back door. I understand that recent remarks by, I think, an Under-Secretary of State for Health indicated that the Government expect that the original figure of about 190 will ultimately be reduced to 85. A structural change of that magnitude should surely be reported properly in a statement to this House, but it has not been so reported.

Now that we have the report of the Select Committee on Employment and hope shortly to have the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, the House expects the right hon. Gentleman to find time soon for a debate on the future of the coal industry.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady is perhaps overstating her case in raising the first point in a week in which we shall be dealing with two important matters as well as the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and a week in which the Opposition have been provided with a further Supply day.

The hon. Lady specifically asked about the revenue support grant orders. While, as she observed, they are not in the business for next week, I do not think she will have an infinite time to wait before she has the opportunity for which she evidently craves.

The answer to her public expenditure programme question is that there was a two-day debate on that matter in Government time before Christmas. In the coming few weeks, the departmental reports flowing from that will be published. It is perhaps in the wake of those publications that further consideration might be given to the point that she raised, but I cannot give a definite undertaking.

I was surprised at the hon. Lady raising the point about health authorities, not because it is not an important issue but because, as it happens, next week an Opposition day debate is to be devoted to health service matters, and on that same day the Secretary of State for Health will be answering questions, which should provide some opportunity for those points to be raised.

I note what the hon. Lady said, perhaps predictably, about the Select Committee reports on coal. I would prefer not to add to what my right hon. Friend and the Minister of State said in answer to questions on that subject yesterday.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 1129 relating to war crimes in Yugoslavia and the need to establish an international court so that those who have committed crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia can be brought to trial.

[That this House notes the evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia provided by the Reports of Sir John Thomson, Ambassador Correll and his colleagues, Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the former Prime Minister of Poland and Dame Anne Warburton; welcomes the Statement of 51 Foreign Ministers of the

CSCE on 15th December 1992 calling for 'proposals . . . including the possibility of the establishment of an ad hoc tribunal', as well as the Statement of 16th December 1992 by Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger calling for a 'second Nuremberg' which was followed in December 1992 by the United Nations General Assembly resolution urging 'the Security Council to consider recommending the establishment of an ad hoc International War Crimes Tribunal to try and punish those who have committed war crimes in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina when sufficient information has been provided by the Commission of Experts'; and urges Her Majesty's Government to promote in the Security Council such a tribunal and to instruct the existing Commissioner of Experts to prepare the statute for such a tribunal.]

In view of today's report by Amnesty International confirming some of the most distressing evidence about rape being committed on a wide scale, and apparently with official sanction, in Yugoslavia, will my right hon. Friend make time available to enable the House to discuss how we can make further progress to establish an international tribunal, which is now accepted by Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give my hon. Friend an immediate undertaking about a debate, but he will be well aware of the concern, to put it very mildly indeed, that the British Government have expressed about those matters, and we very much understand the views that my hon. Friend expresses. The United Nations commission of experts is due to report its findings and recommendations for further action to the United Nations Secretary-General at the end of this month. The British Government will take a close interest in what follows from that.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): May we have an early debate about hill livestock farming in view of the dismay in many parts of the country where hill sheep farming is the predominant agricultural activity at the cuts announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in hill livestock compensatory allowances? Will the Leader of the House look at early-day motion 1208 and other motions which draw attention to the seriousness of the situation?

[That this House calls on Her Majesty's Government to withdraw the Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 70) dated 18th January 1993 pending the report of the Select Committee on Agriculture and further consultation with the industry on their level and effect, in the light of the clear evidence of depressed incomes in this sector and widespread impact on the fragile local economies of the hill areas concerned.]

Mr. Newton: I seek to keep abreast of early-day motions and others, but I cannot add to what I said on the subject this time last week. I acknowledge the right hon. Gentleman's concern, but he may agree that it is reasonable to expect him to acknowledge that, in view of the background to the matter, hill sheep farmers can expect to be considerably better off this year.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): May we have a debate on the engineering industry and the role of the engineering profession in safeguarding our economic future and spearheading the recovery? Does my hon. Friend agree that, as part of that debate, it is important to examine the announcement made by the Jaguar Car Company today about the investment of £700 million in three new models, which will safeguard great tranches of the industrial engineering sectors not only in the midlands but nationally? Does he further agree that the proposals should be welcomed and examined for their significance?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend, and his sentiments extend over a longer period than the announcement today to which he referred. Decisions about motor car investment, and not least decisions about investment involving overseas firms coming here to make cars, have been an encouraging feature of the fundamental strengthening of Britain's manufacturing base.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Leader of the House undertake the Herculean task of finding the Secretary of State for Education, who these days seems to be skulking like Achilles in his tent? Will he bring him to the House to explain why, at a time when he is attempting to put through major education proposals, he so underestimates teachers that he offers them a rise of between nought and 1·5 per cent. and promises that they will never catch up on their pay. Is that not a disgrace?

Mr. Newton: It seems to me that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is very much in evidence, with a series of announcements much welcomed by the public and very foolishly, in my view, opposed by Her Majesty's Opposition.

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on local government expenditure? We hear so often, particularly from councils run by the Labour party, that they are short of funds and they have not enough money to run the necessary social services and so forth, but we read in the newspapers that in Sheffield, for example, they are funding political offices for their Members of Parliament.

Madam Speaker: Order. May I tell the entire House that we are questioning a statement about business for next week. I shall not tolerate further questioning that does not relate strictly to the business statement; but perhaps the Leader of the House would like to make some comment.

Mr. Newton: As the question has been asked, Madam Speaker, perhaps I might be allowed to make the point that of course local authorities must act within the law and they are answerable to various bodies, including the Audit Commission, which will no doubt take a keen and critical interest in the point to which my hon. Friend has adverted. I assume that, if this sort of help is being made available to some Members of Parliament in the city, it will be made available to all, including my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), who is sitting not far from me.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): May we have a statement next week on Government intentions about pornography and obscenity, particularly in the light of developments in telecommunications and the possibility of our having videophones with a line into the home and sex lines that have been perturbing parents? It would be better to shut the stable door before the horse bolts.

Mr. Newton: I think that I would be right in saying that important aspects of that matter would be the

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responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, who will be answering questions on Monday next week.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On Monday's business, does my right hon. Friend agree that a national lottery will bring great benefits to the arts, sport——

Madam Speaker: Order, Order. Is the hon. Gentleman asking for a change in Monday's business because we are not debating the benefits, the merits or the demerits of anything but are dealing with the business for next week?

Sir Anthony Grant: Madam Speaker, I entirely accept that. My purpose is to obtain a little bit of clarity because, while recognising that there are strong views held the other way would my right hon. Friend not agree with me that what is entirely feeble and wet is to be undecided. Does he know whether the Opposition are still giving——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is a disallowed question. We must make some progress on these matters.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion no. 1010 standing in my name and those of more than 60 of my hon. Friends referring to the report on the transfer of petroleum engineering division from London to Aberdeen?

[That this House notes that the Government's commitment to open government is proving to be paper thin as evidenced by Ministers' refusals to reply to legitimate letters from honourable Members as witnessed by the letter of 9th October from the honourable Member for Aberdeen North to the Minister of Energy asking for the publication of the Ernst and Young Report into the transfer of the PED from London to Aberdeen, which elicited the reply that a decision on the transfer would be made soon, but did not even mention the request for publication of this Report and the honourable Member for Aberdeen North's letter to the Prime Minister on 16th November drawing his attention to this error by the Minister for Energy and calling for the publication of the Report, which attracted the reply that the letter had been referred back to the original source of the dissatisfaction, namely the Department of Trade and Industry, for reply, which in turn elicited the reply from the President of the Board of Trade dated 30th November that a decision would be made soon on the transfer, but again ignoring the question as to publication; therefore believes that this sorry saga of continued failure to answer a straight forward question makes the Prime Minister's and the Government's commitment to open government farcical; and calls upon her Majesty's Government to publish the Ernst and Young Report immediately and in full.]

That independent report has been in the hands of the Minister for Energy since 5 October, more than three and a half months ago, and he will not say whether he will publish it or not. He keeps promising that a decision will be made soon. In view of the importance of this matter to the economy of Aberdeen—which needs more employment prospects, lest people think otherwise—will he ask the President of the Board of Trade or the Minister for Energy to make a statement next week so that we can resolve this matter and, in the interests of open government, get this report published as soon as possible?

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether the hon. Member was frustrated in asking that question yesterday, which is when he would have had an opportunity to address it to my right hon. Friend or my hon. Friend the Minister of State. I am not in a position to add to what has been said previously, but, as he knows and has been told, decisions will be announced as soon as possible.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, whatever line one takes, there is unanimity in the House that the situation in Bosnia should be debated? I asked my right hon. Friend to try to arrange a debate before Christmas. He was exceptionally courteous and on one occasion said that he hoped to be able to arrange a debate before too long. How long is too long?

Mr. Newton: I am not able to give my hon. Friend the undertaking that he requests, and certainly not today. He will know that time has been provided this afternoon for a substantial debate on the deployment of British forces in relation to the middle east and on the Royal Air Force generally. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that my hon. Friend will be able to work in a reference in that debate; but, of course, that would be subject to your view, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Would the Leader of the House like to save the Select Committee some time and help to alleviate unemployment by getting the Secretary of State for Transport to announce next week that common sense is prevailing and he is abandoning rail privatisation?

Mr. Newton: That sounds like a triumph of hope over experience. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is presenting his Bill today and expects to publish it tomorrow. I expect it to be debated not long after the period covered by today's business statement.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): During which debate next week will I be able to say that Sheffield city council is sacking thousands of its employees and at the same time paying £55,000 to some hon. Members for office costs? Is that not another example of Labour waste and profligacy in local government?

Mr. Newton: I would be pushed to suggest to my hon. Friend a debate next week in which that would readily be in order. However, I draw his attention to the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be answering questions on Wednesday. My hon. Friend may find that a useful steer.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will a Minister from the Department of Employment be present for Monday's debate to answer the many questions that hon. Members will wish to put about the employment implications for Liverpool, Glasgow and Cardiff of the proposed national lottery legislation?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an instant promise, but I shall make sure that his point is drawn to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Employment.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): During the substantial amount of time that has been allocated to the

European Communities (Amendment) Bill, will there be time to discuss the fact that the MEP for Sheffield is not paying rent or rates for his office in that city?

Mr. Newton: I cannot find time for a debate on that matter, but I have already suggested the possibility of its being raised during Department of the Environment questions on Wednesday.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a Home Office statement to be made next week on the law on wheel clamping? Early-day motion 1110 makes it clear that the law in Scotland is applied quite clearly and properly.

[That this House expresses concern at the growing practice of private and public organisations employing firms, often with a dubious background and whose employees have no adequate identification, which place wheel clamps on parked cars and then extort large sums of money for releasing the vehicle; acknowledges that this can be a frightening experience especially on dark nights for single women; and urges the Government to make clear that wheel clamping is illegal, extortion a criminal offence, and threats to remove vehicles a serious breach of the peace on which the police should take appropriate action.]

However, in this country spivs are going around clamping cars on land that is often used for car parking and the land owners are co-operating with them to extort sums of £50. There are threats to tow cars away, with the cost of returning a car being another £200. That is often happening to single women, and in a recent case a woman with a blind——

Madam Speaker: Order. All that the hon. Gentleman needs to do is to ask for a debate; he does not need to go into details. We are all fully aware of the situation, I think.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker, for endorsing what I am saying—that a debate is necessary and urgent, because the Home Office is delaying action.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that you, Madam Speaker, would wish me on your behalf to say that your words did not warrant quite the interpretation placed on them by the hon. Gentleman—at least, I hope that they did not.

On the basic issue, my right hon. Friend will shortly issue a consultation paper setting out the legal position as we understand it and seeking views on possible options for dealing with bad practice, which undoubtedly exists, in this area. Perhaps a statement could be considered at that time, although obviously I cannot give a commitment now.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My right hon. Friend mentioned that on Tuesday there will be an Opposition debate entitled, I believe, "Reporting progress on the success of the NHS reforms". Will he have a word with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health to ensure that, in addition to other points in her speech, she will refer to the excellent work and contribution of the hospice movement? In particular, will my right hon. Friend note that in my constituency tomorrow the Princess Alice hospice will have its inaugural conference, "Palliative care through education", and is successfully opening its new education wing?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) would wish me to validate my hon. Friend's rewrite of her description of the Opposition's debate, although of course it is one more acceptable to me.

As to the purport of my hon. Friend's question, the hospice movement is an important and often underestimated area in which we have greatly advanced public policy in recent years. Something that gave me great satisfaction when I had related responsibilities was the amount of additional support and help that we were able to give the hospice movement, with great success.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Has the attention of the Leader of the House been drawn to a report in the first edition of *The Daily Telegraph* today that the President of Germany has been unable to ratify the Maastrict treaty because Herr Brunner, the former chief of staff of Herr Bangemann, has brought an action in the constitutional court claiming that the treaty is in breach of the German constitution? That report disappeared from later editions of *The Daily Telegraph*—[HON. MEMBERS: "What has this to do with next week's business?"] Well, the President of Germany cannot sign the Maastricht treaty until that matter is resolved. Can the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs be invited to make a statement before we resume the debate on the Maastricht treaty Bill next Wednesday and Thursday?

Mr. Newton: I gather that there have been some reports of that kind over a long time. I cannot undertake that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will make a statement. I do not need to rehearse my earlier remarks about next week's business for the House to know that there will be full opportunities for airing European issues.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Notwithstanding tomorrow's business, may I impress on my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House the need for the Government to publish soon their own Sunday trading Bill? Whatever the widespread range of views on how to resolve that issue, there is a clear consensus that something must be done. Although we recognise that the Maastricht Bill is taking up a vast amount of the time of the House, we all look forward to the opportunity of having a free vote, as outlined by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Newton: We all recognise the importance and difficulty of that issue, apart from the fact that the consensus that something must be done is not matched by a consensus on what needs to be done—and that presents some difficulties. My right hon. and learned Friend outlined his intentions in a very full statement a month or so before Christmas. Work is now proceeding on turning the three kinds of proposals to which my hon. Friend referred, with their varying effects, into legislative form. However, that is a time-consuming business. It involves a lot of consultation and discussion, and I cannot promise that I expect that Bill to be published in the near future.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): In view of the unanimous and critical report of the Select Committee on Employment on the proposed pit closures that was published today, cannot the House immediately debate that subject? The Government would then have the opportunity to say that they made grievous mistakes, will follow the Committee's recommendations, will abandon

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the closure programme, at least in its present form, and will put an end to the agony of some 100,000 families who have been waiting for a decision for a very long time.

Mr. Newton: I understand the hon. and learned Gentleman's reasons for making that point, but the sensible course will be to discuss the report to which he has referred and others at a time when my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has himself been able to study them and to produce his suggested conclusions.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement in the House next week on priorities in local government spending? Will he urge my right hon. and learned Friend to make it clear that the Government's priority is social care and not the provision of plush offices for Labour Members?

Mr. Newton: I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be the next to have an extremely lively time in the House when he answers questions next Wednesday.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Is the Leader of the House truly aware of the anger felt in agriculture over the abolition of the Potato Marketing Board and the effect of hill livestock compensatory allowance reductions on hill and upland farmers? Given the continuing confusion over the detail of common agricultural policy reform and of the GATT negotiations, will the right hon. Gentleman urgently institute a full debate on agriculture?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's request, but I am obviously not in a position to make an immediate and positive response. I cannot add to what I said earlier about HLCAs. As for the Potato Marketing Board, as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government's objectives remain to ensure competition on equal terms for potato production and to ensure that the United Kingdom industry can both meet the needs of the domestic market and contribute to the export drive in agricultural produce.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a debate or statement early next week about the sickening and apparently growing practice of mutilating horses? It is causing widespread concern and distress. A statement is needed so that the House and the country can get to grips with a very sick and wicked practice.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's concern for animal welfare—which, indeed, is well known and long running, and is shared by most if not all hon. Members. I cannot promise either a statement or a debate, but my hon. Friend may wish to try to raise the matter in an Adjournment debate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Members' interests.

Mr. Newton: Let me add a little to what I told the hon. Gentleman last week, in case I inadvertently misled him. I have had some discussions with the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), and have asked him to consider one or two points that would help us to decide precisely how to proceed. I have no doubt that he will get back to me before long.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): In view of the momentous political changes now being initiated by President Clinton in the United States, should we not, as a matter of urgency, debate the significance of those changes in relation to United Kingdom politics? In particular, should we not give the Leader of the Opposition a chance to come to the House, following his attendance at a lavish bash at the Dorchester——

Madam Speaker: Order. As I said earlier, hon. Members must restrict their questions to next week's business, and their questions must relate to the business statement. The hon. Gentleman's question is wide of the mark.

Mr. Oppenheim: Can we give an opportunity to hon. Members who support the policies to which I have referred to specify the policies that they consider relevant to the United Kingdom? Do they, for example, support President Clinton's——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is out of order. He has had a second bite at the cherry. I now ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate about the Royal Mail? For the past 300 years, my constituents in Carlisle and the rest of Cumbria have lived peacefully alongside their Scottish neighbours; their only differences have been cultural, and related to the existence of a border. On Monday, the Royal Mail is to introduce a new postmark for Cumbria, Galloway and Dumfries. Surely that is nonsense, and the House should have an opportunity to debate it.

Mr. Newton: I hear it suggested that that matter might be raised in an Adjournment debate. The hon. Gentleman may wish to seek such an opportunity. Beyond that, I think that this is a matter for the board of the Royal Mail rather than for my right hon. and learned Friend; but I shall ensure that he is aware of the hon. Gentleman's complaint, as we must assume it to be.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will my right hon. Friend consider again the request by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) for a debate about revenue support grant? Would not such a debate enable us to discover why local taxpayers in Sheffield now find that their school crossing patrols have been slashed so that £55,000 of their money can be dished out to Labour Members of Parliament?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has added an interesting point to what I said earlier about revenue support grant. It is clear from what I said—that the details of RSG will be presented to the House before much longer—that hon. Members will have at least two opportunities to raise the matter, as well as the opportunity presented by next week's questions to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House prepared to reconsider his decision about a debate on coal, given that we have recently been informed that, at some collieries, the pumps used to pump water from workings closed in years gone by cost £250,000 each to operate, which means that, if British Coal and the

Government have their way, pits that are economically on the borderline will be closed on the ground that they are baling out water five, 10 or 15 miles away. If we cannot have a debate, will the right hon. Gentleman at least have that put on the agenda for the seminar?

Mr. Newton: I shall not attempt to add what I said earlier about the possibility of a debate. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman had the opportunity to raise the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State yesterday; in any event, I shall certainly ensure that my right hon. Friend knows that it is on the hon. Gentleman's agenda.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I congratulate President Clinton on his inauguration. Is my right hon. Friend aware, however, that there is great concern among hon. Members about recent remarks made by the new special trade representative of the United States, Mickey Kantor, regarding the EC-American farm subsidies agreement, upon which GATT depends? Given the importance of GATT for the world economy, may we have a statement next week so that we can emphasise the importance of achieving a GATT agreement on the fast-track approach by 2 March?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to arrange for a debate, but I certainly re-emphasise the importance that the British Government attach—as has been very clear in the activities of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others—to the achievement of a GATT settlement. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining that point.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The Leader of the House will be aware of the hardship and health hazards that result from the disconnection of a household's water supply. In view of the urgency of the matter, will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to arrange to make a statement at an early date—possibly next week—so that we can address ourselves to it?

Mr. Newton: The list of questions for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is already long. I reiterate that my right hon. and learned Friend will be here to answer questions of that kind and others on Wednesday.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): May I encourage my right hon. Friend to change the business for next Wednesday so that, instead of discussing the Maastricht treaty again, we can have an emergency debate on unemployment in the far south-west? My right hon. Friend will probably have seen the early-day motion that I tabled recently pointing out that Plymouth has unemployment of 14·5 per cent., which continues to rise alarmingly. An emergency debate would allow west country Members to draw attention to the importance to Devonport dockyard of winning the all-important contract to refit the Trident boat.

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to arrange a debate along precisely those lines, although I appreciate the reasons why my hon. Friend has felt it right to ask for a debate. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the important comments made about the Government's general approach to both those questions at Prime Minister's Question Time not long ago.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Is it not unsatisfactory that there is to be neither a debate nor a statement on the alarming increase in unemployment? Is he aware that Wales is afflicted by the loss of manufacturing jobs in coal, steel and aerospace? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there should be a debate or a statement, bearing in mind the fact that Wales is top of the league for low wages?

Mr. Newton: In the light of the argument advanced by the hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members, those on the Opposition Front Bench may wish to reconsider the subject that they have chosen for their time on Tuesday. Clearly that is a matter for them.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a special debate on the problems facing this capital city of London so that emphasis can be placed on the problems of homelessness, buses and trains, the health service and education spending and on the serious social crisis resulting from high unemployment and the lack of a unified local authority for London that can tackle these serious problems?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is overplaying his hand somewhat. I remind him that, if he wishes to refer to the health service in London, he can use the opportunity that will be provided to him on Tuesday by his right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): Now that more than two months have passed since the Chancellor's autumn statement, may I ask the Leader of the House whether there will be an opportunity next week to discuss the impact of the measures that the Chancellor announced to help the homeless? Is my right hon. Friend aware that in my constituency of Eastleigh, which had a severe homelessness problem, those measures have enabled more than 200 families—accounting for nearly everyone living in temporary accommodation—to find new homes?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving us that encouraging information. I suspect that it is only one item on a growing list of good pieces of information flowing from the important proposals that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made in his autumn statement.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The Chairman of the Welsh Grant Committee and a number of hon. Members have expressed to me their concern about the fact that that body has not met recently. It would appear that the usual channels have become gummed up. Will the Leader of the House take whatever steps are necessary to unravel things?

Mr. Newton: That point was raised with me last week. I will ensure that it is drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. In addition, a number of people have expressed the wish that the Welsh Grand Committee should meet in Wales. That would require a change to Standing Orders, which raises rather different issues.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Petrol companies are ripping off service stations which are contracted to them. That is especially the case with Esso. May we have a debate on that serious matter so that we can discuss the situation at the Heath service station in my

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constituency where the problem will arise tomorrow and where it is likely to continue? We should have an early debate on that topic.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not expect me to attempt an off-the-cuff comment on his general point or on the specific case to which he referred. However, I will draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the Leader of the House have a word with the Prime Minister in order to widen the subject of the debate on Monday so that the Prime Minister can explain how high unemployment must rise before it becomes a price that is not worth paying and perhaps offer the country practical solutions to the unemployment problem which would be more effective than his two present solutions, which are to hold a seminar and a raffle?

Mr. Newton: I understand why the hon. Gentleman felt it appropriate to ask that question. However, I am bound to say that I find it impossible to see how I can widen a debate on the National Lottery etc. Bill to embrace that point.

Points of Order

4.7 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to raise a point of order with regard to the conduct of hon. Members. I note that in today's *Hansard* at column 378, a question was raised by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) about my activities.

I hope that my point of order will be helpful to me and to the rest of the House. I received a note from the hon. Member for Colne Valley at 1.10 pm yesterday after the Select Committee on Trade and Industry had finished its morning deliberations. As you will know, Madam Speaker, a resolution of this House requested the Select Committee to deal with the pit strikes.

Madam Speaker: Order. May I offer the hon. Gentleman a little guidance? If he raises a direct point of order with me, I must deal with it. If he reads column 378 of yesterday's *Hansard*, he will see that I dealt very adequately with the points of order that were raised at that time.

Mr. Caborn: I am sure that you dealt with that point of order very adequately indeed, Madam Speaker, but I would like to refer to a further point surrounding that particular issue. I wrote to the hon. Member for Colne Valley, as I think I informed your Office, Madam Speaker, that I would be chairing the Trade and Industry Select Committee at 2.30 pm. That letter was placed on the Letter Board at the same time that I deposited the letter in your Office at 1.45 pm. I would have expected the hon. Member for Colne Valley not to have raised the matter. Indeed, I would have expected him to comply with the request in my letter that he should raise it when I was able to be in the House.

I suggest that it was more important for me to Chair the Select Committee than to be in the House at 3.30 pm, which would have been impossible. May I therefore ask you, Madam Speaker, for guidance about the conduct of hon. Members when they raise points of order of that nature about other hon. Members?

Madam Speaker: It is my understanding that the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) in fact did his utmost to inform all the hon. Members to whom he wished to refer. As far as I am concerned, I dealt with the matter yesterday. There is just one small matter outstanding. May I take it that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) has informed the hon. Member for Colne Valley that he was about to raise the matter today?

Mr. Caborn: It was not about the hon. Member for Colne Valley. Madam Speaker, I am asking for your guidance about any hon. Member who intends to raise the integrity of another hon. Member, when the House has instructed such hon. Members to be in Committee. Is it right that hon. Members should proceed when other hon. Members are not available to be in the House to answer such an allegation?

Madam Speaker: Several hon. Members were involved and, as the hon. Member for Colne Valley did inform them, in my view he was perfectly entitled to go ahead with

attempting to raise a point of order, which was not, as the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central will see, a point of order that was acceptable either to me or to the House.

Mr. Caborn: On a further point of order, Madam Speaker. Are you saying that in future we adjourn any Committee of the House to make sure that we can be present on the Floor of the House to answer personal allegations? Is that the guidance that you are giving to hon. Members?

Madam Speaker: These are occasions when hon. Members must determine their own priorities. It is not for the Chair to do so. Once one hon. Member has informed another hon. Member that he is going to raise an issue, it is for that hon. Member to determine what his priorities are.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): On a different point of order, Madam Speaker. I pay tribute to the way in which you have chaired the House, particularly during Northern Ireland questions, but my point of order arises out of today's and previous Northern Ireland questions. In the first 10 questions today, three Northern Ireland Members had questions and were ready to be called. I happen to believe that this is the House for the whole of the kingdom; on the other hand, we in Northern Ireland have this rare opportunity to bring specific issues to the House.

Today, when the first question had been answered, the hon. Member asking it left the Chamber, and another hon. Member withdrew his question. Bearing in mind that there are only 16 hon. Members who can come once a month for Northern Ireland questions, and also that, on the law of averages, we find it quite difficult to come up when we table other questions, is there any way that a greater proportion of Northern Ireland Members may have an opportunity of asking their supplementary questions rather than allowing certain hon. Members, as happened today, to farm out questions, thereby ensuring that we are down the list?

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is the luck of the draw where questions fall on the order paper. I understand his frustration and that of all hon. Members from Northern Ireland who would like to come out very high on the paper as a result of the ballot; but I see from my notes that I called the hon. Gentleman on question No. 1.

I think that the hon. Gentleman is making another point, which I understand and which I have mentioned before. There are occasions when hon. Members put their question, listen to the answer and then leave the Chamber. They are perfectly entitled to do so ; I simply happen to believe that it is a matter of courtesy to the House to stay for five or 10 minutes at least, until the House has moved on to other questions, but that is a purely personal opinion, because I would like to bring a little more courtesy into our dealings in the House.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I do not want to detain the House, but further to the point of order raised earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), and agreeing entirely with the point that you have just made about courtesy in the House, will you confirm that it would make your task easier, bearing in mind the difficulties that arise, if hon. Members on both sides could have heed to exchanges such as those which are made more difficult when hon. Members are chairing Select Committees or other major Committees? After all, there are plenty of opportunities to raise matters in the House when the hon. Members referred to are present.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that it would be helpful all round if, as the hon. Lady said, when matters like that are raised by hon. Members, they take into account the other responsibilities of hon. Members.

BILL PRESENTED

RAILWAYS

Mr. Secretary MacGregor, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Mrs. Secretary Shephard and Mr. Roger Freeman, presented a Bill to provide for the appointment and functions of a Rail Regulator and a Director of Passenger Rail Franchising and of users' consultative committees for the railway industry and for certain ferry services; to make new provision with respect to the provision of railway services and the persons by whom they are to be provided or who are to secure their provision; to make provision for and in connection with the grant and acquisition of rights over, and the disposal or other transfer and vesting of, any property, rights or liabilities by means of which railway services are, or are to be, provided; to amend the functions of the British Railways Board; to make provision with respect to the safety of railways and the protection of railway employees and members of the public from personal injury and other risks arising from the construction or operation of railways; to make further provision with respect to transport police; to make provision with respect to certain railway pension schemes; to make provision for and in connection with the payment of grants and subsidies in connection with railways and in connection with the provision of facilities for freight haulage by inland waterway; to make provision in relation to tramways and other guided transport systems; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 117.]

The Gulf and RAF

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

[Relevant documents: The Second Report from the Defence Committee on Procurement of Advanced Air-to-Air Missiles, HC 115 of Session 1991-92, the Second Special Report containing the Government's Reply thereto, HC 350 of Session 1991-92, the Sixth Report on the European Fighter Aircraft, HC 299 of Session 1991-92, and the Fourth Special Report containing the Government's Reply thereto, HC 262 of Session 1992-93.]

Madam Speaker: May I say at the start of the debate that I have had to impose a time limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm.

4.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The House last debated the Royal Air Force in May 1991, soon after the Gulf conflict. Operations mounted by coalition air forces over the past week have shown once again the exceptional standards of quality and professionalism which the service maintains and explain why we are combining this year's RAF debate with a debate on recent events in the Gulf.

My main themes this afternoon will be challenge and change. The RAF faces the challenge of mounting operations in Europe and the middle east when it is in the midst of an unprecedented period of restructuring as a result of changes in the strategic environment. I intend to deal with the changes being experienced by the RAF before turning to the wider issues of the Gulf.

Since our last debate, we have made considerable progress with the implementation of the plans announced for Britain's defences for the 1990s. In Germany, RAF Wildenrath closed at the end of last year and RAF Gutersloh will be handed over to the Army at the end of 1993. Three Tornado GR squadrons have been disbanded and one Tornado reconnaissance squadron has moved to the United Kingdom. The remaining four RAF Germany Tornado squadrons will be based at RAF Bruggen. The two Germany-based Harrier squadrons have moved from Gutersloh to Laarbruch, with the composite squadron of Chinook and Puma support helicopters due to follow in March.

In the United Kingdom itself, RAF Marham and Lossiemouth will be the main operating bases for our Tornado reconnaissance and anti-shipping forces.

The main thrust of United Kingdom air defence will continue to be provided by Tornado F3 squadrons based at RAF Leuchars, Coningsby and Leeming—as well as by ground-based systems. The Phantom and Shackleton fleets have been withdrawn, the latter being replaced by a Sentry E-3D AWACS squadron at RAF Waddington. The Nimrod maritime reconnaissance force, comprising three squadrons, is now collocated at RAF Kinloss.

We announced our plans for the future development of the search and rescue force in October, in the light of the reduction in military flying. The RAF in the future will have an all-Sea King SAR fleet.

There will also be major changes for the RAF Regiment, reflecting the adjustments to aircraft basing.

These major changes in our front line capability will be matched by a streamlining of the support area. Since the middle of 1991, we have announced the closure of 13 RAF stations in the United Kingdom, most of which house support units. In addition, last November, we proposed that the RAF ground training organisation should be rationalised from six stations to three, with major savings in running costs. We also need to streamline our headquarters structures. Next year, two new RAF headquarters will form: logistics command at Brampton/Wyton, and personnel and training command at Innsworth, near Gloucester. This will lead to reductions in RAF HQ manpower of at least 20 per cent.

We have also embarked on an ambitious programme to market-test RAF support activities with a total annual running cost of over £200 million. This is a very significant commitment to the Government's plans to extend competition for the supply of public services.

These changes will have a profound impact on our service personnel, their families and the civilian staff who support them. It will be of paramount importance to ensure that the morale and commitment of our people are maintained as the restructuring is carried through. The RAF has risen to this challenge, as we would expect, with its customary eelan and esprit de corps.

We are making every effort to ensure that manpower reductions are achieved as far as possible by natural wastage and voluntary redundancy. Some compulsory redundancies are inevitable, but all the 960 or so RAF redundancies necessary up to 1 April 1994 will be filled by volunteers. A second phase will be necessary during 1994 and 1995, details of which will be announced in due course.

The restructuring process is happening when fewer people are leaving the RAF. Our manpower intakes are at historically low levels. But it is vital for the future that we ensure that the RAF continues to be seen as a top-grade employer. As the economy improves and our manpower requirements stabilise, we shall need to improve and increase our recruiting. Hon. Members will be aware of steps being taken by the services in the equal opportunities field. In the RAF, women are now employed in almost all branches and trades, without significant restrictions. Since the last RAF debate, all aircrew roles have been opened to women, including those on fast jets. Two female pilots and nine female navigators have entered squadron service. A further 29 female pilots and 13 female navigators are undergoing training.

Our policy is that the new force structure should be well equipped, highly trained and properly manned and supported. The keystone of the RAF's future capability is the European fighter project. The project enjoys support from all the main political parties, industry and the trade unions. I am grateful to hon. Members on all sides of the House who have given their support in a very effective and successful fashion in recent months during the period of uncertainty with regard to the future of the European fighter aircraft.

This broad basis of consensus has been of immense help in the recent difficult negotiations. Throughout the uncertainties of the past year, the Government have held to the view that there is a clear and continuing need for an aircraft broadly of EFA's capabilities, both for the defence of the United Kingdom homeland and for operations in other theatres. The programme is the only advanced fixed-wing military aircraft under development in the United Kingdom. It is important and, indeed, vital in terms of United Kingdom employment and technology, but its essential rationale is to meet a military requirement.

The aircraft will be in service throughout the first quarter of the next century. As present events in the Gulf and elsewhere remind us, there is considerable and growing instability in areas adjacent to NATO, both inside and outside Europe. There are uncertainties about how the world will develop. We face the reality of risk and conflict. The aircraft that we procure must be able to defeat the aircraft of any potential adversary that our pilots might be called upon to face during its operational service.

Our current air defence aircraft—the Tornado F3—was designed to intercept bombers at long range. Even if it were updated with more modern missiles and sensors, the F3 would not be a satisfactory counter to agile fighters such as the MiG 29 and the SU27—let alone any future upgrades of those types, or more modern aircraft. We also need an offensive support and tactical reconnaissance capability.

As many hon. Members will know, in the 1950s, the RAF had 12 different types of combat aircraft. We now have five. When the Eurofighter 2000 comes into service that will reduce to three: the Eurofighter 2000, an upgraded Tornado GR1 and the Harrier GR7. The multi-role capability of the Eurofighter will provide operational flexibility and should yield savings in support costs. I am glad that the Select Committee on Defence —which I commend for its excellent report in March last year—shared our view that there remained a requirement for a technically advanced multi-role fighter.

Despite the importance of the Eurofighter, it must be affordable. The production costs which were quoted by industry in April 1992 were higher than expected. As a result, industrial studies for a range of design options were commissioned by the four Defence Ministers from Spain, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom at our Madrid meeting. The studies concluded that a family of aircraft, based on the existing airframe and engine, was the most cost-effective solution to the budgetary and military requirements of all the four partner nations.

At our meeting on 10 December 1992, the four Defence Ministers agreed with the four chiefs of staff that some relaxations in the operational requirement were possible in the light of the changed international security environment. While some differences remained in national requirements, we reached agreement that these could be accommodated in a single collaborative programme, based on the existing airframe and engine. We also agreed that significant cost reductions were achievable with no change to capability, that further savings were possible with some reduction in performance and that the resulting aircraft should be renamed Eurofighter 2000. Deliveries to the United Kingdom and Italy will commence in the year 2000, and to Germany, and probably Spain, in 2002.

Considerable work remains to be done. We need to agree a revised programme and the differing standards of national variants. Detailed technical and financial negotiations with industry will be required, but our agreement means that the Royal Air Force can look forward with confidence to getting the aircraft that it needs to meet its operational commitments well into the next century.

Flexibility and mobility are the hallmarks of the new NATO strategic concept. Air power is well able to meet these challenges and the Royal Air Force will be making a significant contribution to the air element of NATO's new reaction forces.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The House is delighted to hear what the Minister is saying. Could he give an assurance that the Government will never flinch from increasing manpower if necessary?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course that is the case. We remain committed to ensuring that the forces have the manpower. Such manpower must be capable of dealing with any of the obligations that may be imposed on it without unreasonable stress and strain. That is an important obligation, and we must keep it carefully under review.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am sure that the House welcomes the commitment to ensuring that Britain possesses an adequate air defence capacity. Clearly, the Air Force must have high-quality combat aircraft. If the Air Force is to fulfil its continuing international obligations, it is essential that it has adequate transport and communications aircraft. Does the Minister accept that, although the Hercules may be superbly well maintained, it is an aging aircraft and it is in heavy use serving throughout the world? It cannot be many years before the Secretary of State or his successor will have to order a new aircraft to replace it.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is right to pay tribute to the Hercules. It has, indeed, served Britain and continues to serve Britain in a superb fashion. But it is also right that we should give thought to the long-term replacement for Hercules. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that thought is being given to precisely that question.

The forces that I have described will enable NATO to respond rapidly and effectively to any crisis within Allied Command Europe. A total of up to 80 RAF aircraft will be available to the air reaction force. They will provide a broad range of capabilities for both the immediate and rapid reaction components of the force. Contributions will be drawn from the Tornado, Harrier and Jaguar forces. Rapier surface-to-air missiles will also be assigned.

The relevance, and immediacy, of this shift of emphasis to more mobile forces is amply demonstrated by the range of operations in which the RAF is currently involved. I should mention here the RAF's continuing contribution to the anti-terrorism campaign in Northern Ireland. As the House knows, the RAF Regiment provides vital ground defence for RAF Aldergrove. Wessex, Puma and Chinook helicopters provide support for the security forces and the Northern Ireland Office.

The RAF is making a key contribution to our support for the United Nations Security Council resolutions on the former Yugoslavia. Hercules aircraft contribute to the UN airlift of relief supplies into Sarajevo. These operations have had to be suspended whenever there is a risk that the aircraft will come under attack from the warring factions which surround Sarajevo. The most serious such incident, as the House will know, was the tragic loss of an Italian transport aircraft due to a missile attack on 3 September. But despite the dangers, the operation has continued whenever possible. So far, 310 flights by RAF Hercules aircraft have been successfully completed, bringing 4,152 tons of much needed aid to the people of Sarajevo. This is an important humanitarian role, which has been conducted with bravery and skill. Other Hercules undertake resupply sorties in support of the United Kingdom contribution to the UN protection force in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[Mr. Rifkind]

Following NATO's agreement to the United Nation's request to assist in first monitoring and then enforcement of sanctions and the arms embargo, RAF Nimrod aircraft have been involved in a 24-hour surveillance operation to identify embargo-breaking vessels to the naval task force. The aircraft are currently deployed to Sicily as part of these operations. E3-D aircraft have joined a multinational force monitoring the air space of the former Yugoslavia in support of the United Nations resolution banning military flights over the area.

We have also deployed two Hercules aircraft, together with about 90 RAF personnel, to assist in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. The aircraft are currently based with United States forces in Mobasa in Kenya. Since 12 December they have been engaged in the transport of humanitarian relief stores to affected areas inside Somalia. They have so far delivered over 3 million pounds of stores.

I turn now to recent events in the Gulf. Given the RAF's contribution in that region throughout the momentous events of the past few years, it is particularly appropriate that we should do so in conjunction with the annual debate on the RAF. Since the Gulf conflict ended in February 1991, RAF aircraft have been deployed again to the Gulf on two seperate operations. In both cases the aim was the same: to help protect the civilian population of Iraq from the brutality of the regime in Baghdad—first, the Kurdish people in the north of Iraq from April 1991 and then the peoples of the marsh area in the south from August last year. The United Kingdom joined our United States and French allies in a coalition which established no-fly zones over the north and south of the country in support of United Nations Security Council resolution 688, which called on Iraq to cease repression of its civilian population. I should like to make it clear that the coalition is committed to the territorial integrity of Iraq, which is not threatened in any way by the existence of the no-fly zones.

Eight Jaguar aircraft and two VC10 tankers, based at Incirlik in Turkey, mount reconnaissance patrols over the northern no-fly zone. A similar function is performed by six Tornado GR1 and two Victor tankers in the south. Hon. Members will be aware that the Turkish Government recently agreed to extend the basing arrangements at Incirlik for a further six months. We are seeking the agreement of the Turkish authorities to base Harrier GR7 aircraft there from April in place of the Jaguars.

We should not let current preoccupations obscure the valuable contribution which the RAF has made to the no-fly zones in quieter times, when the attention of the world was elsewhere. The civilian populations of northern and southern Iraq have gained great comfort from the presence of coalition aircraft overhead. They appreciate more than anyone what Saddam Hussein might have thrown at them but for the existence of the no-fly zones. We expect RAF patrols to continue over the no-fly zones for the foreseeable future.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I agree with the Secretary of State entirely about the work that the RAF has done in policing the no-fly zone. He will recall that recently there was speculation that it might be necessary for the United Kingdom to deploy ground forces in Kuwait. That danger may have receded over the past few days, but it may recur. In the event of that happening, and while we are so heavily involved in Bosnia, can the Secretary of State be sure that it will not be necessary to withdraw from Northern Ireland either of the additional battalions that have been deployed there recently?

Mr. Rifkind: I am aware of the reports to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but we have not yet received any requests from the Government of Kuwait for the deployment of any forces to Kuwait. Obviously, only if such a request were received would it be necessary to consider it. In any event, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we would not allow a request from any other part of the world to determine our obligations to the need for security forces to operate within the United Kingdom. Our commitments within the United Kingdom must always take precedence over any other international obligation, however important.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Does the Secretary of State intend to comment on the substantial change in the attitude adopted worldwide towards the decision to resume bombing last week? Is he aware that the Russian Government have expressed anxiety, that the Arab League has come out against it, that representatives of the Iraqi opposition, the Shi'ites and the Kurds, have come out against it, that the French Government have expressed anxiety and that carefully filtered statements have been released from No. 10 about six prime ministerial telephone calls to President Bush. What I and my right hon. Friends said on the night of the statement has turned out to be absolutely correct. The bombing has strengthened Saddam Hussein and has undermined the authority of the United Nations Security Council and the policy that the right hon. and learned Gentleman announced so proudly only eight days ago is in shreds.

For that reason, many hon. Members will vote against the Adjournment tonight because we have been denied the opportunity to express our views against a properly framed Government motion.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman is profoundly mistaken. No one is enthusiastic about military action, but the right hon. Gentleman should reflect on the fact that in the immediate aftermath of the three operations conducted by the coalition countries Saddam Hussein has now allowed United Nations inspection teams back into Baghdad—the first team was allowed in this morning—the attempts by the Iraqis to interfere with the frontier with Kuwait have been suspended and the allied countries are now able to operate in the no-fly zones without attack. The right hon. Gentleman might not like the fact that that has been the direct consequence of the recent action.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Can the Secretary of State tell the House who was responsible for the attack on the Al-Rashid hotel? Was it planned or was it an accident? In either event, will it now be the subject of an inquiry? As he will know, a large number of delegates were attending an Islamic conference in the hotel and they included my constituent, Liaqat Hussain, the president of the Bradford Council for Mosques, who had gone to Iraq to press for the release of two Britons imprisoned there. Will the Secretary of State tell the House who was responsible for that reckless, irresponsible and ill-advised attack?

Mr. Rifkind: The fact that the hon. Gentleman is even prepared to contemplate that the missile which struck that hotel might have been aimed at it deliberately shows the nature of his prejudices. It must be obvious to him that, whatever the source of the incident, it would not have been the deliberate desire of any country to inflict damage on a civilian hotel—*[Interruption.]* So far as the consequences are concerned, I have not the slightest doubt that if the United States Government conclude that a cruise missile was responsible for the incident, they will wish to take all the necessary steps to try to identify the reasons why that might have happened, but the ultimate responsibility for an incident——

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): They have accepted that it was.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would contain himself.

Mr. Rifkind: Responsibility for any incident that has taken place in recent times must lie with Saddam Hussein, whose behaviour caused the necessity for coalition operations in support of United Nations resolutions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: If I may be allowed to continue a little longer, I shall happily give way to other hon. Members.

I have already reported to the House the details of the coalition action against Iraqi air defences on 13 and 18 January and paid tribute to the service personnel involved. The House will be aware that the operations in which the RAF participated were undertaken in self-defence, to protect coalition aircraft patrolling the southern no-fly zone. The right of self-defence is enshrined in international law.

The United Nations Secretary General said on 14 January that air raids against Iraqi air defences on the previous day had a sufficient mandate from the Security Council. The legal position is quite clear. The Government are in no doubt that the actions in which the RAF has participated have been necessary and proportionate to the threat.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On the issue of self-defence, is the Secretary of State aware of the comments by the United States Defence Secretary on 5 January to the effect that Iraqi surface-to-air missile systems are to obsolete and clapped out that they pose a greater threat to the Iraqi troops handling them than to the western allies' aircraft, and that that fact is backed up by the 19th edition of "Jane's Weapons Systems"? Does the Secretary of State still justify the action taken on 17 January? Was it not an over-reaction on the part of the western allies to Saddam Hussein's sabre rattling, which was an attempt to boost his position in Iraq?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady must realise that the coalition action was taken for two reasons: first, in the days following 5 January Saddam Hussein moved new air missile defences into the southern no-fly zone; and, secondly, he permitted, indeed required, Iraqi fighter aircraft to penetrate into the air space over the southern no-fly zone. That dual threat to the coalition aircraft policing the no-fly zone made the action necessary in not only our view but that of the UN Secretary-General.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Defence Secretary accept that there is concern among the allies? The French Government are concerned about the extent to which missile strikes—as opposed to air strikes—to enforce the no-fly zone can be termed to come within the United Nations mandate? Does he accept that concern and will the United Kingdom Government take any action to clarify the extent of the UN mandate under which we are acting?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must be careful before referring to the views of the French Government. On Tuesday this week the French ambassador to the United Nations indicated the full support of that Government for the operations that have taken place, and they were fully involved in the decisions that led to the events in question.

I should like to take this opportunity to update the House on our assessment of the success of the coalition actions against Iraqi air defences. Information that is now available confirms our initial assessment that the actions were highly successful. Severe damage has been inflicted on key targets. Despite the limited nature of the operations, they have significantly degraded the air defence network in southern Iraq. That means that coalition aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone, in support of UN Security Council resolution 688, can do so in greater safety, to the benefit of the civilian population below.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Either force—very limited and measured, bearing in mind the danger of civilian casualties—is used when appropriate, or the allies simply decide that Saddam Hussein may break all the provisions of the ceasefire agreement and may be encouraged by the absence of any response from the allies to go further. Is not that the basic dilemma? Does the Secretary of State agree that it is almost certain—perhaps the word "almost" is not necessary—that, if force had not been used in the first instance, Kuwait would still be under enemy occupation?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct—and not just in regard to what would have happened to Kuwait. If the coalition countries had not responded over the past two weeks, Saddam Hussein's aspirations would not have been satisfied. If he had found that the dispatch of fighter aircraft into the southern and northern no-fly zones and the introduction of new missile defences did not invite a firm and determined reaction from the international community, he would soon have taken further action to reduce the international community's impact. The northern and southern no-fly zones would gradually, but inevitably, have become inoperative. Saddam Hussein would then have started his aggression against Kuwait proper and at some stage the international community would have been required to take action of the sort that we have taken to preserve the independence and integrity of Kuwait.

Opposition Members who have attacked these operations must ask themselves what Saddam Hussein would have had to do to make them recognise the need for firm and decisive action to curb his aggressive instincts. In the past week, it has become clear that, following the firm action that was taken, the international position has been restored. That is something that should be welcomed by all hon. Members.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, in all this, there is another "if"? If Switzerland, Germany, France, Russia and this country had not, since 1975, absolutely poured the most sophisticated arms and arms-making equipment into Iraq, the situation might not have turned out as it has. What will now be done about the pouring of arms to people who may well do the same as has been done by Saddam Hussein? Cannot we learn the lesson that something must be done about the exporting of nuclear weaponry in particular? We do not know how attacks on nuclear installations—if there are nuclear installations—would be monitored.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is quite right to emphasise that enormous care must be taken with regard to the sale of arms to any country. On the question of the approvals that are required before arms sales are permitted, the United Kingdom has tougher controls than virtually any other country.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: Many hon. Members want to take part in this debate. The more interventions I accept, the less will be the chances of other hon. Members to contribute.

With regard to the three operations that have been mentioned, I have heard a figure of 50 per cent. success being loosely quoted in the media. Such figures are meaningless. A mission that achieves its objectives and brings home all its aircraft and aircrew safely is a success. I should emphasise that military operations are not some sort of video game. Anyone familiar with high-technology equipment knows that it is not simply a matter of pressing a button and destroying the target. Modern bombing missions are carried out at high speed, involving split-second decisions and, of course, real people. In fact, the recent coalition action against Iraqi air defences has been highly successful, and I believe that the Iraqis know it.

In this context, the nation can be rightly proud of the contribution made by the RAF. The RAF Tornado GR1 more than lived up to its reputation as a potent and effective attack weapon system. Using the new TIALD pods, and dropping 1,000 lb laser-guided bombs, four Tornado GR1 were successful in severely damaging the precise air defence and control facilities they attacked, first at Al Amarah and later at An Najaf. This is a remarkable performance by any standards.

I wish to dwell for a moment on the matter of collateral damage, which I know is of concern to the House. The coalition went to great lengths to avoid accidental damage to unintended targets. As I told the House on Monday, when the crew of an RAF Tornado aircraft could not clearly identify its target at An Najaf, weapons were not released, in order to avoid collateral damage. I can think of no clearer illustration of the fact that we do not just say these things for public consumption but do something about it, even if it risks failing to attack the target.

It was therefore with genuine regret that we learnt of the explosion at the al-Rashid hotel on Sunday night, during the United States cruise missile attack on a nuclear-related facility. This was a tragic accident involving the loss of civilian life. However, we should not lose sight of Saddam Hussein's persistent defiance of United Nation's Security Council resolution 687—the mandatory resolution establishing the ceasefire following the Gulf conflict—which led to this attack. He alone must bear the responsibility for not conforming to the will of the international community before force became necessary.

The operations against Iraqi air defences have been a success. They have significantly enhanced the safety of coalition aircraft and ensured the continuation of effective no-fly zones, which provide protection for the civilian population of northern and southern Iraq. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, the Iraqis have steadily been abandoning their defiance of resolutions over the past week. Their border incursions have ceased and they have removed their police posts from the demilitarised zone on the border with Kuwait. They have also conformed to the requirements of the United Nations for unrestricted flights for United Nations special commission inspectors into Iraq. These are welcome developments, but clearly not the end of the road. It is a matter of great regret that Saddam Hussein could not simply do what the United Nations requires of him without being forced to it.

Once again the international community has thwarted the designs of Saddam Hussein. In the last few years he has seen the collapse of his efforts to annex Kuwait, to acquire weapons of mass destruction and to crush minorities within his own people. Now his open defiance of the United Nations has been confronted and rebuffed again. The Government remain resolute in their determination to ensure that Iraq will comply with all relevent United Nations resolutions and that Saddam Hussein will not again threaten peace and security in the Gulf region. The Royal Air Force will continue to play a key role in putting this policy into practice.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The Secretary of State has mentioned the question of Saddam Hussein's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. Does he recall that in April 1990, when I pressed the Government to increase the number of inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, I was told that they would not press for more inspections as Saddam Hussein had signed the international non-proliferation treaty and they had full confidence that he would abide by his international obligations and would not develop nuclear weapons? That was five months before Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait.

Would not it be appropriate today for the Secretary of State to engage in a little act of contrition following the Government's sins of commission and omission? We did not have proper intelligence—I use the word literally—about what was going on, although the rest of the world seemed to know, and we were supplying Saddam Hussein with a vast number of products that enabled him not only to build his nuclear arsenals but to make chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Rifkind: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman was successful in predicting Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The entire international community, including the hon. Gentleman and all other hon. Members, should take account of the experience of the past few years, which has demonstrated that Saddam Hussein's word is of very little value and that we must judge his regime by its deeds rather than by its words. That is precisely why the action that has been taken was necessary.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): With regard to the supply to Saddam Hussein of arms and the means of manufacturing them, the Secretary of State will recall that the inspection teams operating in Iraq discovered a great

deal of material relating to suppliers. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman prevail on the United Nations to publish that material so that we may know the identity of the arms exporters in this country who were the friends and allies of Saddam Hussein and the extent of the support that they received from within the ranks of the Government?

Mr. Rifkind: It will be for the United Nations to decide whether to publish any information that it has. In that regard, we are quite happy to abide by its view.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: Several hon. Members wish to speak in this debate, and I have had the indulgence of the House long enough.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Air Force. The House will wish to join me in congratulating the force on reaching that landmark and for the great achievements of the past 75 years.

The House will wish to know that the occasion will be marked by a royal review at RAF Marham on 1 April, at which Her Majesty the Queen will present a new Queen's colour to the Royal Air Force. The review will include a full wing parade, a fly-past of some 150 aircraft, exhibitions and a static aircraft display reflecting the past achievements, present activities, and future aspirations of the RAF.

Mr. Bernie Grant *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: The massive shifts in the world order which we have witnessed over the past few years have thrown up a new strategic situation which requies much greater flexibility and mobility from our forces than ever before. The United Kingdom will continue to require the services to respond—as we have seen in Iraq—to a whole spectrum of unpredictable possible threats and contingencies. It is fitting that, in the 75th anniversary year, we should pay particular tribute to the manner in which the RAF has been able to meet the new challenges it has faced.

RAF aircraft are flying daily sorties over northern and southern Iraq; they are committed to the NATO and United Nations military efforts in the former Yugoslavia; and they are playing a valuable role in the humanitarian role in the distribution of aid to the suffering communities in the former Yugoslavia and in Somalia. Nor should the longer-standing commitments in Belize and the Falkland Islands be forgotten.

The RAF is in transition. The restructuring in which we are currently engaged will ensure that the service continues to be able to meet the requirements placed on it. The men and women of the Royal Air Force have shown how admirably they can cope with the most difficult circumstances. I pay tribute to them for their bravery, commitment and professionalism. With well-trained and well-motivated personnel and with modern equipment—particularly now that the future of Eurofighter 2000 has been assured—I believe that the RAF can look forward with hope and confidence to its next 75 years.

4.51 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): We are pleased to be having this debate because it gives us an opportunity yet again to register our full support for the Royal Air Force in its efforts over Iraq and elsewhere in the world. As the Secretary of State reminded us, the RAF is deployed throughout the world. It also gives us an opportunity to discuss the way forward in the Gulf, as we believe that we should be discussing not only the recent activities but the ways forward.

Having said that, I must stress to the Secretary of State that today's debate is no substitute for a full-scale debate on the RAF. Hon. Members in all parts of the House wish to raise constituency matters relating to the RAF and operational and logistics aspects of the service. I remind the Government that we have not had an RAF debate since 2 May 1991. I trust that, when he replies to the debate, the Foreign Secretary will confirm that, in the 75th year of the RAF, the Government do not want to be discourteous to the RAF by not providing a full-scale debate in the House of Commons. It would be an insult to the RAF and the House if we did not have such a debate.

In essence, this debate is concerned with the recent raids involving the RAF over Iraq. That is where the public interest lies and the subject on which we must question the Government. Those raids were about the enforcement of no-fly zones over the north and south of Iraq. When those zones were established, they met with almost universal approval. We called for them, we supported them then and we support them now. I pay tribute to the RAF personnel and our allies who have daily patrolled the dangerous skies and whose courage and skill has, for the last 18 months, protected thousands of Shi'ites and Kurds from death and injury.

This is an opportune time to recall why it was necessary to impose those no-fly zones. Saddam Hussein has an atrocious record on human rights. Like most dictators, he has shown the utmost brutality towards minorities and especially against those who disagree with him. He began to use his aircraft to carry out much of that programme of genocide. In the north against the Kurds, he waged chemical warfare in which thousands of innocent men, women and children perished. It is estimated that, in the town of Halabja, 5,000 people lost their lives. In other areas, refugees were gunned down as they tried to flee.

A United Nations official report on the situation in the south speaks of the use of phosphorus and napalm bombs. Reports of chemical warfare were rife. I must add that chemical warfare—indeed, much of the rest of the warfare—was made possible in many instances by equipment supplied by western companies. As the House knows, the British Government have clearly been shown to have treated the United Nations arms embargo against Iraq with a Nelsonian approach, turning a blind eye to breaches.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I welcome the hon. Gentleman's remarks of support for the action in Iraq. Does he agree that the comments of CND—the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament—of which he was a member for five years, are regrettable, particularly the remark that the course of action was regrettable? Will he confirm that he resigned from CND in the light of those remarks?

Dr. Clark: I wish that I had not given way to the hon. Lady [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] She wastes the time of the House and squeezes out other hon. Members who wish to make a contribution to the debate. I do not think my position in the debate over the issues in Iraq is to be doubted.

[Dr. Clark]

Because Saddam Hussein waged wanton genocide, the United Nations was forced to pass resolution 688 demanding that he stop persecuting minorities in Iraq. Later, to ensure that that resolution was implemented, no-fly zones were imposed, a move which at the time met with universal support. I have heard it suggested that they were illegal. No less a person than the United Nations Secretary-General gave approval for their establishment in August 1992 and said that the Security Council had given the allies the necessary mandate.

That was the position then and I take the view that, if it was, and is, good enough for the United Nations Secretary-General, it is good enough for me. It goes without saying that unless those no-fly zones were enforced, they were unlikely to be of any use. Thus, allied aircraft have been deployed to ensure that no Iraqi aircraft can fly in those zones and perpetrate their dreadful crimes on the Kurds and the Shi'ites.

When Saddam Hussein began to install ground-to-air missiles and their associated radars in the no-fly zones—occasionally they locked on to patrolling allied aircraft—he had only one object in mind. That was to deter the patrolling aircraft and make nonsense of the no-fly zones. That could not be tolerated. In effect, he was threatening not only the lives of the pilots but the lives of thousands of innocent people in the north and south of Iraq.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a United States Air Force Wild Weasel aircraft today fired a missile at an Iraqi battery which had directed its laser beam against a French Mirage aircraft? Such a provocative act is further evidence that we cannot place any validity on statements made by Iraq.

Dr. Clark: I was aware of that, having heard about it on the 4 o'clock BBC world news. I gather that further details of the incident are awaited. It seems that the Iraqis locked on to an allied aircraft.

Mr. Winnick: Would my hon. Friend agree that we should be deeply concerned, whatever side we take, about civilian casualties? We should not otherwise be in this House, and certainly not on the Labour Benches. The last person to give lectures about casualties is the criminal dictator in Iraq who is not only responsible for what my hon. Friend has been describing but it should also be remembered that he initiated that eight years war with his neighbouring country, a war which cost the lives of tens of thousands of people on both sides and no gain was made. That is apart from the gassing of his own people and all the other crimes and atrocities that this evil tyrant has committed.

Dr. Clark: I accept and acknowledge the sincerity of my hon. Friend who feels very strongly about this and I thought he made his point very well. He reinforced the argument I was trying to deploy, that this man has murdered thousands upon thousands of his own citizens and we must never forget that. Even now there are British citizens languishing in the gaols of Iraq. I think of Michael Wainwright, from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), and I think of Paul Ride from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard). They are languishing in those gaols for no other reason than that they inadvertently crossed the border. They committed no crimes, yet we do not know in what conditions they are being held. I hope that when the Foreign Secretary winds up he will be able to give us some more information about that.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): May I return to the point which the hon. Member made about the safety of our own aircrews? He will no doubt have read that in the north, a definite ambush was set up and MiG fighters were deployed to try and draw our fighters into an ambush so that those ground-to-air missiles could hit them. Does that not emphasise the fact, which if I may say so has not been emphasised from his own Benches, that we have to do something, if only for the safety of our own people, apart from all the points that he has been making.

Dr. Clark: I hoped that I had made the point that that is basically what it is all about and it was because of that that it was right to target purely military targets, not civilian targets and the bombing raids were necessary and justified, if we were going to enforce the no-fly zones. There have been questions as to whether the actions—the western reaction of the past week—were in accord with United Nations resolutions.

Mr. Bernie Grant: As the Secretary of State would not answer my question and my hon. Friend appears to be a friend of the Secretary of State, perhaps he will answer my question. I specifically asked the Secretary of State last Wednesday about targeting and he gave the impression then that all the targets would be in the no-fly zones. We now learn that the British Government supported the Americans when they launched the cruise missiles at Baghdad, which is outside the no-fly zone. Could my hon. Friend explain why there has been this change of mind by the Secretary of State and has the Secretary of State misled Parliament in what he said last Wednesday?

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend was less worthy than he normally is in his initial comment, but I honestly cannot say what the Secretary of State thinks. His mind is beyond himself, let alone me. I cannot interpret that.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): I accept that my hon. Friend cannot speak for the Secretary of State, but can he give his own opinion and will he take this opportunity to condemn the American cruise missile attack on Baghdad, which clearly had nothing to do with the defence of the no-fly zones?

Dr. Clark: Yes. We have made clear our position with regard to the justification for those raids. We have said that, if they are in accord with United Nations resolutions, if they are within international law and within the level of proportionality, they are justified. In the case of the American raid we say clearly, and said immediately after the raid, that enough was enough of that sort of raid and that the whole issue should be referred back to the United Nations. That was our position on Monday. It is our position now and I hope that that is clear.

If I might continue about the legality of these raids. The custodian of those United Nations resolutions is the Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali. He has made the position clear about the legality of the no-fly zones. He repeated the position about the latest raid last week and said:

"The raid was carried out in accordance with a mandate from the Security Council under resolution 678, and the

motive for the raid was Iraq's violation of resolution 687, which concerns the cease-fire. As the Secretary General of the United Nations, I can tell you that the action taken was in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council and the Charter of the United Nations."

That is pretty clear to me. It is not like the Secretary of State's mind. We understand it clearly. We are therefore completely satisfied that the raids in which we were involved were covered by the United Nations mandate and were in accord with international law. As such, they have our full support, but we also feel that it is now appropriate to pose the question as to which is the best way forward. Where do we go to? One thing is clear: no matter how important this affair is—and it is important—we must not allow Saddam Hussein to dominate the world political stage. He is not the most important person in the world, and there are considerable problems elsewhere. I think of Cambodia, Bosnia, Somalia, and of Mozambique, and I could go on. There are other problems. We must not get this out of proportion.

We all know that Saddam Hussein is a chancer as well as a bully. Of course he resented the ceasefire terms imposed on him by the United Nations and he thought he had a chance. He saw a window of opportunity in which he could rid himself of some of those obligations. He thought that Europe was preoccupied with the Bosnian situation. He knew that the Americans had 30,000 troops trying to provide relief aid in Somalia. They had their hands full. He looked at the presidential changeover period in the United States and thought that that would blur decision-making so he took a chance. He thought it was an opportunity to ease some of the burdens of the United Nations resolutions and he has been shown in no uncertain terms that he cannot do so.

His actions and the United Nations' response have sparked a debate which raises many pertinent questions, not least of which is how the United Nations enforces resolutions in the new world order, following the end of the super-power confrontation.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the incursions that took place before these raids and were used as justification for them, took place in land that was clearly in Iraq before the commencement of the invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf war? Will he also say how the Iraqi regime was to negotiate about the borders when those in the west were not interested in negotiating with them about that?

Dr. Clark: I can confirm that what my hon. Friend has said is a fact. That land used to be Iraqi. It was declared a demilitarised zone until last Friday when it became part of Kuwait. That is my understanding of the situation. He is right. I am not justifying our attacks within the no-fly zone on the incursions into Kuwait, serious as they were, but justifying trying to save the lives of thousands of Shias and Kurds who would suffer if those no-fly zones were lost.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that the radio of the Voice of the Kurds which broadcasts from the organisation, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which is the socialist party within Kurdistan which has 49 per cent. of support within the democratically elected Kurdish Parliament, elected last year, has called on the Iraqi people and Iraqi army to rise up and overthrow Saddam and his brutal dictatorship? Is he also aware that despite some calls from some quarters in the Arab world against this action, there are large numbers of people including the Iraqi democratic opposition who believe that it is time that the United Nations and the international community started to give its aid and assistance to that democratic opposition? The humanitarian aid should no longer go through Saddam's regime: it should go directly to those who need it so that Saddam and his forces are not reinforced by it.

Dr. Clark: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention, because it accords with the information that I have been receiving over the past 24 hours. I have been on the telephone to people connected with the Iraqi National Congress—the official opposition forum for Iraq, and other groups who have been involved with the Kurds and the Shias and Iraqi opposition in general. They told me, "The response was appropriate." That was their reaction to the bombings.

On Monday, I said in the House that after three raids, it was perhaps time to take stock of the situation. I felt it appropriate for the matter to be referred back to the Security Council, not with a view to weakening our resolve or stance against Saddam Hussein but to reassess what had been achieved and to develop a more long-term and coherent strategy of how he could be forced to comply with UN resolutions. We were delighted when that course was followed but disappointed that the Government did not take more of a lead.

Of necessity, the Security Council discussion on Tuesday was somewhat restricted in its terms, and we still feel that a further discussion would be useful. A discussion in the Security Council would have the advantage not only of taking stock, but would allow us to maximise support in the coalition ranged against Saddam Hussein. We felt that any misunderstanding could lead to disagreements with our Arab friends and allies. That must be avoided if our longer-term objectives are to be achieved in the middle east.

The Gulf affair raises the whole prickly issue of how United Nations resolutions are to be enforced. As we enter a new era without the two super powers and their client states there is clearly a new enhanced role for the UN, but the UN must be more than a mere debating chamber. Its resolutions need to be enforced. Our experience of the League of Nations shows that the will of the international community needs to be enforced and not merely expressed. What may be appropriate in one situation may not be appropriate in another. Different situations demand different solutions. We need flexibility and, of course, the cardinal rule must be that force must always be the weapon of last resort.

In the past individual nations or groups of nations have taken on the responsibility to ensure that United Nations resolutions were enforced. Last week the United States, Britain and France, with the backing of Russia, did that. They had little option if Saddam Hussein was not to continue to flout vital resolutions. We should remember that he had installed missiles in a no-fly zone, and invaded the Kuwait border/demilitarised zone and taken missiles. I am sure that my hon. Friends will agree that that was not in accord with the United Nations resolution.

He also refused permission for United Nations weapons inspectors to fly in and perform their task. That task is vital to ensure that Saddam Hussein does not continue to build up his chemical and nuclear warfare capacity. That task had to be enforced. However, we accept that the sensitivities of some of our middle east

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allies were affected. That can be overcome in the longer term by the United Nations being given the means to work through other regional groups as was envisaged in chapter 8 of the United Nations charter.

In the new world order, the United Nations must be modernised to accommodate its burgeoning peacekeeping and peacemaking operations. I am always surprised by the number of places in which the United Nations is trying to keep the peace, to keep warring groups apart and, sometimes, to make peace. It is appropriate to consider rejuvenating the military staff committee. We should debate the establishment of a joint military planning group within the United Nations.

There is an urgent and immediate need for a high technology communications unit in the United Nations to help co-ordinate military operations. Military units operating under the United Nations should be able to communicate as effectively with the the United Nations as with their national Governments. Without such facilities, it will be difficult for forces to continue to operate effectively under the aegis of the United Nations. The Secretary-General has produced a report on that and other issues, and I hope that the Government will press for some reform along those lines.

The United Nations must pursue non-military means with even more vigour, especially in relation to their use in Iraq. Should not we consider a resolution spelling out that if Iraq had a Government who would abide by the ceasefire conditions, did not persecute their minorities and accepted all the pertinent United Nations resolutions the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations would be lifted, making life much more tolerable for the ordinary people of Iraq with whom we have no quarrel?

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: No. I should like to continue.

Over the past few weeks, many young men in the RAF and their colleagues in allied air forces risked their lives in raids against Saddam Hussein. Let us not forget that. They took no pleasure in that, but they did it in an attempt to force him to comply with UN resolutions. They were spelling out that he could not flout the wish of the rest of the world. Thankfully, they all came back and we have edged away from the immediate prospect of out-and-out hostilities into which we seemed to be drifting on Monday. The position is now much more hopeful.

Saddam Hussein—if I dare say it—has declared a ceasefire; President Bush has been replaced by President Clinton; and the United Nations inspectors are being allowed back into Iraq on UN terms. That is a much more hopeful scenario than the one that prevailed seven days ago.

Mr. Brazier *rose*——

Mr. Cormack *rose*——

Dr. Clark: No, I will not give way.

We must build on those positive aspects. We must work within the UN to make it more effective in carrying out its resolutions. While we are doing that we must tell Saddam Hussein that we will not tolerate his persecution of his minorities or his threats to his neighbours. It must be made absolutely clear that he cannot renege on the ceasefire terms and that United Nations resolutions will not be broken with impunity.

5.17 pm

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I fully associate myself with what the Secretary of State for Defence said about Her Majesty's Royal Air Force. As one who benefited greatly from the support of the Royal Air Force during the tramp across Europe in the second world war, I appreciate it as much as anybody.

I should like to raise two issues in relation to the far east. I agree with the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) about seeking a way forward, because as far as I can see no one is doing that. People are still dwelling in the past. In the past few days the situation appeared to deteriorate into a personal vendetta between the American president and Saddam Hussein. One must try to find a solution.

I also agree with the hon. Member for South Shields about the Secretary-General's views on the necessity for a proper communications system. The previous Secretary-General told me that his greatest regret was that he saw no signs beforehand of the Iraqi attack on Kuwait—that it was impossile for him to do so because no satellites or intelligence services were at his disposal and the powers did not give him any information about their expectations in international affairs, in respect of conflicts between nations. Obviously that should be remedied as quickly as possible.

One understands the attacks on President Saddam Hussein perfectly well. He was attacked because he started the war against Iran, but one must remember that in that respect he was supported by the whole Arab world, which regarded Iran as its greatest threat, and by a large part of the western world—which took the same view and proceeded to supply President Saddam Hussein with all the weaponry of war necessary for his purpose. In condemning President Saddam Hussein for the damage that he has brought upon his people, one must remember also what happened in Iran under the last regime and the destruction that it brought to the people of that country. Both are equally worthy of condemnation.

As to the future, with the change in the American presidency we have reached the stage where the United nations Secretary-General can himself be called in to deal with the hopeful signs mentioned by the Opposition spokesman, and identify whether there is a genuine policy behind them or whether they were made purely for propaganda purposes. The matter can no longer be dealt with by the four powers, who are already beginning to break up. The United Nations is really in the hands of the four powers mentioned today. That cannot continue if we are to find a way forward, because they are all so committed to their past. That applies to our own Government as well.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is now prepared to step back and to take an entirely fresh look at how the situation can be dealt with in the future. I note that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has a grin on his face, as he so often has at any suggestion of that kind. His views would carry a little more weight if he told Israel to implement the United Nations recommendations and suggested that force be used against Israel to get it out

of the occupied territories and that Israel take back the 400 helpless people who, in the cold of winter, it threw into territory that it does not occupy. If the hon. Gentleman did that, I might pay some attention to his views.

Mr. Winnick: The right hon. Gentleman is right to attack Israel's action and the people whom he mentioned should never have been deported. That was not in accordance with international law and I cannot disagree with the right hon. Gentleman on that. However, does he recall his earlier speeches, and in particular an article of his that was published in *The Independent* just before Christmas 1990, in which he defended and justified Saddam Hussein's position towards Kuwait, and to which I replied at the time?

Before I take any lectures from the right hon. Gentleman about Israel or the middle east, I remind him that when he was Government Chief Whip at the time of the Suez crisis, I and many other Members of Parliament demonstrated against British aggression in Egypt, which —as we knew at the time—was done in collusion with France and Israel. Instead of resigning, as Edward Boyle and Anthony Nutting did, the right hon. Gentleman kept himself in government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is outside the scope of the debate.

Sir Edward Heath: The hon. Gentleman did not deal with my point that he is not prepared to say that force should be used against Israel to make it carry out United Nations recommendations. He never—not for a moment —deals with that point.

There is also a lesson to be learnt from Suez. Today, Governments still expect to get rid of President Saddam Hussein. I never justified his conduct, but I explained how he had made such a complete misjudgment because of the support he previously received from the Arab and the western world—and, as we are now learning, right up to the last minute from President Bush and the American ambassador. However, that did not justify his actions in any way.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) mentioned 1956. Afterwards, everyone said that the thing to do was to get rid of Abdel Nasser. We never did; he was there for another 14 years and died of a heart attack. For the powers to say, "We must get rid of President Saddam Hussein," does no more than give him additional publicity and strengthen his country. I wish that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence had acknowledged that in his speech.

Furthermore, recent action has alienated us from the rest of the Arab world.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd) *indicated dissent.*

Sir Edward Heath: There is no use my right hon. Friend shaking his head. He is just not in with the Arab world. I did my best to get him there when he was one of my Private Secretaries. I took him around the Gulf with me, but it will take more than that to get him to understand that recent action has alienated a large part of the Arab world. That alienation lessens our influence and damages our economic and trade position with the Arab world. Meanwhile, the rest of the European countries are getting on with it and gaining a lot of benefit while we lose. That is why we must abandon the idea that we must get rid of President Saddam Hussein before anything else can be done.

Mr. Hurd: I gladly acknowledge that I owe a large part of my education to my right hon. Friend. It has moved on a little in some respects since those days, but I certainly acknowledge the debt. I hope that we are reasonably in touch with the Arab world. I believe that it would have dismayed the Arab world much more—even those who utter some discontent now—if we had allowed Saddam Hussein to exploit what he saw as a moment of weakness and uncertainty in the western world. If, as a result, we were today in a position in which the integrity of Kuwait, with its new boundaries, had clearly been violated; in which the United Nations had conditions imposed on it before any inspection teams were allowed into Iraq to examine and destroy chemical and nuclear weapons; and in which allied planes that are helping to protect the Shias and the Kurds had in effect been bullied out of the sky, the tremors of nervousness, dismay and accusation directed from the Arab world reaching their friends in the West would have been overwhelming and very dangerous.

Sir Edward Heath: My right hon. Friend is perfectly entitled to his view, and I would not challenge part of it. The damage has been caused by the attack on the alleged arms factories outside Baghdad which alienated public opinion. There is no use my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence saying, "In any case, it is all Saddam Hussein's fault," because that is not accepted. If we decide to bomb targets where there are questions of legal justification and that action does undesirable harm, of course we lose out. That is where the whole question arises of how the situation should be handled and it is a question of utmost importance. There is far too much of, "Whatever happens, it is all President Saddam Hussein's fault." That is not how the rest of the Arab world sees it.

Another factor left out of the account in looking to the future is the action of Iran, which has not been mentioned by either my right hon. and learned Friend or Labour's Front-Bench spokesman. There is undoubtedly a desire on the part of Iran, and the opportunity, to penetrate the southern area of Iraq, as it has tried to do for decades and centuries and against which we must guard. No action has been taken and I would like assurances on that aspect.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said that Kuwait has made no request for British forces to be sent there. I am reassured by that, but I want a reassurance from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that if any such request is made, it will be turned down at once. We cannot become involved in having ground forces in Kuwait against any possible threat from Iraq. We cannot accept that for one moment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?] I will explain why.

Such action will again deepen the hostility of the rest of the Gulf towards this country. We got out of it in 1961; now, we will be regarded as the colonial powers returning again. I was responsible for handling the events of 1961. Kuwait asked for complete independence: it wanted control over foreign and defence policy. The Government accepted that, negotiated it and agreed it at the beginning of July. We also said privately, "If there is any threat to you, you can come to us." According to our own

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information, such a threat was posed towards the end of that July. We said, "This is a threat to you. Do you want us to come to your assistance?" The Kuwaitis said yes, so we sent in forces. As a result, the Iraqis—who were on the Basra road—halted and then withdrew.

We then said—this is the important point—"You are now independent in every respect. If you are to have forces here permanently, they should come from the Arab League. They can be placed there as a guard against any attempts from Iraq to the north." The Arab League accepted that: it moved in its forces and we—having gone in at the end of July—withdrew in the middle of October. That was the end of it.

Now, we should get the Arab League to take action and provide what is necessary for the defence of Kuwait. Its members can agree that among themselves. There may be difficulties; the Al-Sabah regime in Kuwait is not the most admired in the Arab world, for good reasons. Nothing that has happened since the war gives us any reason for admiration either. The rest of the Arab world knows that perfectly well. Of course, no one over here ever mentions the fact that many Palestinians and Jordanians who were working in Kuwait have spent all their lives there and have never been allowed back; nor does anyone mention the action taken against individuals who have been allowed no proper trial. However, I do not want to go into all that.

If it is necessary for action to be taken, it should be taken through the Arab League. That will mean active work on the part of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and by the Foreign Ministers of the countries that were involved in the Gulf war. I hope that the Foreign Secretary will accept that.

I have expressed the strongest possible opposition to the sending of British forces to Kuwait. Earlier, a voice behind me asked, "Why?" I have explained one of my reasons; another reason is that, once the forces were there, it would be impossible to get them out. We should find ourselves landed with yet another commitment abroad, in a country where there are no direct British interests. [HON. MEMBERS: "There is oil."] We have all the oil we need. What other British interest is there? We must face facts. The only direct interest that we could have in Kuwait is oil, and we have oil.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I am very interested in my right hon. Friend's idea that we should leave the security and defence of Kuwait to the Arab League. The Arab League has never called itself an effective military instrument, capable of coherent defensive action. That being so, surely it is incumbent on the western allies jointly to secure the interests of their friends in the region—the emirate of Kuwait and the other continguous powers.

Sir Edward Heath: The Arab League has the necessary resources. It has money, equipment and men. My hon. Friend may treat it with contempt, but it worked for many years in the 1960s. What is more, if the Arab League defends Kuwait, it will be much more difficult for Saddam Hussein to use the Iraqis to attack it.

My opposition to sending British forces into Kuwait is equalled only by my opposition to the involving of further British forces in any Yugoslavian action. A ghastly civil war is going on: people are trying to wipe out the legacy of generations and centuries. We cannot do that for them; what we can do is, where necessary, put a fence between Yugoslavia and other countries that might be affected. That is an understandable aim, but we are simply not capable of working out the answer for Yugoslavia.

Perhaps the plan worked out by Lord Owen and his colleague will eventually be accepted; we cannot tell. If it is accepted, however, we shall not know whether it will be kept. Many would want to accept it, get rid of any intervention and then start adjusting again—but this is not a war in which we must become involved. If we send in more forces, we shall become more and more tied down.

We must accept that, if we try to protect humanitarian forces, we are bound to suffer casualties. That cannot be avoided, although it is tragic. Already, tributes have been paid to one soldier whose life was lost in Yugoslavia. What will happen when such events occur constantly? What will the public say if we put forces in, those in the mountains start carrying on as they did during the second world war and all the casualties start coming home? We know that the public are affected by television coverage of those who are suffering now; what will they say when the forces that we put in are in the same condition? I know that, technically, the debate is not about Yugoslavia, but I want to make it absolutely plain how strongly I oppose our being dragged in to Yugoslavia step by step, as is now happening.

Nor should we give way to American pressure. We do not know yet what the new president will want, or how he will conduct himself. If I were the American president, I would be furious about what his predecessor has done during the past 10 days to try to force him into a corner and to deprive him of any freedom of decision in policy matters. To take all public interest from the arrival of a new president so that it will stay with the old one is appalling behaviour on the part of anyone in public life. That is the Americans' affair, however; we do not have to give way to American pressure.

In the 1960s, Harold Macmillan and his Government stood firmly against all American pressure to get us into Vietnam. That pressure was added to by Australia and New Zealand. We continued to stand against it, and how right we were. At the time of the war between India and Pakistan, there was tremendous pressure on us to become involved. Macmillan and his Cabinet stood against it: I well remember the emergency meetings that we had. When there was trouble in Jordan and Israel, there was pressure on us to become involved in that, too; we resisted that pressure. When there was war again between India and Pakistan, President Nixon and Henry Kissinger put great pressure on us to go in. We withstood that pressure and said no and we were absolutely right to do so.

There was great pressure for us to go into the Yom Kippur war; we withstood it absolutely. In all those cases, we took the right attitude. I hope that our present Government will stand up to any American pressure to become involved in Yugoslavia, Kuwait or the Gulf. We must concentrate on working out a way of taking publicity away from Saddam Hussein and securing a workable agreement. I think that the UN Secretary-General is probably the person to do that. It must be done personally; it cannot be achieved through long-distance communications—another communiqué here, another decree there. That will not produce the answer. It is time that we got down to the real job of working out a solution for the future.

5.38 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) for introducing an element of reality to a debate that was becoming absorbed in the hype of the last days of President Bush.

I joined the Royal Air Force 50 years ago this year, and qualified as a pilot in 1945—too late to fight. As a former service man, however, let me say that nothing upsets service men more than Ministers' sending them into action, then hiding behind them and saying that those who criticised the action are traitors to their country. The Royal Air Force was formed 75 years ago and some other things that successive Governments have asked it to do are on the record. Squadron Leader Harris—later "Bomber Harris"—used chemical weapons in the twenties against the Iraqis to control the tribesmen. It was the first time that air power had been used for colonial control. That was not the fault of the RAF: it was the post-war Government who decided to use air power to keep Iraq under our control. We may not want such things to be remembered, but in the Arab world they are remembered.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup spoke about Kuwait. He will recall that Selwyn Lloyd sent a message to Foster Dulles in 1958 suggesting that Britain take over Kuwait as a crown colony. Foster Dulles said, "What a marvellous idea." That may not be remembered in the House, but it is remembered in the Arab world.

I hope that many of my hon. Friends will join me in the Lobby against the motion for the Adjournment. It is a disreputable motion. Whenever a decision of policy arises, the Government table a motion that the House goes home. That is what an Adjournment is. We never had a single vote of substance during the Gulf war. We always had to vote on the Adjournment. Let us be clear that, by voting against the Adjournment, those who take my view—I do not know how many there are—are voting against the wickedness of the bombing that occurred in the past 10 days, and I will tell the House why.

During the Gulf war, we were told that Saddam Hussein was comparable to Hitler. Incidentally, that was a description used in connection with Nasser as well. Subsequently, however, we have learnt a lot about the Government's attitude to Saddam Hussein. They armed Saddam Hussein. The present Prime Minister, as Chancellor, provided a credit of £1 million to Saddam Hussein three months before the war. Iraqi pilots were trained by the Royal Air Force until a few days before the war.

There is some evidence to suggest that the American ambassador indicated to Saddam Hussein just before he occupied Kuwait that such a move would be seen in Washington as an Arab matter. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and I both spent many hours with Saddam Hussein arguing that he should withdraw from Kuwait. I do not know what he said to the right hon. Gentleman, but I know what he said to me: "Even if I withdraw from Kuwait, America is determined to destroy me." Everything that has happened since has confirmed Saddam Hussein's analysis of American policy.

It was not a question of human rights; otherwise, why would Saudi Arabia have received different treatment? There is no democracy in Saudi Arabia. The al-Sabah family run Kuwait. Why have not we heard the great spokespeople on the Conservative Benches on the subject of civil rights in Kuwait.

What about the Palestinian question? Have the Government ever really seriously contemplated exerting the sort of pressure—I am not talking about military pressure—on Israel that might have forced her to respect the resolutions concerning Palestine or even the recent evictions of 400 people? I am a lifelong member of Labour Friends of Israel because I believe in Israel's right to survive. But the Government have never been serious about implementing United Nations resolutions involving Israel.

British Governments did nothing when Turkey invaded Cyprus. Why? Because Turkey was the bulwark of the west against the Soviet Union. We ought at least to understand that the rest of the world understands that what is going on here is odious hypocrisy.

The language used is so false. If a woman is shot in Belfast, as happened the other day, that is terrorism. If a women is killed in the al-Rashid hotel in Baghdad, that is the international community introducing a proportional response. If anyone tries to kill someone else in Bosnia, we send in Lord Owen to tell both sides to stop.

The Minister cannot get away with the fraudulent arguments that he put to the House last week and this. Although he did not like to admit it, he has even produced a slight change of opinion among those on the Opposition Front Bench, who now say that we should go back to the United Nations. That was not said at the beginning: I do not recall my right hon. and hon. Friends saying then that the action should have been freshly endorsed by the Security Council.

I cannot go into the Lobby to vote for a Government who killed 300,000 Iraqis the year before last.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I shall not give way for the moment.

Do not think that that was all marvellous high technology precision bombing. We know from the recent bombing of the al-Rashid hotel that high technology precision bombing is an illusion pumped out as propaganda.

Mr. Robathan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I shall not give way for the moment.

The Harvard medical team went to Iraq just after the bombing. It said that 150,000 Iraqi babies under five would die because we had bombed the water supply and that cholera and typhoid would spread as a result—and so they did. The other day, a United Nations Children's Fund spokesperson, speaking on the 7 o'clock news, said that cholera and typhoid were still rampant. Why? Because we —the so-called allied forces—bombed the water supply. What military targets were at stake there?

We express horror at ethnic cleansing, but, my God, the Kuwaitis threw out every Palestinian after the war because, for their own reasons, the Palestinians had been sympathetic to Saddam. Saddam was an enemy of Israel. Was not that ethnic cleansing? The Saudi Government threw 750,000 Yemenis out of Saudi Arabia into the Yemen. When did the British Government protest about that? It is odious hypocrisy, and people around the world know it.

Mr. Robathan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I will not give way for the moment, because I am developing an argument which does not carry a lot of support but at least I can make it clear.

Most of hon. Friends will probably abstain in the vote tonight because that is one way of dealing with the matter; Conservative Members will be whipped to vote for the Adjournment; and some Labour Members will go into the no Lobby. We want the House and the country to know why.

Even during the Secretary of State's speech, I noticed little indications that something that is being said has been noted. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said very clearly that the no-fly zones are not an attempt to partition Iraq. That came from the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office insisted in a memorandum to the Secretary of State that that should be included. That had to be said because many people in the Arab world think that the no-fly zones are an attempt to partition Iraq. The Turks are terrified that, if the Kurds were really free, there would be trouble in Turkey, where the Kurds are also repressed. As the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, the former Prime Minister, said, if the Shi'ites or some of the marsh Arabs could join Iran, Iran would become a threat. The arguments are fraudulent. The cover is thin.

The truth is that the Government did everything that Bush wanted. I can only say, thank God that Bush has gone. That man did more damage to the true international community than any recent President. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Roosevelt and Truman were very different.

I do not believe for a moment that the Government have majority support for what they have done. People understand very well that what happened was that the British Government, yet again—in contrast to the courage of Macmillan over the Vietnam war and the Indian war as revealed to us by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup—simply went along with everything that Bush wanted. Then, when they realised that it was not popular, they got the press office at No. 10 to pump out a story that the Prime Minister had had five or six telephone calls to Bush, just to drop a little hint that there was more caution in London than they were prepared to admit at the time.

It is a disreputable policy. It is a policy that will lose support worldwide. The Government should not be surprised if it does enormous damage to the United Nations. The other day, I read that students in Ethiopia had demonstrated against the United Nations, which they regard as being no more than a flag surrounding American imperialism. I am very clear about it: I want to see a democratic United Nations. I want the member states to elect the Security Council——

Mr. Robathan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman; he will just have to make his own speech.

The United Nations was intended to be an instrument of the world community to rid humanity of the scourge of war, not a cover for the one remaining super-power to take on board what Queen Victoria tried to do when she sought to run the world herself and through her three grandsons —the King of England, the Kaiser of Germany and the Czar of Russia. Those days of imperialism are over. It may not be recognised by those on the Government Front Bench, but the Government burnt their fingers at the time of Suez. I believe that they will have burnt their fingers again this time for embarking on an operation that could not be justified by any of the arguments. If the world is to deal with violations of human rights and protect the planet, those questions must be dealt with through genuine international action free from the economic interest of one or another super-power.

5.49 pm

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): None of us who sat in the Chamber or served in government during the invasion of Kuwait and its subsequent liberation will have been surprised by the speech that we have just heard from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). If he had had his way, and if the policy of the House and the Government had followed his votes on those occasions, Saddam Hussein would still be in Kuwait. He would still be committing the atrocities and cruelties that it was proved that he committed in Kuwait. Indeed, there cannot be much doubt in the House that his ambitions would have spread far wider still.

I give full marks for courage to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) for his speech, in which he most bravely said that the actions of the United Nations would have the Opposition's full support. That was a brave attempt before the right hon. Member for Chesterfield was let loose. One realises that full support in terms of Labour party attitudes must be severely qualified.

Thank God that, unlike the Parliament in Iraq, we have a Parliament here in which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield can make a speech like the one that he has just made, which was critical of and hostile towards Government policy, and still live to tell the tale. I take some pleasure in that.

The hon. Member for South Shields referred to the length of time that our armed forces, and particulary the Royal Air Force, have been engaged in work within Iraq, and in the skies over Iraq, to save human lives. It is sobering for me to think that it is nearly two years since I stood on the snow-covered hillsides of northern Iraq and met the streams of Kurdish people who were in a pathetic condition, having been driven to the extremities of those mountains through their sheer terror of the threatened genocide of Saddam Hussein and his forces. The House should take pride in the fact that those people live; they are fed, watered and housed. They have come down from the mountain tops and are now back in their villages. To an extent, they are protected by the Peshmerga, their own foot soldiers. That is of course made possible as a result of the air cover provided for all these months by the RAF and the American and French air forces.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield referred to Operation Haven. In that respect, it is right to pay tribute to the attitude of the Turkish Government. It was not an easy decision for them to take. The decision in the Turkish Parliament was by no means unanimous. It raised major domestic problems in relation to the support for the Kurds in northern Iraq. However, the Turkish Government have continued with that policy in the interests of humanity and to save lives.

Operation Haven is now known as "operation provide comfort"—the Americans have a great habit of changing brand names after the original name is established. As my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) will be aware, while the situation in

respect of the southern no-fly zone is tragic, at least that policy has provided some comfort and help in desperate circumstances.

I want first to deal with Iraq as I want to refer directly to the comments of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. However, I am mindful that this debate is also about the RAF. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said, the two subjects are, quite rightly, linked in the debate. I want to address recent events and to draw on my experiences in an earlier incarnation.

We recognise that what we have seen in recent weeks and months is what we saw in the period before the Gulf war broke out. Perhaps tributes should be paid today to former President Bush and former Secretary Baker in respect of the United Nations action in that it was possible to hold together a coalition of such diverse and different countries. At the start of the events, no one would have dreamt that the coalition could have held together in such testing circumstances. It is vital that that coalition should hold together now.

With great respect to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), the Father of the House, I subscribe to the view of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and not to that of my right hon. Friend. My evidence is that, while there will always be Arab concern about the risk of civilian casualties and that any response should be proportional and not excessive, there would have been far greater concern if it appeared that the United Nations no longer cared about the insistence on the ceasefire terms, about the determination to impose UN resolutions or about the need to ensure the destruction of the weapons of mass destruction which could have posed a major threat to neighbouring countries had they not been successfully dealt with.

Saddam Hussein is, as we know, an attentive viewer of CNN. He, like everyone else, knew about the transition period and the change of President. He knew what problems that could pose in the American political scene. We clearly passed through an initial period of challenge and trial by Saddam Hussein, and I believe that we have passed that test in an appropriate and responsible way. If Opposition Members disagree with me, they must recognise that the United Nations' objectives, certainly in the short term, appear to have been achieved. The United Nations' inspectors have returned to Iraq and can continue their work.

We must recognise the determination to maintain UN resolutions and we should not underestimate the work of the UN inspectors. I wonder how many hon. Members have obtained from the Library copies of the 16 reports by the UN Secretary-General on the progress of the work of the UN inspectors which is taking place now in Iraq and which we hope will continue.

How many people understand the scale of the work that has been undertaken? We have now established the new plant to incinerate the bulk mustard agent. How many people are aware that we have now commissioned the plant to destroy the two types of nerve agents that have been identified? Incidentally, both those plants were built by Iraq to UN standards.

How many people are aware that those operations will be centralised with supplies brought to Muthanna? It has been estimated that there is 18 months' work in the destruction of mustard and nerve agents. That information provides some idea of the scale of the resources that have been identified.

How many people are aware of what has already been destroyed? Five thousand sarin-filled 122 mm rockets, 350 R400 aerial bombs, and 44,500 litres of nerve agents have been destroyed. Can the House begin to comprehend the scale of that arsenal and the huge importance of the work of the United Nations inspectors?

Mr. Dalyell: This is not meant in an offensive or hostile way. I simply ask the right hon. Gentleman whether, when he occupied the position of Defence Secretary, he had any idea, before hostilities started, of the scale of the exports and their nature.

Mr. King: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the export of arms, as he knows very well, we imposed the tightest prohibition of any country in the United Nations: no export of arms to Iraq. What we know—and there is no secret about it—is that people were not aware of the extraordinary deviousness and equally extraordinary skill in concealment. It is no secret that some of the chemical manufacturing capability, identical to what is required for agricultural purposes and pesticide manufacture, was disguised as requirements for alternative products; and we also know the sad saga of the supergun. We know to what lengths Saddam Hussein and his procurement operation went to disguise the true purpose of his activities.

Mr. Robathan: My right hon. Friend has given an interesting list of chemical weapons that Iraq possesses. Could he, from the benefit of his previous position, tell the House, particularly Opposition Members, how many chemical weapons the British forces had in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq when we were there two years ago?

Mr. King: We had none, and we would not have had any. This has been our position, as my hon. Friend knows, for very many years.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has said that we must look to the future. We will not find an answer to these unhappy problems if there is a lack of resolve by the United Nations to stand on ground that is sound and just. We must ensure that we take with us in that stance our friends in the Arab world and maintain the coalition. We must ensure that our response to any challenge or provocation is at all times only proportional to such challenge. There must at no time be any doubt in Saddam Hussein's mind of our resolution in that respect.

Reference has been made—it may or may not be true; we cannot be certain about it—to the conversation between the American ambassador at that time and Saddam Hussein, but if there was any evidence in that respect it would merely serve to underline the crucial importance of there being no misunderstanding or room for doubt in Saddam's mind of our determination.

If we need to give proof of that resolution, does it include the necessity to ensure the security of Kuwait and, leading straight on from that, what does it mean for the location of British forces were we to receive such a request? Contrary to what my right hon. Friend said, if it was perceived that there was an urgent, major and early threat to Kuwait, it would be essential for the United Nations to ensure that forces were available so that there was no open invitation to attack. It was the weakness of Kuwait that

[Mr. King]

encouraged the attack on it. There is no way in which Kuwait on its own could possibly defend itself were there to be a major Iraqi attack.

However—this is perhaps where I take my right hon. Friend with me more—it could only be a very short-term operation. He is right when he says that it is not desirable, either from the point of view of our own forces and the climate and conditions in which they would serve or from the point of view of our Arab friends for Western forces to be present in a different culture, which could and would be exploited by Islamic elements seeking to cause and develop grievances. In that respect, therefore, it is not desirable that our forces should be there on any long-term basis.

My right hon. and learned Friend talked about the Arab League. He will know that there is the Gulf Co-operation Council comprising the six Gulf states. The original proposal, at the end of the Gulf war, was that the council, together with Egypt and Syria, would act jointly to provide forces on the ground. Sadly, that proposal seems to be making no progress at all; the latest newspaper report that I read said that it was dead. If it is dead in respect of the location of Egyptian and Syrian forces, I certainly hope that we can look to our friends in the Gulf in the knowledge that in the final analysis we will be anxious to ensure their independence and liberty. We will want to play our part and do anything we can to help if they suffer outside aggression, but the first burden of responsibility should be carried by them.

Whatever the differences between the individual territories concerned, there is a need for real effort. I say this as someone who very much values his friendships with those in positions of responsibility in all the Gulf states. We should be able to expect in future a greater effort to establish a positive and effective co-operative force against the background of the proof that we have given of our willingness to help in their time of need.

More widely, in respect of the Royal Air Force, my right hon. and learned Friend talked about Britain's defences for the 1990s. We know that there are areas, not least in the number of our infantry regiments, where there is concern about numbers and what would happen if commitments were to build, and that this imposes extra stress; but when we are discussing the issue we must not overlook the fact that our Navy, our Air Force and other branches of our Army are also getting on with the changes which are very painful for them all and which involve major upheaval for many of them. I pay tribute to the progress being made by the RAF in the changes that my right hon. and learned Friend announced, which I think are going forward with general agreement and to the benefit of our country in cost-effective defence and the people involved.

My right hon. and learned Friend is right to pay tribute to the RAF, not just for its work in the no-fly zones but for the work that it is doing on what I suppose is probably the most dangerous flight in the world, going into Sarajevo and out again in a Hercules. I do not know whether any hon. Members have invited themselves for that trip, but I am told that one needs to take certain facilities if one undertakes that extremely dangerous flight. It is showing great courage in their support of the people there, in the work done in Somalia and, above all, in the work that is done, as I know so well, in Northern Ireland. We pay tribute to the courage that it shows day and night.

My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the RAF anniversary which will be upon us shortly. It has had some brave anniversaries. Only recently we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Now we are approaching the 75th anniversary of the Royal Air Force itself. It has served our nation well. I am very proud to pay my tribute to it tonight, a night when we know that the service continues, as it does, in the finest traditions of the past.

6.7 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): As some of us thought was inevitable when the change of business was announced, the debate so far has displayed a concentration on the urgent issues raised by Iraq at the expense of some important, long-term questions which are of particular significance to the Royal Air Force. I hope that Government Front-Bench Members will have appreciated that there is a considerable desire on both sides of the House, if some of the issues of importance to the Royal Air Force cannot be debated this evening, for an early opportunity to be found for such a debate to take place.

I would like to deal with three particular issues which are of direct relevance to the Royal Air Force. The first is the European fighter aircraft, which I understand we must now call the Eurofighter 2000, in order perhaps to meet the sensitivities of Mr. Volker Ruhe. In that regard, I offer my congratulations to the Secretary of State, who unhappily has left us for a moment or two. He deserves great recognition for the skill with which he ensured that the European figher aircraft programme will be maintained.

The military case for the European fighter aircraft as the Secretary of State pointed out, is overwhelming. The employment and technological consequences for the United Kingdom industry are extremely significant. I would add to that the political damage which would have occurred had we had yet another failed European procurement programme. After the failure of the NATO "frigate for the 90s" programme, the whole notion of common procurement would have been dealt a severe blow if the project for the European fighter aircraft had had to be shelved. It was generous of the right hon. and learned Gentleman to acknowledge that, in the difficult negotiations with which he was concerned, his hand was substantially strengthened by the fact that he enjoyed the support of virtually the whole House of Commons.

The second issue to which I shall refer—I suspect that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will not be surprised—is that of search and rescue facilities. He will know that this is an issue to which I have given some attention over the past three or four years. He will know also that, because of the proposal for the implementation of the new arrangements for search and rescue on 1 April 1993, this may be the last chance that we have to debate the proposals. Finally, he will know that I have a particular constituency interest in this matter because of the location of RAF Leuchars in my constituency and the provision of search and rescue facilities from that station.

I do not wish to rehearse once again all the arguments in favour of the retention of search and rescue facilities at RAF Leuchars, but I think that it is worth reminding the

Minister and the House in summary of one or two matters which seem to me, at least, to provide an overwhelming case for the Government to think again.

RAF Leuchars is in the front line of our air defence, as the Secretary of State acknowledged in his speech. It is situated by the sea and there are additional rescue operations because of that. B flight of 22 squadron has an outstanding record of achievements in search and rescue and it is inevitable that, as a result of the arrangements to be implemented from 1 April, the level of cover provided by search and rescue in the area around the station will be substantially reduced.

From an answer that I received yesterday, I ascertained that over the past five years search and rescue operations from RAF Leuchars have rescued 352 civilians and 25 military personnel. Some of those people would have been at risk if the arrangements which are to be put into operation after 1 April had been in operation over the past five years.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. and learned Gentleman will understand that during the past few weeks my constituency has taken up what can only be described as an enormous amount of search and rescue helicopters' time. I would like, as I am sure he would, to give credit for the fact that the crews there do far more than their duty requires. In particular, we have been most impressed by what they have done in seeking out and finding all the people stranded as a result of floods and ensuring that no lives were lost.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman anticipated two points that I was about to make. First, although he did not say so expressly, by implication he pointed to the enormous public relations value of these operations. He also pointed, perhaps more directly, to the experience of the past fortnight in his part of Scotland and in mine, where the extreme weather, first snow, and then flooding, has meant that the facilities at RAF Leuchars have been constantly employed, and in a way that does considerable credit to those responsible for these operations. This has served to underline just how significant and important is the service at present provided. There really is an opportunity on this occasion for the Government to think again.

I have to say, perhaps in a slightly partisan way, that throughout the 1992 general election Conservative supporters in north-east Fife accused me of scaremongering when I suggested that search and rescue at RAF Leuchars was at risk. The Government have proved me right and their own supporters wrong. It would be in the interest of the community if the Government were to prove me wrong. That is a burden that I would happily assume for the benefit of the community. There is a chance to think again and I hope that the Government will take it.

The third matter which I wish to raise, dealing most directly with the Royal Air Force, is that of the EH101 support helicopter. The Secretary of State referred to the increasingly important notion of our armed forces operating with flexibility. I want to put a series of questions. I suspect that the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs may not be the best person to answer them, but no doubt the Minister of State will write to me in due course in response to what I have to say.

Can the Minister of State tell us why the Government have delayed issuing the invitation to tender for the utility version of the EH101? He knows that on 9 April 1987 the then Secretary of State committed the Government to 25 EH101s. Why has no contract been placed? Is it understood how important such a contract would be for Westland? It must be understood how important the helicopter is for the Royal Air Force. Will the in-service date of 1997 still be met? If not, has there been a change of date and what is the new date?

Having taken the time of the House to deal with some precise matters concerning the Royal Air Force, I turn to the broader question of Iraq.

The Liberal Democratic party has been content to endorse the action that has been taken so far, based on three criteria: first, that the action generally had the agreement of the coalition allies; secondly, that it could be demonstrated to be in accordance with international law; and, thirdly, that minimum force was used. I believe that those criteria were met.

I am unconvinced by some public protestations of doubts by countries which supported in private the action taken, but which now, for domestic purposes, feel it necessary to add their reservations to others.

The test of the action is that it was effective: Iraq backed down. It described its action as a ceasefire—a characteristically misleading definition of an acceptance of obligations under duress, which I suppose might be more accurately described as a surrender to the inevitable. But we would be wrong to think that this was the end of Iraqi provocation. We would be wrong to think that the self-imposed moratorium, no doubt designed to offer some kind of attraction to President Clinton, would necessarily be continued without limit of time.

It is my belief that in due course there wil be further provocation. Therefore, looking forward, as some have already urged in the debate, the question that we must now ask ourselves is how we should deal with such provocation when it arises. The answer to that question depends upon two related considerations: first, what is our long-term policy concerning the region; secondly, what is the nature of the provocation?

It is in the interests of the region, and certainly in the interests of the United Kingdom, that there should be stability in the middle east. If, by some extravagant response to provocation, we were to cause irreparable damage to the middle east peace process, that might be too great a price to pay. The peace talks, however imperfect, are the best way to achieve stability. I shall be critical of Israel in due course, but one has to recognise that the anouncement today of its intention to remove the legal bar against discussions with the Palestine Liberation Organisation must be seen as an encouraging step that may have far-reaching consequences. It should have happened long ago, but it has happened now and it should be applauded and recognised as having the potential to make a substantial contribution.

We also want Saddam Hussein to be replaced by an opposition in Iraq. If, by over-zealous responses to provocation, we make him stronger, that will hardly serve our interests or that objective. Not every provocation requires a response and not every response needs to be a military one. If force is the only way, we must be prepared to use it, but only when we are satisfied that there is no other way.

Nor should we believe that legal justification is always adequate in itself. Legally justifiable action is all the more acceptable when it carries with it moral authority. Public

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opinion in the streets of Arab capital cities is unlikely to be impressed by the niceties of that least empirical of disciplines, international law.

There has been much discussion of double standards. When we talk about double standards we should impose on ourselves some clear thinking. Not all United Nations resolutions are the same either in their terms or in the action which they authorise. It is facile to say that every solution should be enforced in the same way. Inevitably, there will be resolutions which, by their language, are variable in their strength.

The strength of our political commitment to all resolutions should never be variable. Once passed, all resolutions deserve, even demand, the same political will for their enforcement. Some say that, because we are not displaying the same political will over resolutions relating to Bosnia or the Palestinians, we should not enforce resolutions relating to Iraq. That argument is fundamentally flawed. The proper position to adopt is to say that all resolutions will be enforced with the same political will. That is the only way in which to eliminate double standards.

A moment ago, I said that I would be critical of Israel, and this is the moment when I propose to be so. It is monstrous that, some weeks after the illegal expulsion of about 400 Palestinians, those people are still languishing in no man's land between Lebanon and Israel. That is a clear breach of article 49 of the fourth Geneva convention and of international law, and we should use every means in our power to persuade Israel, which is responsible for expelling those men to that place, to take them back.

Mr. Galloway: Even by bombing?

Mr. Campbell: It is unlikely that the United Nations has the will to enforce the resolution by bombing. If the hon. Member thinks that bombing is a way of persuading Israel to be reasonable, he has a curious appreciation of the mentality of the Government of Israel, although they are a changed Government.

Mr. Galloway: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that I have the greatest respect for him. He is right: Israel would not see sense if it were bombed. Why then would he expect Iraq to see sense if it were bombed?

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman falls into the trap of assuming that each situation is parallel to any other. With regard to Iraq, we have a series of United Nations resolutions which Saddam Hussein has deliberately avoided. We have used the force which the resolutions authorised. No force is authorised in the resolutions with regard to Israel.

When the United States said that it might not provide the £10 billion guarantee for settlement on the west bank, the Government of Israel found themselves driven to a more amenable posture than they had previously taken. We should use every means available. I do not believe that bombing Israel would make the slightest difference. Other means are available, including making strenuous efforts to persuade the United States that the extent to which it remains a patron and Israel a client has substantial disadvantages for the momentum of the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell: I should like to make progress, if the hon. Member will allow me to do so.

The right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) referred to the Gulf Co-operation Council and the Damascus agreement. It must be a matter of considerable regret that that agreement has not produced the sort of security arrangements for the Gulf which it was hoped it would produce.

It is a matter of disappointment for those of us who have talked to officials of the Gulf Co-operation Council that there remains, I suppose one might say, old mistrust among the members to the extent that they are unable to put together a proper system of security for their protection. For that reason, if we were asked by the United Nations to send troops to Kuwait on a specific mandate and for a specific purpose, I would certainly be willing to consider that. Frankly, to suggest that it should not be considered in all circumstances is to close down far in advance a policy option which it might be extremely valuable to take up. As long as such a request is consistent with United Nations resolutions and as long as a limited purpose will be achieved, it certainly should not be rejected out of hand.

To those who say that we should not have taken the action which we did in expelling Iraq from Kuwait, or indeed the action of the past few days, some questions must be addressed. Who among us now believes, if anyone seriously did, that sanctions would have forced Iraq out of Kuwait? Who believes that the so-called ceasefire would have been called without the experience of military action and the threat of more?

I am wholly convinced that, without the military effort of the allies during the Gulf war, Iraq would still be squatting illegally in Kuwait. I am equally convinced that, without the air exclusion zones, the Kurdish people in the north and the Shia Muslims in the south would be under air attack at the whim of Saddam Hussein.

When one is asked to assess Saddam Hussein's character, one need not embark on the sort of exchanges in which Privy Councillors who have previously spoken have had the privilege to take part. The House should remember that Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against his countrymen and women. If one wants a measure of the man's character, one will find it in that single incident. It is often said that Saddam Hussein is consistently guilty of miscalculations. That is almost certainly true. However, the difference between him and us is that he can afford miscalculations and we cannot. His authority is undamaged by miscalculation whereas that of the United Nations may well be.

As a new President of the United States takes over, we must face the truth—uncomfortable to some—that the authority of the United Nations depends on the commitment of the United States. The military resources of the United States are so significant that only when it agrees to act is the United Nations likely to be able to act on a large scale. The conundrum which must be solved is how to prevent the dominant member, without whom action is unlikely, from being the party which alone determines that action should be taken. The United Kingdom would do much for the future of the United Nations if it helped to resolve that conundrum by its insistence that every member, however powerful, must be subordinate to the collective will of that organisation.

It was reported yesterday that, in a speech at the Royal United Services Institute, the Secretary of State said that

we should not commit military forces in circumstances where there is no military solution. I agree with that proposition, which is self-evidently valid. However, we should never commit military forces unless there is a clear political objective. That principle applies not only to operations conducted by the United Kingdom on its own, but with equal validity to any operations that we may undertake in the future on behalf of the United Nations.

6.28 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I pay tribute to the robust and sensible speeches which we heard from the Opposition and Government Front Benches at the beginning of the debate and the excellent speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), the former Secretary of State for Defence. My right hon. Friend spoke with great experience and authority.

Many of the comments made by hon. Members reinforced my absolutely unambiguous conviction and view, which I have held on and off over the past two or three years, that the response to Saddam Hussein and Iraq's activities has been absolutely right. The response was proportionate and, indeed, was the only conceivable language that the gang in Baghdad or, indeed, the entire Arab world would have begun to understand. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has said, a weaker response would have been the most terrible come-on signal for more violence and atrocities, so the response was absolutely right.

I do not accept the view of some hon. Members that the response has strengthened Saddam Hussein. For a start, he is living in a world in which he orders his own strength or weakness through propaganda or terror. He does not need the benefit of manipulating popular opinion; he can manage without that. Any opinion which is not popular in his book is instantly exterminated.

I accept the view, reported in *The Times*, of senior Kurdish leaders. They argue

"that any respite in their attacks against him would provide 'a lifeline to a sinking man'."

I greatly respect the Kurds; they are noble people. The Kurds said that the bombing had not strengthened Saddam Hussein and that we should not desist from such attacks. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said that we should desist from bombing and that the Kurds were against it. I do not always believe that I read in *The Times*, but in this case I prefer *The Times* to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. I believe that *The Times* correctly reported the view of the Kurdish forces.

I do not believe that the action taken in the Gulf was a Bush vendetta. The media had a lovely time depicting it as such. The American part of the action was American policy; but, of course, it was more than that: it was coalition allied policy. It was the policy of the United Nations backed by Boutros Boutros Ghali. It was a policy to ensure that a string of United Nations Security Council resolutions, from 660 to 688, were enforced. Resolution 678 referred to stability in the region. That is an important commitment behind which the United Nations rightly puts its weight. We should support the United Nations in that commitment.

All the resolutions are the policies of the member nations of the United Nations, including the United States. I do not believe that those policies will change much except that perhaps greater reinforcement and a clearer long-term context will be provided under President Clinton that we have seen in recent days. Therefore, I do not accept the myth of a Bush-Saddam vendetta: it is the manufacture of the press. It may be good reading and good entertainment, but it has no basis in reality.

The idea that constructive dialogue was the alternative to the raids and our firm response to Saddam's provocation takes my breath away. Luckily, that idea has not been mentioned much this afternoon. The idea that one could have a constructive dialogue with that genocidal maniac and his gang is absurd. People talk about them as a Government, but they govern only a small part of the country which they terrorise. The idea that it is possible to have a constructive dialogue with the sort of person who lies and lies again is even more absurd than the idea that it is possible to have a constructive dialogue with Al Capone.

I am deeply convinced that the actions taken by the United Nations and the western allies were correct and in balance. But, of course, more is needed, as other hon. Members have said. We cannot live in the short-term context of tit for tat, however right our response has been. We cannot continue leaving the initiative to this dangerous man, with his vicious habits and dangerous Government, and his Tikriti gang in Baghdad because, first, as others have rightly said, he would do it again next week. Why should he not? He will agree to something this week and be at it again as soon as he sees the chance. Secondly, the fundamental threats remain to, first, the authority of the United Nations, which is serious, and, secondly, in even more precise terms, Kuwait and through Kuwait, Saudi Arabia.

There is the oil issue. I have never thought that we should be ashamed of admitting that a threat to the world's oil reserves is serious. If applied, it could freeze the lives and bring untold suffering to millions of vulnerable people. Why should we not stand up and say that the threat should be minimised?

The threat to Kuwait remains. I am sure that Saddam Hussein is longing to have another go at Kuwait. It probably passed through his mind the other night that as George Bush went he might be able to have another go. I suspect that the only thing that stopped him was the superior air power in the region: 1,000 American marines have been put into the area and there is a great deal of equipment there.

Saddam Hussein remains a threat to the area and to middle eastern stability. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said that the Arab-Israeli dispute was a poison which infected the entire middle east. Saddam Hussein's Government and policy, the hideous aggression of this man who happens to be in control of Iraq, are a poison which infects the whole middle east. It will remain a poison until we find sensible strategic ways of taking and retaining the initiative and applying it so that the poison is squeezed out.

One is always tempted into arguments about standards and about what we should do in the Arab-Israeli case. Of course, there are things to be done and there is blame on both sides. I only note en passant that at least the wretched people who were deported by the Israelis were allowed to go through some judicial process of appeal. I cannot remember reading about an appeal against any decision or law that Saddam Hussein has made. When one talks about double standards, one should be a little careful.

Saddam Hussein is one of the chief poisons infecting the area and we must turn our minds to considering how to

[Mr. David Howell]

squeeze it out. My view is not a new view; it is not hindsight. It is a view that I have expressed ever since the Schwarzkopf ceasefire at the end of the Gulf war. If we did not intend to go on to Baghdad, as some people advocated —I thought that it was impractical—and if we sought a full-blooded military solution to the Iraqi problem at the end of the Gulf war, we should have switched the emphasis to not simply giving up and going home but developing a sustained diplomatic, economic and political strategy worldwide embracing and supporting the many Arab interests who are desperate to see Saddam Hussein out of the way. Such a strategy should have been swung into position and pushed on so that all the time the pressure was on Saddam and Baghdad, rather than him applying pressure on us.

That is why I always wanted stronger help to be given to the Kurds. We have given some, but we should give more. We could have learnt the lessons about the degree of help and its operation from Afghanistan, where successful help was given at one stage to the Mujaheddin. I always wanted us to give more words—or perhaps even more than words—of support to the Kurds. I wanted us to give practical help such as that urged on the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) following her visits to the area. She brought to our attention the cause of the Shi'ite Arabs in the marshes. I always wanted that cause to be supported much more strongly by the Government. I continue to want much more sympathetic support to be given to the Iraqi opposition forces, in London, Washington and other capitals, and, if possible, inside Iraq. Of course, such people live dangerously in Iraq. The regime is nothing other than complete tyranny.

I always wanted us to have a much more vigorous approach to the Iraqi funds which are sloshing around and helping to finance the continuation of Saddam's regime. We could play a much stronger part there. We could raise a far more criticial voice in the United Nations about Saddam's gang. People may remember that in South Africa the minority apartheid Government were given the boot because they persecuted, through terror and other means, the vast majority of the South African people.

In Iraq the colour element may not exist but the rest fits uncannily. A minority is persecuting the majority of the peoples of modern Iraq by the most monstrous methods, which have been described graphically by hon. Members this evening.

The measures to which I have referred are the necessary minimum to seize the initiative. Additional measures may well have to be considered. We shall have to consider reinforcements in Kuwait, whether of our own troops or others. Certainly the mood is that more reinforcements are needed for the 1,000 American marines in Kuwait. Reinforcements could be either with United Nations blessing or directly provided by United Nations troops. There is no doubt that Saddam will try again.

Some CIA experts and some people here put forward the thesis that the conflict is all about the balance of power in the middle east. They suggest that removal of Saddam would tip the balance hopelessly in favour of Iran. Iran has by no means a pleasant attitude to stability in the middle east. It may well cause a great deal of trouble. Therefore, people say that we should keep a weak Saddam. That is a complete misreading of the position.

Saddam's rule of Iraq means that it is not an adequate balance to whatever the ayatollahs are planning for the future or any malign Islamic fundamentalist moves which may be orchestrated from Tehran. So long as Saddam is there, the balance is unequal. We need a democratic, strong Iraq which would be a counter-balance for Iran. That would create the balance in the middle east which is probably the best that we can hope for.

People talk too idealistically about a new order in the middle east. There will never be order, but there could be balance. There could be an equilibrium, as the French call it, just as there could be a new world balance. I do not accept the phrase "new world order" that President Clinton still uses. We could work to achieve a balance by having a democratic, strong Iraq.

The Shi'ite Arabs in the marshes are not pro the Tehran ayatollahs. They are not secret agents of Iran, as some analysts seem to think. They are perfectly ready to work in a federal, democratic Iraq. So are the Kurds. There is not at present, and I do not believe that there will be, a great movement for a separate Kurdistan which would undermine Turkish and Iranian stability. Instead, there is a readiness to recognise that a democratic Iraq would provide a balance for any ambitions of Iran and much better hope for balance in the Gulf as a whole.

As for the Arab opinion which is always drummed up on these occasions as being against doing anything too harsh to Saddam Hussein, I know where such views come from, but I question their strength and solidity. There are always people in Amman, Jordan who are ready to dance in front of televison cameras waving placards and prompting the BBC man to put through a report about pro-Saddam feeling in the Arab world. There are street demonstrations in Cairo, but there are also wise, moderate Arabs of great experience who know that the prime hope for stability in their region is to get rid of Saddam Hussein and his gang and that hideous method of rule—if it can be called rule—in modern Iraq.

As long as the Saddam Hussein gang and its terror methods rule in Iraq, and as long as Iraq's policy is one of open, opportunist aggression, there will be no lasting peace for Iraq in the middle east. We have to start by recognising that and mobilising our own efforts and those of all Security Council allies—not just the permanent ones —to ensure that we seize and hold the initiative against a man and a system which will otherwise bring even more suffering, killing and bloodshed to a benighted land which deserves better.

6.40 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) made it quite clear that we expect a great deal more from the Foreign Secretary when he replies to the debate than what we have heard so far. As my hon. Friend said, this week we have been calling for more than simply a reaffirmation of United Nations Security Council resolutions that are now about two years old. We are asking whether the Government have a strategy in line with the widespread belief that Saddam Hussein intends to continue testing the potential for creating disharmony among the original allies that threw him out of Kuwait.

To that end we hope that the Foreign Secretary can explain not simply how the Government intend to react to individual incidents, but what medium and long-term strategy exists for ensuring that the resolutions can produce a successful conclusion so that the people of Iraq can decide what will happen to their country and its present leadership.

If we are looking for ways in which we can build the new order to which everyone has referred, we could do no better than refer to a document prepared by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 17 June 1992, entitled "Agenda for Peace". Paragraph 82 of that document refers to the role, the understanding and perception of the United Nations within the new world order in the absence of the super-power conflict that previously decided whether a group of people in any particular part of the world were goodies or baddies and whether or not they were on our side. Paragraph 82 states:

"All organs of the United Nations must be accorded, and play, their full and proper role so that the trust of all nations and peoples will be retained and deserved. The principles of the Charter must be applied consistently, not selectively, for if the perception should be of the latter, trust will wane and with it the moral authority which is the greatest and most unique quality of that instrument."

Tonight's debate should take place around that paragraph.

When we talk about the use of force in the name of the international community, it is not enough to be able to justify it; it needs an explicit mandate from that international community. We cannot assume it, and, if we do not think that we will get it, we cannot engage in the use of force in the name of anyone other than ourselves—and then we have to take full responsibility for our actions.

The use of force must always be the last resort and everyone must be convinced that it is absolutely and unequivocally necessary, rather than there being a question of whether it can be justified. It is worth considering why people have started to question whether we had that right within the resolutions that have been traded back and forth across the Chamber tonight.

In an article, Sir Anthony Parsons referred to the fact that, until the decision to implement the no-fly zone in the north of Iraq, the United Nations had never breached article 2(7) of its own charter which

"defines the rights and obligations of member states, and sub-paragraph 7 categorically excludes UN intervention in domestic affairs of state."

We can all recall incident of dictators treating their people in an unacceptable way when we felt that something should have been done. However, because of its charter, the United Nations had never sought to interfere until the adoption of resolution 688. Sir Anthony Parsons wrote:

"The adoption of Security Council Resolution 688 in April 1991 was a watershed".

He referred to the language that was used:

"SCR 688 condemned the repression, demanded its cessation and insisted that Iraq allow access to international humanitarian organisations . . . strong language for a resolution, even on an international crisis.

The American-led coalition used force in the spirit of the resolution to establish and maintain Saddam-free safe havens in northern Iraq and, a few weeks ago, a 'no-fly zone' was established in the South to prevent the Iraqi air force from attacking the populace."

Someone as knowledgeable as Sir Anthony Parsons was acknowledging that it was a unique situation. When people begin to question just how far we should go, they must examine the way in which we seek to implement international law and United Nations resolutions.

As a result of recent events, Britain is faced with real concern that in one part of the middle east it is justifying actions which stray beyond the boundaries of what is mandated by law and Security Council resolutions and which may therefore be unlawful, while elsewhere it has obviously strayed in the opposite direction, away from implementing what is clearly required by law and mandated by the Security Council. It is a matter of principle. In political terms, those concensuses translate into a serious break-up of international credibility on the states undertaking enforcement action against Iraq. Selective implementation of the law undermines respect for the law and ultimately risks denying us the ability to rely on law in the future.

When Britain insists on the need to enforce international law and establish the authority of Security Council resolutions taken in pursuit of the Council's duties according to the United Nations charter, it is important to remember the universality of those principles. Damaging comparisons are bound to be made when the peoples of the middle east compare Britain's insistence that Iraq comply immediately and unconditionally with its international legal obligations and the Security Council resolutions with the limits that it sets on what it is prepared to do in the face of the refusal of successive Israeli Governments for more than two decades to comply with their international legal obligations and with Security Council resolutions on their conduct in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Under successive Israeli Governments, Lebanese territorial integrity has been violated time and again, including by a full-scale invasion that still exists in the form of the Israeli occupation of part of south Lebanon. Explicitly expansionist policies have been declared and implemented in the occupied Palestinian territories and the victims of those unlawful practices have been left to fend for themselves. Apart from clear declarations of opposition and condemnation, Britain has not lifted one finger in their defence.

In the two years since the Gulf war ceasefire there has been no change in the Israeli authorities' refusal to accept and to comply with their legal obligations, nor has Israel witnessed any consequences for its continued misconduct which have been sufficiently meaningful or resolute to make it comply.

The British Government, along with their European Community partners, have concentrated on supporting efforts in the middle east peace process, efforts that have enjoyed cross-party support in the House. Everyone knows that the Palestinian people's realisation of full civil and political rights can come only through an end to the occupation and the full exercise of their right to self-determination.

However, is that peace process sustainable in the face of the lack of protection for the existing rights of Palestinians, under the law governing belligerent occupation? Can the Secretary of State honestly expect the leader of the Palestinian delegation, who lives in Gaza, to go to the next round of the middle east peace talks while his neighbours are sleeping in tents somewhere between Israel and Lebanon and we are doing nothing about it? How long does the Secretary of State think that he would last if he went to those talks and then tried to return to his home in Gaza? It is absolute nonsense.

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

All those members of the world community who are concerned about ensuring that there is a new world order must question the way in which the coalition has decided that it is worth insisting on immediate and unequivocal compliance with UN resolutions in one area, while allowing them to be ignored in the other parts of the world that my colleagues have mentioned tonight and in the debate on the United Nations a few weeks ago. For example, it seems that it is okay for Cambodia to ignore them. If we continue to ignore grave breaches of such resolutions, as and when they occur, it will not help those of us who want to strengthen the United Nations.

Does not the Secretary of State think that the fact that nine children have been killed in the occupied territories by live ammunition and 194 seriously injured since 1 December 1992, is a grave breach of United Nations regulations? Does he regard that as a grave breach of international law? How quickly will he hurry along to ensure that that ends? Will he be as determined to ensure that that ends as quickly as possible?

Britain is confronting a serious problem. If we do not do something about the grave breaches of United Nations resolutions in other parts of the world, international law is likely to be brought into disrepute, and when we are forced to return to the United Nations it will be difficult to get the sort of consensus that we might require.

Sir Anthony Parsons also wrote in that article that Russia and China abstained on resolution 688 because they were worried that it was being used in a way that broke article 2, clause 7 of the United Nations charter. If we are to build a new framework and to construct a new world order we need the support of China and Russia.

If we cannot demonstrate that we are going to be even-handed, in the longer term the comparison between Britain's standing and resolve in different cases in the same region will damage perceptions of British intentions and credibility. It will also damage the credibility of the Security Council and the belief that it will carry out its functions, as set down in the United Nations charter. International law will be brought into disrepute. Such damage risks setting the scene for future consequences and additional costs and burdens, which the politicians of the future—including ourselves—will have to deal with.

The principles of the United Nations charter must be implemented consistently. In all instances they demand that the strong must protect the weak and that action must be taken to save life and to uphold the rights of human beings, under international law, to basic human rights and to an existence free of persecution and threat to life. If we can achieve that, the United Nations will convince many people that it is a force to be reckoned with—an expanding force that can mould and create a new world order—and that it can benefit the world through the removal of many dark and evil influences. More importantly, perhaps, all the peoples of the world can start to believe in the United Nations.

6.55 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), as I did the last time that I spoke in a debate, which was on the United Nations. Once more, I find myself in accord with much of what he has said. In foreign affairs, it is nice to think in terms of a long-term strategy and many other hon. Members have referred to that need. The problem is that events often force one into short-term tactics—tactics that can appear to be totally inconsistent with the long-term strategy, which must be to preserve peace. Short-term tactics so often mean fighting.

It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). He and I are the only two members of the Defence Select Committee in the Chamber for this debate. Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that it might be worth sending a small complaint to the business managers because they must have known that the Defence Committee would be in Brussels today and yesterday, visiting Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and NATO headquarters. Had they known that, perhaps the debate could have been timed for another day. I hope that Committee members may be coming through the door at any moment, if their aeroplane is not late, and that if they are back in time they may succeed in catching your eye as I know that that is their wish.

When we last debated the Royal Air Force, in May 1991, we had successfully concluded the Gulf war—or Operation Granby as it was known—and that became the main theme of our debate. However, we are back in the Gulf again. The reason is simple—on that occasion we did not finish the job and Saddam Hussein is still flouting United Nations Security Council reolutions.

Under those resolutions, the coalition forces were fully justified in taking the military action that they took and, as we have seen, that action has worked and the United Nation inspectors are once more being allowed back into the country to carry out their flights and inspections.

I am sure that international lawyers will have a field day on the legal grounds for the attacks of recent days, but I believe that the five United Nations Security Council resolutions gave more than adequate authority for them and that has been confirmed by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali. If he says that the action was justified and legal that is good enough for me and, as the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) pointed out, he not only said that last August but has said so again since the military action took place.

We all want Saddam Hussein to be toppled politically and not militarily. It is significant that he tried it on once more recently and two factors brought that about. First, sanctions are beginning to bite and again he is facing considerable domestic unrest. Obviously, mounting such an excursion was one way to divert the attention of his people from domestic problems. Secondly, he obviously saw a hiatus in United States' foreign policy with the torch of presidential leadership being passed from President Bush to President Clinton. I think that the House will welcome President Clinton's robust confirmation of President Bush's line on Iraq and the excellent statements that he has made on the subject.

We cannot allow Saddam Hussein to ignore world opinion and, first, continue to break the terms of the ceasefire following the Kuwait war; secondly, to continue his incursions into Kuwait; thirdly, to continue his acts of genocide against his own people—the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ite population in the south; and, lastly, to persist with his plans for chemical warfare and a nuclear capability.

What would happen if Saddam Hussein were toppled? Many hon. Members have speculated that his successor

might be worse. I do not think that a successor could be worse than Saddam Hussein. Some hon. Members have drawn a comparison between Saddam Hussein and the late President Nasser of Egypt. There is no comparison. As history has shown, Nasser was a completely different character. Even at the time of the Suez canal crisis, most of those who were involved—and I was involved militarily—recognised in Colonel Nasser a formidable and reasonably just opponent.

Saddam Hussein is in a different class altogether. He has no friends—or very few—in his own country. His army is divided. Even the Republican Guard, which was always regarded as his praetorian guard, is about 100 miles from Baghdad and is not allowed to go anywhere near the city. Saddam Hussein has some cohorts—about 70,000 men in all—who guard him. I am told that he never sleeps two nights in the same bed. He is a hunted man, and sooner or later he will be toppled.

It does not matter who succeeds him. It might be a colonel, or it might be a civilian. In any case, the situation in Baghdad could not be worse than it is at present. Some people have speculated that the successor might be a Baathist politician. If so, I do not think that that would matter. What the Iraqi people require is peace and stability and the opportunity to rebuild their totally shattered economy.

Since our last debate on the Royal Air Force, we have had two years of tension and conflict, which have tested the new basis of our armed forces to be more flexible, more mobile and "smaller, but better". Now that the United Nations is able, because of the absence of the former Soviet Bloc veto, to fulfil the role for which it was created in 1945, there is more for the organisation to do militarily in support of the implementation of United Nations resolutions by way of the peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building that are set out in the Secretary-General's "Agenda for Peace", which is essential reading for every politician.

From being primarily guard forces in Europe, our Army, Navy and Air Force must change to multi-purpose, rapid reaction forces able to go anywhere and do anything at short notice. That is our principal role in NATO. The new operational roles of our armed forces call for both new formations and new equipment. The Royal Air Force is getting some of the new equipment it needs.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence fought very hard, long and successfully to safeguard the future of EFA—now renamed the Eurofighter 2000. The House is relieved that the key performance parameters of EFA will be retained in the new project and will still result in a saving of about 14 per cent. of the overall cost. This has been achieved by a change in the arrangements for work sharing and production, as recommended by the Select Committee on Defence during the last session of Parliament. If a saving of 14 per cent. in unit costs is possible in this case, can the Secretary of State for Defence—I do not expect the Foreign Secretary to answer this question—say what scope there is for achieving a similar saving in other collaborative projects?

I should like an assurance that the RAF will get the complete aircraft, including equipment, that it needs, and not just the airframe. This is particularly important for the defensive aid sub-system—'DASS' for short—which is the electronic hardware, as well as the software, without which aircraft would be defenceless. I should like confirmation that there will be no downgrading of this aircraft, and no risk of delay in delivery, which has already slipped to the year 2000. That delay provides more time for the development of the offensive systems with which the aircraft will be equipped.

I refer, of course, to the air-to air missiles. Any aircraft is only as good as the missiles that it carries. Since 1980 we have been trying to develop an advanced short-range air-to-air missile—'ASRAAM' for short. This was originally part of the family of weapons for which there was a memorandum of understanding between the United States on the one hand and the United Kingdom, France and Germany—later joined by Norway and Canada—on the other. The United States was going to build the medium-range missile, and the European consortium the short-range missile, but I am afraid that that family has fallen apart.

Mr. Menzies-Campbell: Divorced.

Mr. Colvin: Exactly—divorced.

Canada and Norway pulled out, and the whole thing has fallen to pieces. On ASRAAM, the United Kingdom now has to go it alone. I am glad to say that last March British Aerospace signed a contract for its development. There is some advantage in having missiles—or any system, for that matter—made by the manufacturer that makes the airframe, as that ensures good integration.

There are a number of questions to which I and, I am sure, other members of the Select Committee on Defence would like to receive written answers from the Secretary of State for Defence. What is the current time scale of ASRAAM? We are worried about slippage. Will it be ready for the Eurofighter 2000 when it enters service in the year 2000? Will the unit costs be the same as those we have been give so far? What is the current thinking on the question of fitting ASRAAM to the Tornado air defence variant? Will the United States buy it, as was originally decided, or will the Sidewinder missile, at present used to equip American and British aircraft, be upgraded? What is the latest on AMRAAM, the advanced medium-range air-to-air missile that the Americans are developing?

I should like to turn for a moment to the question of support helicopters. It is almost six years since the then Secretary of State for Defence announced:

> "After a comprehensive review of the requirement for support helicopters in all roles, . . . the right choice is to introduce the utility EH101 to meet that role requirement."

That decision was based primarily on suitability for the role but also on commonality with Merlin, the naval version of the EH101, 44 of which are already ordered for the Royal Navy. Since Lord Younger's announcement the case for the EH101 utility support helicopter has become even stronger. It has a long range, and the support costs are low, making it the undisputed choice.

But the Ministry of Defence stil revisits some of the old options, using up vast staff resources and wasting a great deal of time and money. The Ministry is currently looking at four options, all of which were available in 1987, when Lord Younger made his decision. The EH101 can lift all the loads that the Army has to handle; it has a range of about 600 miles; and it can be in service by, I think, 1996. An alternative is to buy the French Cougar, which is an updated Puma, or the American Black Hawk, both of which are smaller, have inadequate lift, do not have a ramp for loading vehicles, carry only about 12 to 14 men, and

[Mr. Colvin]

have a short range of 280 to 350 miles, which is half the range of the EH101. They would not be available any sooner than the EH101, in 1996.

Or the RAF could buy more Chinooks, with which it is equipped at present. It is a 1960s design and an expensive helicopter to run. The Ministry of Defence keeps saying that life costs are more important than purchase prices.

The last option is buying second-hand Pumas. That, too, is a 30-year old design, also expensive to run with a low lift capability, short range and unsuitable for today's operational requirements. It might be tempting to buy 16 or 20 second-hand civil Pumas, especially——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am afraid that the hon. Member is the first to be caught in the 10-minute trap.

7.10 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) was caught in the time trap, but I am pleased to speak following him because his speech brought us back to the subject of the Royal Air Force.

I was pleased when last week a debate on the RAF was announced, but disappointed when we had the proposal of this mongrel debate, which is already proving grossly unsatisfactory. It may be interesting, but the House cannot subject the RAF to the careful scrutiny that it deserves and at the same time range widely over the whole of the middle east and a large part of the history of the 20th century.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said when referring to the role of the RAF in Persia just after the first world war, if it had not been for Lord Trenchard, it is highly unlikely that the RAF would have had an independent existence. Lord Trenchard played the card of being able to police that part of the world cheaply—with a couple of squadrons of biplanes —but had he not been able to offer that economic card, the RAF might have ceased to exist at least until the second world war.

There is that historical link, but it does not justify the House having to spend so much of the debate looking at historical matters when this is the first debate on the RAF that we have had since 1991, apart from a grossly unsatisfactory debate last year when, in discussing RAF discipline, I tried to extend the discussion by arguing that morale should extend beyond immediate questions of discipline. But for that, the only consideration that the House would have given to the RAF in two years would have been to discuss whether homosexuals should be allowed to participate in the service. At this time of enormous change and challenge, the House should consider more frequently and fully than is possible in today's debate the problems faced by the RAF.

I welcomed the comments of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). I strongly support the United Nations and believe that there must be international authority. The mockery to which the United Nations has been subjected night after night on Iraqi television, the derision of United Nations officers that has been displayed on our television screens and the action of Saddam Hussein in response to his minorities has been such that the no-fly zones are justified, and trespass into them justifies military action.

Even so, I have anxieties about the situation. We had to support the United Nations action because we could not allow the United Nations to go the way of the League of Nations by failing to respond positively to aggression and brutality of the kind that we witnessed from Saddam Hussein. Those who do not want the United Nations to act toughly are likely to surrender to the international gangster, and there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein is such a man.

But the United Nations cannot and must not be seen as a puppet of the United States. We cannot see foreign policy dictated, as it has been in recent days, by the last hurrahs of a departing president. We were right, and I would not wish the Tornado pilots who flew missions in the Gulf to feel that they were not acting in this country's interest. They were. They were acting in the interests of responsibility and peace and in the hope of an international order which, we trust, eventually a mature world will seek to develop. But if the United Nations is to be a logical and intelligent force which secures international peace and stability, it cannot rely purely on America with contributions from France and ourselves.

After the Gulf war—I have spoken of this before, but it remains relevant—there was a debate in the Western European Union, where I lead my party's delegation, being vice-chairman of the socialist group, in which the two British members who spoke, a Conservative and myself, were the last to speak.

Throughout the debate, one speaker after another from other member states made triumphalist speeches expressing great pride over the wonderful victory that had been achieved in the Gulf. I became extremely unpopular in that parliamentary assembly because, when it came my turn to speak, I pointed out that I condemned Saddam Hussein and strongly supported the war that we had waged against him but thought it sad that most of western Europe had sent more parliamentarians to speak in that debate than they had sent troops or personnel to serve in the UN force. If the UN is to mean anything in the years to come, it must have a broader base, and it must not be seen as a puppet of America. I leave the matter there because I am anxious to speak about the RAF.

I have some serious concerns about the RAF. I am aware of their serious nature because I have had the good fortune, with the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), to spend much of the last 12 months with the RAF. It has been interesting, demanding, fascinating and, by and large because of the courtesy and consideration that we have received, enjoyable. It has been demanding because the hon. Gentleman and I have been engaged in a high learning curve. One of my proud achievements was that I was not air sick throughout the 12 months.

We learned a great deal. For example, we learnt how great is the dedication in the service. There are superb skills, on the ground and in the air. But there are also a great many anxieties in the service, and I regret to say that the Minister did not allay those anxieties today. Hon. Members may recall that I intervened in the Minister's speech when he was speaking about the need for the European fighter aircraft. It is an essential aircraft. But the RAF also has other, immediate, needs, as the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside pointed out.

The Hercules is a fine aircraft, flown by superb crews, but it is old and every year more requirements and duties are placed on the people at Lyneham who service and fly it. It is now in Yugoslavia, Ethiopia and the Gulf, and

perhaps it flies to Turkey to help service the Jaguar detachment there. Enormous demands are being made on that old aircraft. It cannot go on accepting more burdens at the behest of Ministers without at some point serious consideration being given to its replacement.

I flew with the RAF around south Armagh in a Puma. As the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside said, the Pumas are old, and they, too, have been subjected to enormous use. The helicopters there represent a highly prestigious weapon from the point of view of the terrorists of Ulster, and the crews flying them are courageous and capable. But must they always have to expect to fly ancient aircraft? It is true, as the Minister will no doubt say, that they are well maintained. That is because the RAF provides—rather, it has up to now provided—extremely skilled training. It has people on the ground who are extremely skilful.

The hon. Member for Harlow and I met NCOs—not officers—who had specialised in areas of avionics and engineering far beyond my capacity to begin to comprehend. The Member for Harlow and I have met NCOs, not officers, who have patents out in areas of avionics and engineering that are far beyond my capacity even to begin to comprehend. We met two chief technicians, with two separate patents, in one hangar in one RAF station in Germany, Bruggen, the home of the surviving Tornado squadrons. As the Minister said, the reward of the Tornado GR1 squadrons after the Gulf war in half the cases was disbandment.

The question of training is important. Is quality to be retained or will the RAF have increasingly to rely on private contractors who work from nine to five, who may not be investing at all in training because they are relying on recruiting people who are retiring from the services with a pension. In some cases they are not spending anything on training at all. What does that mean for the future? Perhaps I may make this one final point and then hope that I can speak in another debate on the RAF.

My final point is about career prospects. Young, highly skilled people do not know what their future is. If we are to contribute to the exercise of international authority in any part of the world, training is important——

7.21 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): There is a very old military adage: know your enemy. Most people will accept that Saddam Hussein is our enemy—not only our enemy, but the enemy of the west, of the Arab world and, above all, of his own people. I have not had an opportunity recently of meeting Saddam Hussein, as have some right hon. Members, but I remember meeting him in 1988 at the time of the last major offensive which the Iranians were launching against Iraq. I looked forward to that visit and I went into Baghdad as the Iranian rockets were raining down. I went to see him. I looked at his troops and I looked at him and I was, at that point, totally on his side because, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) has said, at that time, most people in this country considered Saddam Hussein to be someone we needed to support in any way that we could. I was saddened when I went in to see him. I went in with only one friend, Count Jean de Lipkoski. He greeted this marvellous Frenchman with open arms and said, "How splendid you French have been. The supply of weapons you have given us is superb. We could not do without the French and the Russians."

Then he turned to me and launched a most vitrolic attack on the United Kingdom and said how useless we were and that we never supplied Iraq with any weapons. Indeed, he said that we were supplying the Iranians with weapons. I tried to carry the argument to him and said that perhaps we would have liked to given some weapons at that point, but we had our arms embargo and we were sticking by that.

I am afraid that there are some people in the House who are determined to spread the myth that we have been supplying arms to Iraq for many years. That is not true and most people know that it is not true. However, time moves on and one did see in the period after that war the true face of Saddam Hussein. It was after that war that we witnessed the worst of the excesses against his own people. I supported him, quite rightly at that time, as did most other people.

The recent air attacks were directed against missile sites and against control centres. These sites were designed to keep out our aircraft so that the Iraqis could operate against the Shi'ites in the south and the Kurds in the north. The other reason is that we needed to safeguard our own crews who were flying in those areas. The last thing I, or anyone in the House, would wish to see, would be one of our aircraft being shot down simply because we had neglected to take the action that was needed.

It seems to have worked, but I think it is impossible for us to consider that we have achieved all that we needed to achieve. In fact all that we have is a truce. It is a truce that will not last and when it is broken it will be broken by Saddam Hussein not least because it is impossible for him to survive in his country at present without a series of crises to keep him in power. He needs this to convince his own people that he is facing a world coalition and facing it down and defeating it. He needs more action on our side to provide him with the right home progapanda.

When that occurs, what reaction will there be from us? What contingency plans do we have? It is not much use continuing to bomb missile sites. It is right to do it at present, but there is not much point in doing that while life in Baghdad goes on normally and Saddam, through his propaganda machine, can claim a great victory. That is not the way forward.

There is one great instrument of repression that still lies in his hands: the Republican Guard and those people who form his own personal bodyguard. If we are to go forward and are forced to take action, we must be ruthless in in attacking that instrument, because to undermine their morale is the most positive thing that we can do. They are the people who are attacking the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ites in the south and they are the people who we must go for.

I am saddened that we have had this slight mix-up and cannot concentrate in this debate on the Royal Air Force, but I now turn to that. I sometimes think there is a dastardly plot to do down the Parachute Regiment. I am sad to think that that might be so and I hope that I am wrong. We desperately need more helicopters for the Parachute Regiment and for 24 Air Mobile Brigade. Several other hon. Members have made this point. It is remarkably good news that we have managed to retain the European fighter aircraft, but in June 1990 in a debate in

[Sir Jim Spicer]

the House I advocated that an air mobile division should be formed using the Parachute Regiment and 24 Air Mobile Brigade as the basis for that expansion.

Two years have passed and although the United Kingdom heads the formation of the ACE rapid reaction corps, little has been done to increase the helicopter lifting capability of 24 Air Mobile Brigade or of similar formations in the United Kingdom. France, Russia and Germany all have scout attack and support helicopters allotted permanently to them, but 24 Brigade has no support helicopters allocated and depends instead on begging helicopters from the RAF as and when they can be made available. There are only 60 of those helicopters in the whole British Army.

All that I would say—this is obviously not a question for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, but for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence—is that I hope that it is being addressed very seriously indeed and that orders will soon be placed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) made it clear that we decided as long ago as 1987 in favour of the EH101. I have to say to Ministers that there might be a theory that if we put the arguments again we can put off the day of decision which we know has to come. I beg the Minister to get on and announce now that the utility EH101 is to be ordered in quantity and then allocated to 24 Air Mobile Brigade so that the Parachute Regiment can travel round in those superb helicopters in the style to which it should be accustomed.

7.29 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On 27 November, I was fortunate to draw the No. 1 slot in the ballot for private Members' motions and introduce a debate on the need to improve relations with the Arab world. On 4 December, I made a 50-minute speech on Iraq during the debate on the United Nations initiated by the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend). Although those speeches are highly relevant, I shall not go over that ground again except to draw the conclusion that, as I said then, the west should accept in good faith the Iraqi offer to negotiate and to promote a dialogue. I personally would wish to see the lifting of sanctions as a gesture of good will towards Iraq forthwith.

To hon. Members who resent such a view on the ground of the persecution of the Shias and the Kurds, I say gently that I was on Christopher Morgan's programme on Radio 4 last Sunday with the grandson of the Grand Ayatollah of Shi'ism, Al-Hoei, whose name is Jusef Al-Hoei. He said, on behalf of the Shi'ite people, that bombing was pointless. On the same programme, Mozin Desaig, on behalf of the Kurds, said that the bombing by the west simply provoked more of Saddam's wrath against the Kurds.

The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, thinks that I am naive. I think that he is unreal to believe that Saddam can be removed in foreseeable circumstances.

I borrow the phrase of the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), who spoke about being "not in" with the Arab world. However, I welcome the clear statement by the Secretary of State for Defence that the Government are now endorsing the integrity of the Iraq border.

Wherever the fault lies, sanctions impose suffering on the people of Iraq, not least on the old and vulnerable. Unless something is done quickly I fear that the children of Iraq could become a generation hating the west. I heard my old friend from European Parliament days Claude Cheysson say on the World Service:

"What is the policy? To bomb Baghdad twice a week until heaven knows when?"

That is the reality and it would simply consolidate Saddam's hold on the reins of power in Iraq. The only alternative is to try to amass a land force which would occupy and hold downtown Baghdad. Such a move would lead to Vietnam plus.

For part of the debate I hope that hon. Members will focus their minds on one of the root causes of the trouble —the pouring of sophisticated arms and arms-making equipment into Iraq by Germany, France, the Soviet Union, Chile, Switzerland, the United States and Britain. Albeit deeply wrong, no wonder the Iraqis thought that they had carte blanche to march into Kuwait when they desperately needed cash to pay the western arms creditors. That was a major part of the problem at the end of the hostilities.

There is much wringing of the hands about Iraq and nuclear weapons. How did it all start? I shall tell the House precisely how it started. It started in the first week of September 1975. During the recess I was greatly influenced by reading the 500 pages of Kenneth Timmerman's book which I lent to the Secretary of State for Defence. I gather from the Ministry of Defence that it has studied a copy. Page 55 states:

"While touring Provence with Chirac and de l'Etoile"—

he was the marketing director of Marcel Dassault—

"Saddam made a side trip that few people in France paid much attention to at the time. On their way to the bullfights at Le Baux, Saddam's French hosts took him through the Cadarache nuclear research centre, one of the most advanced in Europe. In this small Provincal town just north of Marseilles the Commissarriat à l'Energie Atomique had set up its first experimental fast-breeder reactor. That called it Rapsodie. It certainly enchanted Saddam."

You bet it did!

"The basic principle of a fast-breeder reactor, also called a supergenerator, is to 'breed' more nuclear fuel than it consumes. In the process, it transforms significant quantities of uranium into plutonium. While plutonium is a by-product of most nuclear fuel cycles, and can be extracted from spent fuel by chemical reprocessing, it has little utility except for making bombs. Iraq's interest in fast-breeder reactors was motivated by one concern alone: obtaining a sure source of plutonium for use in a nuclear weapons program."

If the west goes out of its way for money and whets the appetite of those who might be described as ruthless Tikritis, what can we expect?

The relationship between France and Saddam is extraordinary. Timmerman says:

"When they returned to Paris, Saddam decided to prepare a surprise for his 'personal friend', Jacques Chirac. It had been easier to win over the French than Saddam had dreamed. He wanted to seal their pact on a personal note. Much to the chagrin of the maître d'hôtel at the Marigny Palace, where he was staying, Saddam ordered his personal cook to return to Baghdad on the presidential plane to retrieve a load of victuals for Chirac. Top on the list was one and a half tons of an Iraqi river fish called *masgouf*, which Chirac had enjoyed in Baghdad the year before. With Iraqi security guards patrolling the kitchens of the Marigny Palace with their machine pistols, Saddam's cooks roasted the huge,

greasy carp over open fires. Raymond Thullier, who was later told the story by Chirac, said that 'the whole place smelled of charred flesh. It was amusing, but a mess.'"

With such a relationship can we be surprised that they think that they can do anything they like?

However, it was not only the French. If we acknowledge the depth of the deceit by the British Government and therefore our own share of responsibility for bringing about this situation, we will find it less unpalatable to start talking to Saddam Hussein. Before criticising the French, we should look at ourselves in the mirror.

I have a long question for the Foreign Secretary. The process of giving a licence or consent is a matter for one group of public servants, the Department of Trade and Industry. The enforcement of the law is entrusted to another group, Customs and Excise. If the acts of exporters are determined criminally or non-criminally by the dealings that they have had with the licensing agency, in this case the DTI, both the enforcement of the law and the fair administration of justice become impossible if the enforcement agency, Customs and Excise, is misinformed about or ignorant as to the nature of those dealings. Still more are good government and justice impossible if it were to be the case that documentary and oral evidence of those dealings were kept out of the criminal trial on grounds of public interest immunity.

I asked the Foreign Secretary, having given his officials the article in "Public Law" by Anthony Bradley, the former professor of public law in Edinburgh, what the Government intend to do to tighten up the whole issue of the relationship between Customs and Excise and the DTI.

Another remarkable book which challenges the integrity of the heart of the Government is to appear. It is by David Leigh with Richard Norton Taylor and its title is "Betrayed". I have been sent a review copy and the press conference launching it is on Monday. This is the author who, with Magnus Linklater, wrote "Not With Honour" about Westland—which events have subsequently shown to be wholly accurate.

In a letter to *The Times* published on 13 November the Attorney-General claimed that there had not been a cover up because the existence of all the secret documents had been voluntarily declared to defence counsel in the Matrix Churchill case. The evidence disclosed in the book shows that that was simply not so.

7.38 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Near the end of his speech the Secretary of State for Defence expressed the overriding reason for the events in the Gulf that have given rise to this debate. He said that we acted to ensure that Iraq complied with all United Nations resolutions and that the presence of the Royal Air Force was to ensure that compliance. There are two formidable reasons for the creation of the United Nations resolutions against Iraq, and both stem from the early reasons for the formation of the League of Nations and the United Nations. They were international peace—which has been achieved by the destruction, or a partial destruction, of the nuclear weaponry in Iraq—and internal peace, which is expressed in the United Nations declaration on human rights.

If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, wish to know whether a Government support human rights, you must ask the people. If you ask the marsh people of Iraq, you soon find the answer. You find half a million trapped people, and drained marshes: that is a fact, not a rumour. When the Iraqi regime's senior water engineer was captured recently, he had the maps on him and marked those parts of the marshes that had been drained. The marshes provide the livelihood for the ag[illegible]ld Madan—the marsh people.

There is no food. There are men who have been starving for days on end. There are prolonged military assaults on homes and people. There are no doctors or medicines. In the camps that hold 50,000 refugees in the safe haven of Iran, you also find the answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You find parts of families, elderly men, perhaps young children, and women—and you hear tales of horror. You see tortured bodies—the wounds of war. On the long borders of Iran and Iraq, you will find 10,000 wandering, homeless people. You can find the answer on human rights there. They have been driven from their homes and are without fresh water, food or shelter.

If the dead could talk to us, I dare say that they could give us the answer—men who were tortured, assassinated or executed by their own Government. Recently, 120 men aged from 14 to 22 were arrested and driven to a prison near Baghdad. In walked the son and son-in-law of Saddam Hussein carrying machine guns, and all those men died, and they were buried in an unmarked grave that had been dug by a bulldozer half an hour earlier.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could hear the answer from the dead children whose lives were snuffed out by napalm or phosphorous bombs or by chemical weapons—one friend told me that the stench of garlic marks the one that destroys the kidneys—or just from physical attacks by brutal men, children who have been picked up by their legs and swung against a wall until their skulls collapsed, perhaps in front of their mothers.

What are the memories of the children who escape? One small boy told me of a memory that he cannot get out of his mind—of seeing a tank run over an old man just in front of him, of the old man screaming, and of the laughing of the soldiers in the tank. That was in Basra.

Think of the women who were forced to watch the killings of all the members of their families just yards away by crueller methods than we can ever visualise, women who were lined up in hundreds alongside captured men, and were witnesses then to lines of tanks driving over those men. One woman told me that she saw 700 men killed in front of her in just that way. She told me of the stench of human flesh in the heat, and of the pain and anguish as she saw her sons and husband crushed into the earth. Some women go mad as a result and never speak again. I have seen them in the camps.

Successive Kurdish tragedies triggered our western response and led to the framing and acceptance by the Security Council of the resolutions that the Royal Air Force and allied forces seek to impose or to keep in place in Iraq. Some resolutions, or parts of them, have been achieved, with deep frustration and now with the use of force.

We hope that we have removed the nuclear threat, but what about internal peace? How do the people of Iraq see their own future? Just before Christmas, on 18 December, I had the opportunity to address an informal meeting of the Security Council called by the non-aligned nations. I urged the Security Council to implement resolution 688, and gave many examples of victims' histories. For outside

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

the no-fly zones, internal peace is a wholly unachieved goal, and within those zones it can be only partially successful.

The tragedy of Iraq is at the heart of every Iraqi family now. It is much worse than during the Iran-Iraq war. Young men were sent away to fight in that conflict, but not all that many of them, and perhaps not every man in each family. If they went to the borders and fought, they were considered martyrs to a national cause. Today, at least one member of every Iraqi family is a victim

Even many members of the Iraqi army are victims of the system and dare not speak. Just a look interpreted as treasonable will damn one to a lingering death—perhaps to being burnt alive by petrol being poured into the gullet and ignited by vapour emitted from a knife wound slashed in the stomach. As the victim writhes to death, he is watched by brother officers. One of them may be his own brother, who dares not speak. One officer told me that —he fled.

Only the cruel and the ignorant join the Iraqi security forces who are Saddam Hussein's praetorian guard of hell. They are hand-picked fighters—members of his family, and village tribesmen from his local towns. Every other family in the land, including those who have sons in the army, has its victims—perhaps through martyrdom or imprisonment. Burial alive is common, as is being imprisoned underground, beaten by guards, with a little gruel for food and brackish water. That was the fate of a friend of mine who is now paralysed and is dying.

The people know that there is no peace ahead without Saddam Hussein's removal. He lives only by the creation of violence and hatred and has no second nature. That is the man. One cannot reason with him. To think otherwise is folly. The former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with responsibility for Iraq, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, resigned his post because, he said, no one could negotiate with Saddam Hussein—and that was in December 1991.

Saddam Hussein has total sovereignty. Perhaps only parliamentarians can understand the full effect of that. Saddam Hussein is the state of Iraq—the constitution, which he made up, says so. Iraq is not even a one-party state. By its own laws, it is a one-man state. Saddam Hussein takes, owns, runs and finally destroys all. There are no checks and balances to help the Iraqi people.

I give a small example of their loss of freedom. A year or so ago, Saddam Hussein knocked down holy places of worship in the south. There is no licence or authority today to rebuild them. There is no freedom to worship. Nor do the Iraqi people have the freedom to listen—something that we consider as free as air. Anyone caught listening to the BBC World Service in Arabic will be executed on the spot. Freedom of movement is not on offer, and nor is access to education, medicine, or freedom to see a doctor or go to hospital. That is true of the north and south, and of the centre now.

The three basic human needs of food, shelter, and clothing without which survival itself is threatened are withheld from the north and south. They are withheld from the Kurds, Sunnis, and Shias alike by Saddam Hussein's forces, despite the memorandum of understanding designed to permit UN aid. Saddam Hussein's word is worthless. His ambassador's signature on last November's memorandum of understanding is of no value.

Were it not for the British Government, the European Community, the voluntary agencies and the Iranian Government and the thousands of individuals who have donated funds, no food, clothing, water or medicine would be supplied to the Iraqi refugees and oppressed people. Even that aid is very little when matched with need. Human rights and human values now have no sanctuary in Iraq.

Recent events in the Gulf served one of our two purposes—the effective pursuit of international peace through the maintenance of Kuwait's borders and the destruction of potential nuclear weaponry within Iraq. Just as vital is the aim of achieving human rights. In the heart of every Iraqi lies the plea that their sufferings and needs must be addressed. They cannot act alone.

7.48 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I welcome this debate, and want to see in the near future a full, wide-ranging debate on Iraq in the United Nations Security Council. Force was justified to end the criminal invasion of Kuwait. It must not be forgotten that the dictator was given five months to get his forces out of Kuwait. In fact, he was virtually begged to do so. Unless force had been used, Kuwait would almost certainly remain under enemy occupation today. Had that happened, many of the horrors to be found in Iraq, about which the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) spoke so movingly, would no doubt have occurred in Kuwait, and for a long time to come.

To save his own skin, Saddam Hussein agreed to all the provisions in the ceasefire agreement of two years ago. After he lost that war so decisively, he feared—understandably, although whether with any justification one does not know—that the allies would destroy his regime. In those circumstances, he would agree to anything, as long as he could remain in power. As we have seen, he has taken every possible opportunity since to tease and taunt the allies—no more so that in the past few weeks. He has shown his complete contempt for the ceasefire agreement, and has constantly tried to go as far as possible in breaking it without provoking the retaliation of the allies.

Time and again, when the no-fly zones are criticised, we must remind ourselves why they came into being. As hon. Members on both sides of the House have pointed out today, they were introduced to defend the Kurds and Shi'ites from butchery in the north and the south. Nor should we forget the international outcry that was also rightly heard on the Floor of the House when that danger was posed. If I remember rightly, there was no criticism then of safe havens and no-fly zones, even from the opponents of the war. In those circumstances, we were right to take the attitude that we took; and the Kurds, as well as the Shi'ites, remain undoubtedly in constant danger.

The international community is faced with an irrational dictator—although, let me add, he is not so irrational that he does not know how to survive in power. All his actions have been to a large extent irrational, despite what was said by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup

(Sir E. Heath). With no justification, he initiated a war against a neighbouring country, Iran, which lasted eight years. When we are told—as we are from time to time—that the international community is not concerned with Muslims, as it should be, we should not forget that tens of thousands of Muslim lives were lost in that futile war on both sides along with those of Saddam's other victims. Nor should we forget that the vast majority of people in Kuwait are Muslims, and that Saddam has been responsible for many other atrocities, including the gassing of the Kurds—all Muslims again.

Can there be any doubt that, if force had not been used in the past few days by the international community—led by the United States—the United Nations weapons inspectors would not be in Iraq now? Can any hon. Member challenge that contention? If force had not been used, Saddam Hussein would not have climbed down. Not only would the weapons inspectors not have been allowed in; Saddam would obviously have taken the next step. If he had known that the allies would not act, he would have felt able to treat them with utter contempt and see what other provisions of the ceasefire agreement could be broken, and no doubt would have decided at some time to try to invade Kuwait again. Certainly, he would not have hesitated to do so if he had thought that he could get away with it.

Nevertheless, the international community must use force only as a last resort. Any use of force must be measured and limited; all possible action must be taken to avoid civilian casualties. I am not a hypocrite: I must accept that, if force is used, there will be a possibility of civilian casualties. I am therefore not a pacifist. If I believe that force is necessary from time to time, I must accept —with great sadness—that civilians may be killed or injured. None the less, every effort must be made to avoid bombing civilian targets.

I do not defend the bombing of the hotel in Baghdad, and I cannot emphasise too strongly that we are not at war with the people of Iraq; we have no quarrel with them. We should always remember that they were the first victims of this gangster and his terrorist regime. I know that a direct analogy cannot be drawn, but when, before the second world war, anti-fascists mobilised against Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, it was always pointed out that the first victims of such criminal terrorist dictatorships were people living in the countries involved. Limited action is essential, not simply for propaganda purposes but in support of a genuine wish not to inflict further harm and damage on the people who have suffered so long under the terrorist regime in Iraq.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup mentioned Israel. As I said at the time, I certainly believe that Israel has violated international law. The right hon. Gentleman was Chief Whip in the Government who were in power in 1956 when this country committed an act of criminal aggression, in collusion with France and Israel. As I told him, he did not wish to resign then—which is all the worse if he did not agree with the Government's policy. I know what I was doing then, along with many other democratic socialists: I was demonstrating our contempt for the action that was being taken, and our respect for international law and the United Nations. If I felt so strongly in 1956, why should I take a different attitude in the 1990s, when a criminal terrorist regime commits acts of aggression against Kuwait and continues to oppress and terrorise the Shi'ites and Kurds—as well as perpetuating the general terror that afflicts Iraq?

Some of the opposition in Iraq—both at home, to the extent that they can survive underground, and abroad—take the view that western Governments do not really wish to get rid of Saddam, but merely want to weaken him. I hope that that is not the case. It is not our job, as such, to get rid of him; I certainly do not believe that bombing will get rid of him, or should be used as a means of doing so.

My hon. Friends rightly criticise—as I do, and did at the time—the way in which western Governments, as well as the former Soviet Union, supported the regime in Iraq to the hilt. That lesson should not be forgotten. But if it was wrong to appease Saddam then by arming and supporting him, why continue that appeasement by saying, in effect, that no action should be taken when he invades Kuwait—or when, having been decisively defeated, he shows such contempt for the provisions of the ceasefire agreement? I see no logic in that. Given that I was opposed to the appeasement of the regime at one time, I want no appeasement now. I want western Governments, in particular, to learn the lessons that the past provides.

I cannot be a party to ignoring the situation in Iraq, and I have no intention of changing my position. It may not be popular in certain circumstances to take such a line, but I believe that it is necessary to deal with criminal aggression. Certainly, I feel that that is part and parcel of my duty as a democratic socialist.

Today's edition of *The Guardian* contains an article by David Hirst, who is an authority on Arab matters and well respected as such. It quotes the Iraqi opposition as describing Saddam Hussein as

"the most evil and destructive tyrant in modern Arab history."

I consider that a fair summing up of the person who has ruled in Iraq for so long, so unfortunately and at such cost to human life.

I believe that what was done was basically right, although it was not right in every respect. The allies demonstrated that it was necessary to show Saddam Hussein that the ceasefire agreement must be respected. If he has now got the message—I hope he has—it will be to the good of Iraq, and of the international community.

7.57 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I must declare a professional interest. My company gives consultancy advice to Thorn EMI Electronics, which provides the RAF and other armed forces of the Crown with equipment.

In his opening speech, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said that the RAF faced challenge and change. The debate has produced a number of challenges of what might be regarded as accepted assumptions: the most notable came from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who said that he and his hon. Friends would vote against the motion, because they would thus be voting against the wickedness of the western allies' recent bombing raids on Iraq. He also said that he took pride in the fact that, 50 years ago, he became a pilot in the RAF. I found it strange and I was somewhat saddened by the fact that the right hon. Gentleman seemed to have no feeling of loyalty towards the aircrews of his old service, who have been risking their lives to try to ensure that United Nations resolutions are upheld by the tyrant in Baghdad.

I was saddened, too, by the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E.

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

Heath), who said that he could see no circumstances in which the armed forces of the Crown could reasonably go to the aid of Kuwait. It was a strange observation—first, because, as I pointed out, the Arab League has never really been an effective instrument of peacekeeping in the Arab world and, secondly, because the Royal Air Force has shown time and again—most recently in 1990, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait—that it can be on the spot literally within hours and that, by its rapid intervention in the theatre, it can deter aggression.

We saw this principle in operation on numerous occasions when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup was a member of the Government. For example, in 1961, fighters went up to Kuwait and prevented Iraqi aggression. In 1962, they were sent to India to defend the north-east frontier area against potential Chinese aggression. They were also sent to northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. There were many other instances during the right hon. Gentleman's time in Government.

The early expedition of force—and particularly of air power—can deter conflict and prevent warfare from spreading. That is why air power is a key element of peacekeeping and why Her Majesty's Government reasonably invest so much in it.

The other aspect that is particularly relevant to the recent raids is that we have seen from Iraqi aggression the potential dangers of nuclear and chemical weapon proliferation. Some Opposition Members have said that the allied bombing of Iraq in recent days was particularly heinous in as much as, sadly, there were civilian casualties at a hotel in Baghdad. Those casualties were incurred because Saddam Hussein was not keeping United Nations resolutions and because a Tomahawk cruise missile either malfunctioned or was shot down. One must remember that Saddam Hussein's Scud missiles were launched 89 times in the Gulf war against targets in Saudi Arabia and Israel. One Scud missile caused 127 casualties in Saudi Arabia. In the Iran-Iraq war, Scud missiles caused 2,000 deaths in Iran. This gives us an idea of the dangers of nuclear and chemical weapons proliferation. Those offensive weapons must be taken out, if necessary, at source.

I hope that the Western allies have learnt the lesson and will be putting in place effective anti-ballistic missile defences. The early dispatch of Patriot missiles, appropriately modified, enabled the allied forces to conduct their operations successfully. It would have been much more difficult had there been no defence against Scud missile attacks. Moreover, had there been no defence, the Israelis might have entered the war, with disastrous consequences.

We face challenges and changes. Partly because the debate has been hijacked by the need to discuss foreign affairs, there has been little time to examine the changing strategic circumstances within which the Royal Air Force has to operate. We have had no debate on the defence estimates—even though I suggest that such a debate is overdue, as the statement on the defence estimates was published way back in July last year.

We are faced with a multitude of operational tasks that the Royal Air Force has to accomplish—in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Somalia and Iraq—with a budget which is declining constantly in real terms and with manpower which is diminishing steadily under "Options for Change". The Air Force has a difficult challenge to make ends meet and fulfil its re-equipment programmes.

As I see it, 12 vital re-equipment programmes need to be funded: the Eurofighter 2000 and its associated weapons systems and equipment; the C130 replacement or modernisation; the Nimrod replacement; the medium surface-to-air missile for air defence; the SWATHE system for anti-armour attack; the conventionally armed stand-off missile—we saw in the Gulf war how perilous it can be with effective air defences for weapons to have to be launched over the target.

Free-fall weapons should increasingly become a thing of the past. In this respect, too, we need a tactical air-to-surface missile to provide the United Kingdom with an air-launched nuclear capability. People who say that a modified Trident or free-fall weapon could do the job are not thinking the issue through. We do not have time to go into detail now, but I suggest that those last two suggestions are facile in view of the flexibility and rapidity of response of air power.

The need for medium-lift helicopters has been described before and is serious. In all recent conflicts, there has been a grave shortage of support helicopters. I would say that we need both the Blackhawk and the EH101 because there are different tasks for helicopters of different sizes. The Firefly primary trainer has to be bought. Furthermore there is the mid-life update of the Tornado, the GR4. There is also the purchase of the advanced short-range air-to-air missile and the six Sea King HAR3 search and rescue helicopters. Those are all important programmes if the Royal Air Force is to be a flexible service.

How are we to save the money to provide the finance needed for the re-equipment? First, I suggest, we should reduce our commitment in Germany. It already assumes one quarter of the cost of strike command. When the Russians come out of the eastern part of Germany, as they are pledged to do by the latter part of 1994, we should save money on Germany and concentrate on the United Kingdom and on greater flexibility from the home base.

Secondly, we should create a two-tier service. If warning times are to be greater—if the political situation is such that we can envisage with greater certainty how potential crises will evolve—we should rely more on reserves: we should have effective regular forces properly trained and ready for use, but should rely more heavily on reserves and auxiliaries and should have auxiliary squadrons flying again.

Thirdly, we should be more rational in our support of the front line. We should rely rather less on maintenance units and more on industry for the third line servicing of our equipment. This will give us the leeway that we need. As it is, only 37 per cent. of the defence budget goes on equipment and 42 per cent. on pay and pensions. It is a dangerous trend, which needs to be reversed, and I think that some of the measures that I have outlined can achieve it.

8.8 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): It was said of the Bourbons that they learned nothing and forgot nothing. We should have learnt from the treaty of Versailles of the dangers of treating with the humiliation, partition, reparation and fear of dismemberment with which the allies are pursuing the defeated enemy Iraq—a

defeated enemy whose military potential has been crushed and whose ability seriously to make war is no longer a consideration.

On hearing of the assassination of one of his master's political enemies, one of Talleyrand's aides said, "It's a terrible crime," to which Tallyrand replied, "It's worse than a crime—it's a blunder." I contend that the west has not only been guilty of crimes of comission and omission but, from its own standpoint, has been committing blunders that will return to haunt it. Just as after the treaty of Versailles, the mutation of German national grievance came back to haunt us in an absolutely horrendous manner only decades later.

The fact that it was a crime to launch 40 cruise missiles at the push of a button many hundreds of miles from where they would land, at £1 million a piece, when they almost overflew people starving to death in Africa, has not really been disputed in many places over the past few days.

Notwithstanding the sneers in the House this evening, the French Government have made it clear that they regard that attack as outwith international law in the sense that it was outwith the terms of the Security Council resolution. The Russian, Jordanian, and Syrian Governments and the Arab League share that view. Demonstrations in the Islamic world, from Kuala Lumpur to Karachi, make clear the sheer scale of the opposition to the assault on Baghdad. It sometimes seems that there is a majority only in this House of Commons in favour of the assault that took place on Baghdad last Sunday.

Whatever may be said about the factories which the United Nations inspectors repeatedly testified had, by then, no military significance, the assault on the great historic Arab capital of Baghdad was no different in its intention from that of the Luftwaffe in the east end of London or of the terrorists who leave bombs in Victoria station or Oxford street and walk away before the damage is done.

The attack was designed to strike terror into the hearts of the civilian population of Baghdad and to turn the people against their Government. Just as the blitz by the Luftwaffe and Irish terrorism succeeded only in galvanising patriotic feeling, so the latest spasm of violence against Iraq by the west has actually strengthened Saddam Hussein's regime.

The attack was a blunder because it has contributed seriously to a wave that will continue for years of further instability, radicalisation and sweeping fundamentalism across the middle east and the broader Islamic arena. I do not know where some of the authorities obtain their information. On Arab streets, in the slums of Algiers, in Aden, in the slums of Cairo and in the mosques of Saudi Arabia, the attack has led to the beatification—if Muslims can be beatified—of that blood-soaked tyrant, Saddam Hussein. His stock has never been higher.

Believe me, that wave of radicalisation and fundamentalism has been under way in the Arab area for a considerable period. Anyone who is aware of the Palestinian question and who has watched the steady march of the fundamentalist movement, Hamas, gaining ground at the expense of the secular, moderate, nationalist leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, knows exactly the despair and humiliation felt by the Arabs that is leading to the festering problem of fundamentalism.

Hon. Members should mark my words. There is not much of a legal process in Saudi Arabia. However, Fahd is in danger. The Moslem brotherhood, outraged by recent events and the influence of the Americans in the kingdom, is even now plotting the overthrow of the puppet King Fahd who is so beloved of the British Foreign Office and the British Government.

When considering these matters, it is important to walk a mile in the other fellow's shoes. On the streets of the Arab world, the west is seen as nothing more than a bloody hypocrite after Sunday's attack and in respect of its general policy. The British Government cannot escape the Palestinian question.

This very day the Foreign Secretary met the ambassadors of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to discuss the illegal deportation of 415 Palestinians. However, he refused to allow the acknowledged representative of the Palestinian people here in London to attend that meeting. He will not meet him on any other occasion. Even when PLO leaders are in London, the Foreign Secretary forbids his top officials to meet them. That undermining of the moderate, nationalist leadership of the PLO is the same kind of gift to the Muslim fanatics and extreme radicals as the attack on Saddam Hussein by the coalition air forces.

In the third world, western foreign policy is seen as based on the need to preserve not a new world order, but a new world odour. The third world believes that it smells just like the old world odour. It is a pattern of relationships based on the economic, and ultimately military, domination of third-world countries by the big powers from the terms of trade to control of technology and military hardware.

When the peoples of the Arab area and of the third world generally consider the pattern of policy of western Governments, they see hypocrisy. One of the raids was launched from Turkey. Turkey illegally occupies a British Commonwealth country and it has been doing that for 20 years. However, it has launched attacks on another country for that country's transgressions of international law.

The hypocrisy is evident to the peoples of the Arab world and of the third world generally when they witness the total failure of western Governments to do anything about the illegal occupation of East Timor and the west's total failure to do anything about even simple matters such as the deportation of the 415 Palestinians, irrespective of the decades-long illegal occupation of Palestinian lands and the deportations, imprisonments, torture and killings that occur every day in the occupied territories of Palestine. Not a penny's-worth of sanctions is broached against Israel, let alone the launching of an armada against that country to force it to obey international law.

In no theatre is there more of a sense of burning outrage than in the former Yugoslavia. The western powers have been completely unable to stop the genocide and ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Muslims in Bosnia at the hands of Christian Serbs. The hypocrisy of western policy is seen to be at its most naked in that theatre.

Saddam Hussein will mutate across the Arab area and across the Muslim world. There will be more Saddams. Saddam will be strong until some kind of decency and justice permeates the international approach of the so-called allies.

8.18 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): I listened to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) with great interest. In the few words that I will be able to say, measures—and only measures—of agreement between us may well appear.

I want to explore the overall problem. I welcome the debate, but I am afraid to say that I will make another foreign affairs intrusion. None the less, the debate is important and it contains an emergency element.

I do not hesitate to say that I support, and have supported, the Government's policy. However, the spirit of my speech will be about the overall policy considerations for the future because they are most important. I welcome this opportunity to make a submission about what I am sure the Government are considering and, if they are not considering these points, I would like the Government to consider them.

Starting with the immediate, it should be made clear that we are dealing with the aftermath of the Gulf war. I am surprised that this has not been mentioned so far, but we are dealing with a situation which is, if you like, our own fault or which we brought about, because we chose —I respected the decision at the time and I respect it now —not ultimately to defeat Saddam Hussein militarily. It was a partial defeat, a defeat in a limited and controlled war. Having gone along with that, yet recognising the facts of life and acknowledging that hindsight does us absolutely no good in this, we must live with the consequences.

The first consequence is that we are landed with a very necessary nuclear and general weapons inspection that must be carried out on Iraqi soil by foreigners to Iraqis, an irritant to them and a perpetual excuse for them to create crises. This inspection must be enforced by air power. The problem of enforcement by air power is that the whole process could be too prolonged to hold politically.

The second main consequence is that we have the no-fly zones. It should be made quite clear that while they represent an immediate humanitarian problem, the Kurds and their situation within Iraq have been a problem for hundreds of years, the Shias and their situation in Iraq for even longer.

It is worth mentioning with regard to the Shia population that while some of them are in the most appalling conditions in the marshes, it is said by some, with no proper census, that the population of Iraq is over 50 per cent. Shia and there has therefore been a great struggle on the part of elements of the Sunni minority, or certainly not a substantial majority. There has been permanent competition between them, with the Sunnis always dominant, mainly through repression.

When it comes to the Kurds and Shias, no-fly zones are primarily necessary not only because of history—this is another point not brought out, and it is an unfortunate one—but because certain statements were made at the immediate conclusion of the Gulf war which encouraged the two insurrections, despite the fact that it should have been clear to those responsible that we have not done sufficient military damage to Saddam's army, much as we would have liked to, to limit its permanent capacity for vicious internal repression. We may have limited Saddam's capability to make war, but he showed a remarkable capacity to put down those two insurrections and we must live with the fact that, at least in part, we helped to create them. That gives us the responsibility for the humanitarian task involved.

Last but not least, we live under the United Nations umbrella, one which is wearing increasingly thin. The French position involves at least a warning. Arab pronouncements are becoming increasingly clear. It will not last much longer, this umbrella, this legality, without an overall and even-handed policy for the region. It is a region that I have had quite a lot to do with over the years and I have many personal connections with it.

That brings me to my policy concerns. The first is a general one and it goes far beyond even the region. It is the whole question of the Anglo-American relationship. It is very special and important to us, yet when we go into any sort of action with our American friends and allies we must face the fact that we ourselves have a limited national capability in the modern world. Neither we nor anyone else can really be effective without the Americans and the problem is the overwhelming imbalance of the coalition. It gives rise to the danger that whatever the coalition does is perceived to be a carrying through of United States policy.

That perception alone gives us the right to ask whether the United States has a regional policy. Perhaps we should exercise even more influence than we already do. But the answer to my question is no, the United States does not have a good regional policy for the whole middle east and Gulf theatre, and Iraq is but part of the whole. The danger is that we become completely besotted with Saddam Hussein while the whole of the rest of the theatre, with even more important considerations at stake, goes down the political and possibly the military drain.

When it comes to this regional policy, the containment of Iraq is part of it but there are two other major areas that must be addressed and dealt with. The first is the Palestinian question. The United States above all—because no one else has the capacity to deal with it—must come to terms with Israeli excesses which are exercised in the full knowledge of the support that it almost invariably gets from the United States. The United States must deal with its domestic political difficulties and the pressures constantly brought on presidential candidates, not least on President Clinton, by a very powerful lobby in the United States. The United States must come to terms with this because it is part of the whole.

The second major element is Iran. The Ayatollah kicked out not only the Shah but also the west, and particularly the United States. The United States has not come to terms with this. We have the same syndrome as we had only too visibly and recently with Vietnam. Iran is potentially a considerable danger, but, if it is dealt with, it could also be a considerable friend. It is the traditional and historical regional counter-balance to Iraq. Had Iran been stable and had the Iranian revolution not happened, none of this would ever have happened—no Iran-Iraq war and no invasion of Kuwait. Incidentally, there can be no regional security pact—a grand phrase mentioned by many—without the participation of Iran. Otherwise, I am afraid that it will be ineffectual.

We now come to the dangers of not having an overall regional policy. The first obvious danger is the destabilisation of the Arab and the whole middle eastern world. All our Arab friends have domestic difficulties. Many of them, particularly the Gulf states, are extremely

weak politically and extremely vulnerable, which is the very reason why we are there. Going wrong on this gives fuel to those extremes which they most fear.

Secondly, if we do not get it right we encourage Islamic fundamentalism. It is a very real danger from Algeria, Morocco, through Egypt, right down the Gulf countries and across the wider world. It should not be unnecessarily fuelled. It represents ammunition and food to those who want to destabilise and take over and who most certainly are not our potential friends.

Last but not least in the list of dangers is Iran itself. A considerable internal power struggle is going on and there is a serious risk of its going the wrong way——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Mr. Elfyn Llwyd.

8.28 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meironnydd Nant Conwy): We in the House are mindful of the threats to world peace posed by the regime of the evil Saddam Hussein. We also know of the unspeakable atrocities being perpetrated by his regime. Our concerns and those of the international community as a whole are reflected in the various United Nations resolutions of the past 18 months. I and my party were reluctantly in agreement with the original air strike, provided that it was carried out with safeguards for civilians and minimal loss of life generally. We also made it clear that our support was offered only as far as the action was within the sanction and authority of the United Nations.

One must consider the attacks on military installations as opposed to other sites. The Secretary of State said that Royal Air Force personnel did their best to make sure that they did not kill civilians. But can the accuracy of a cruise missile be guaranteed? The al-Rashid hotel is a case in point. Also, we have to consider whether the first strike was proportionate to the threat. Perhaps it was, but the question remains whether the other two strikes were legitimate. Further, if the strikes are designed ultimately to remove Saddam as president, as would probably be justified, they are certainly not succeeding. They are, in fact, having the reverse effect.

The public perception at the present time is that this country, with the other countries, has gone a step too far. The allies are on a slippery slope leading to full-scale conflict in this area. Martin Woollacott, *The Guardian* on 19 January, caught the mood when he said:

"A natural apprehension, accompanied by an element of guilt, has run through the west as allied planes and missiles struck at Iraq."

I am sure that this apprehension is in the minds of many hon. Members, since the legitimacy of the strikes is questionable.

The allies have not sought Security Council authorisation for the strikes, which ostensibly took place because of Saddam's failure to comply with resolutions 687 and 688. It is patently clear that the absence of such authorisation must open to question the legitimacy of the actions. Surely the allies cannot be acting on behalf of the international community when they do not seek specific sanction from the Security Council. Resolution 687 reads:

"relating, inter alia, to the restoration to Kuwait of its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity and the return of its legitimate Government, to the status of sanctions, the setting of specific conditions for a formal cease-fire".

This resolution was not carried unanimously.

The Secretary of State for Defence said that United Nations resolutions, supported by the personal endorsement of the Secretary-General, provided the legal authority for the attacks. The sanction of the Secretary-General is not the sanction of the Security Council. Indeed, article 42 of the charter of the United Nations is quite clear. It says:

"Should the Security Council consider that the measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea or land forces by Members of the United Nations."

Perhaps I am wrong, but I cannot see any reference to sanction by the Secretary-General alone.

In my view this is the crux of the question. Furthermore —this has already been quoted this evening—the Secretary-General's document, "An Agenda for Peace" deals with the use of military force in paragraph 42. It refers in detail to the concept of collective security and nowhere does it mention that the Secretary-General is in any way empowered by delegation or otherwise to speak on behalf of the Security Council.

Therefore, I believe that the legitimacy of the strikes must be in question. We are now in a serious position in which, as previously mentioned, Jordan, Syria and Libya, on behalf of the Arab world, are expressing strong misgivings about these actions. Similarly, the Russians and the French are now signalling their valid concerns at the actions. The international community is coming to the view that the most recent action was punitive only and that can never be legitimised or accepted in any decent international community.

Saddam has indicated that he is ready to observe a ceasefire. I believe that the time has come for resolutions 687 and 688 to be looked at anew. The precise details of non-compliance should be catalogued and the matter should be placed before the Security Council without delay. It is hoped that then the Security Council would give Iraq until a specific date to comply fully with the resolutions. Then, and only then, would the United Kingdom Government be observing the charter of the United Nations. Any further failure to follow the charter would, without doubt, pose a greater threat to world order than even Saddam's regime, since it could lead to the break-up of the United Nations. That is a valid point. At the present time, the United Nations appears to have been used by the so-called allies and that is certainly not the purpose for which it was formed; quite the reverse. At the moment, the United Nations can be considered a puppet of others.

I sincerely hope that the Government will resist any further applications by the United States—since we are talking of puppets—for a show of strength. I trust that the Government will proceed with caution. I trust that they will accept what this, albeit evil, man now says; at least listen and open a dialogue, and go back and examine resolutions 687 and 688, before placing the matter urgently before the Security Council. In international law, as everybody knows, legitimacy is everything. The United Kingdom must act strictly in accordance with the United Nations charter to regain that legitimacy and, with it, moral authority. Failure to do so would be merely to play into the Baghdad tyrant's hands.

8.35 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I have to declare an interest, of which the House will be aware. I have worn a light-blue uniform for more than four decades. I regret the length of time, but I have never regretted wearing the uniform; it has been a great privilege. I do regret, though, the loss of our full day's debate on RAF matters, because I feel that this once-a-year debate is important.

I compliment my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench on the way that they have handled matters in the Gulf as far as the Royal Air Force is concerned, and I wish to place on record, as others have done, my respect for and appreciation of the gallantry and skill of the crews involved. I believe that the Government and the RAF were right to impose a ban on disclosing to the media the names of aircrew taking part in the operations. Those in mass communications forget the family problems that are left behind, and it is right that we should never disclose the names of the aircrew.

My concern is that the RAF's position should now be recognised as the key element in deterrence against modern conventional warfare. I accept that Trident, as the nuclear deterrent, is the final deterrent, but more often than not we will be called upon to deploy RAF units in a deterrent capacity or a peacekeeping role. Therefore, I wish to draw attention to the changes that have taken place in the Royal Air Force under "Options for Change".

We have had a lot of publicity about the changes in the Army, but there has not been a lot of shouting about the changes in the RAF. It is interesting to note that, post-options, the RAF will have four types of combat aircraft: seven squadrons of Tornado F3s, three squadrons of Harriers, three sqauadrons of Jaguars in direct support of the battlefield, four squadrons of Tornado GR1s, two squadrons of Tornado GR1As and two squadrons of GR1Bs. That force consists of all-weather fighter assets and is a reduction by 33 per cent.—a massive reduction —in our all-weather fighter assets.

Long-range offensive assets have been reduced by 38 per cent. We all know the value of the GR1. I understand that, when an American air force general was asked what additional assets he would have liked in the Gulf, he said that he would have liked more squadrons of GR1 Royal Air Force aircraft. That tells us a lot about the GR1's standing. Maritime patrol aircraft have had a reduction of 25 per cent., and the Royal Air Force Regiment a reduction of 29 per cent., while there has been a 33 per cent. reduction in light armoured squadrons. Furthermore, 21 United Kingdom RAF stations will be closed, as will three in Germany, by 1995. That is a massive reduction in what I believe is the key element of the Royal Air Force.

I turn now, as my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench would expect me to do in this debate, to the volunteer reserves and the auxiliaries, where my interest, of course, lies. I agree with the moves and views that are taking place about the future. It is important that we recognise the key position which the auxiliaries and the volunteer reserve will occupy. It is right to examine those two organisations and ask whether we can make any changes and improvements, probably by a merger, to streamline them and make them more efficient. That does not mean that I want them to be reduced; I want them to be strengthened and increased. I would like some flying units to be returned to the auxiliary air force, or whatever it will be called in the future.

The great value that we get from auxiliaries and reserves is not often appreciated. If I had my way, all those who are trained by the Royal Air Force to fly would be signed up for life, regardless of the length of their full-time commission. The massive investment which the state makes in training pilots, navigators and so on should be repaid by their commitment to an auxiliary or reserve job which requires them to put in so many hours a week, a year or whatever. It destroys, as the United States did so effectively in the Gulf, the myth that was spread many years ago that weekend pilots could not fly fast jets. That is absolute nonsense.

Another matter to which I should like to draw attention is the volunteer air cadets. I believe the air cadets give the nation and the Royal Air Force tremendous value for the money which is invested in them. The officers and instructors who look after the air cadets are volunteers and are not paid. They attend evening duties and weekend activities, as do the flight people in the Chipmunks. The volunteers also fly motor gliders or conventional gliders and are not paid for it. That must be about the best bargain that anyone ever got, because the volunteers do it simply because they love flying or they love to be involved in the cadet organisation.

We should expand that sort of activity because I believe that we cannot get better value. If there are any thoughts in the alternative options programme which is buzzing around in the Ministry and elsewhere at present that it is not good value, let me say from considerable experience that it is the best value that I have seen in my life. I have never been able to work out why the RAF has been able to get so many dedicated people at no cost. Surely that must be a good thing.

Another area in which the Royal Air Force plays an important role is peacekeeping and humanitarian activities. The replacement of the Hercules will be a vital and important decision. We must recognise that the Hercules is the workhorse which is used by the Air Force all over the world at short notice, often to drop humanitarian supplies in some of the most inaccessible regions on the planet. Therefore, when the Hercules is replaced, I hope that it will be replaced by an aircraft which is better but can do the job as effectively. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench understand what I mean by that, because one often gets an aircraft which is alleged to be able to do the job better but does not do it as effectively. We must be sure about that.

The next matter to which I should like to draw attention is the replacement of equipment. There must be a proper stand-off weapon system for the Royal Air Force. Surely we recognise that individuals in aircraft are at a much greater risk if they must get right over the target to deliver the weapon system. It would be much better if they could deliver a weapon system from the stand-off position. This is no criticism, but during the Gulf war the JP233 was required to fly straight and level over an enemy target to deliver the weapon system, which denied the Iraqis the use of the airfield. That had a cost element. I should like that matter to be dealt with.

I support what the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said about the Leuchars helicopters. We will never be able to thank enough the units operating the helicopters for what they have done. I

regret that the local authorities did not accept my invitation to attend a meeting to be held with a view to seeing whether we could find local authority input in the cost of keeping the facility at Leuchars, and I am saddened by that. Local authorities have themselves to blame for not taking up the opportunity. *[Interruption.]* In life, it is a question of taking the opportunity. Local authorities did not even consider following up the invitation to a meeting, and I find that distressing and disturbing.

I hope that the Chipmunk's replacement aircraft will be as good to fly and as much of a pilot's aeroplane so that we continue to get volunteers to fly them.

8.47 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I do not know much about the Royal Air Force, so I will not engage in that part of the debate. Two years ago, hon. Members and I were taken to SHAPE headquarters by the Royal Air Force, and they treated us very well. During the war, there were a lot of black service men in the Royal Air Force, but I know that that is not the case today. Perhaps the Secretary of State could investigate why that is so. I am disappointed that we will not have a serious motion before the House which we can all debate and that this debate is not solely about the position in Iraq.

In December 1990, I went to Iraq where I met members of the Revolutionary Command Council. As a result of that visit I was opposed to the Gulf war, and I voted that way with a number of my hon. and right hon. Friends. At that time, we said that the Gulf war would solve nothing, and I think that the case has been made. More than 300,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed, and 150,000 children suffer from cholera, typhoid and so on. Iraq has been devastated.

I note that the British Government made a profit on the war and that American firms received lucrative contracts at the end of the war. Perhaps the mistake of the Iraqis was not to invite the Americans to repair the bomb damage that occurred during the Gulf war. If that had been done, perhaps we would not have the present situation.

Since the war, the Iraqis have done well to rebuild Iraq. As the House will know, they have few or no materials because of the sanctions imposed on them. They have done remarkably well to repair bridges and so on.

When the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) spoke about the situation of the marsh Arabs, one could not help but feel a lot of sympathy for them. One wondered how the hon. Lady could speak about the Iraqis withdrawing water from the marshes and leaving people thirsty. Coalition forces bombed the waterworks in Baghdad and Iraq, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of people dying from contamination of the water and the diseases which resulted.

I am worried about the double talk and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) mentioned, about the fraud of this Government and of the Americans with the attacks by the western allies. I notice that they no longer speak of a coalition. The coalition has unravelled, and only a few countries are taking part in the further attacks against Iraq.

The French and the Russians do not impress me. They are speaking out now because George Bush has gone. It is like saying that the schoolmaster has gone so the children can begin to have a go. I suspect that that is why the French and the Russians are speaking out now. George Bush and the Americans ruled the United Nations Security Council with an iron thumb, and the British Government trailed behind on the coat tails.

The point that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) made is important. If one takes a cold, calculated look at what is happening, one begins to see a pattern emerge. Muslims in Bosnia are not defended by western allies. The Iraqis are attacked by the western allies; they are also Muslims. The Palestinians have been attacked by Israel but there has not been much of a song and dance by the western allies because they are Muslims. The Libyans are also Muslims. They have also been ostracised and sanctions have been placed on them.

One begins to wonder what the western allies have against Muslims.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grant: I will not give way. In the language that has been used, the international racism of the western allies has to be seen to be believed. People talk about "spanking" the president of a nation of 18 million people, whether those people like him or not. I suspect that international racism has a lot to do with that. I believe that the recent attacks have been sparked by Bush's hatred of Muslims generally and Saddam Hussein in particular. It is a disgrace that the British Government have blindly followed what Bush did.

Let us consider the justifications which the allies gave for the bombings. They talk about incursions into the no-fly zone. They talk about incursions into Kuwait. The language is not accurate. It was not Kuwait but a demilitarised zone. They talk about Kuwait because they want to conjure up emotional images of what happened before, during and after the Gulf war.

The allies talk about United Nations inspectors and so on. Let us examine the no-fly zone. I specifically asked the Secretary of State for Defence two questions last Wednesday. I asked him about the targets. I asked whether the targets were inside or outside the zone. He said categorically that they were inside. A few days later, on Sunday, we found that the British Government supported the Americans when they sent cruise missiles outside the no-fly zone into Baghdad, killing innocent civilians.

I asked the Secretary of State where he had obtained authorisation for launching the raids. He said categorically that the no-fly zone was authorised in accordance with international law and that the forces were acting in self-defence. That was merely an opinion but it was not backed up by the facts. We were not told what specific aspects of international law supported the allies. We were not told which United Nations resolutions supported the allies. For example, we know that the allies banked on resolution 688, which was carried in April 1991. It referred specifically to northern Iraq and the Kurds.

I quote no less a source than Dilip Hiro, who is an expert in middle east affairs. He said in *New Statesman and Society:*

"Sixteen months later in August 1992, however, in the absence of any large-scale flow of Shia refugees into Iran or Kuwait, or any formal complaints to the UN by a neighbouring country, the western powers had no grounds for applying Resolution 688 to the situation in southern Iraq. They needed a specific resolution for the purpose. But their soundings at the Security Council showed that they would not get the minimum nine votes required to pass such a motion. Of the seven third-world members of the Council, Cuba, Yemen and Zimbabwe had even opposed Resolution 688; and

[Mr. Grant]

China and India . . . had abstained . . . Having found the road to a separate Security Council resolution blocked, the western leaders resorted to invoking 'unwritten, customary international law' which, they claimed, allowed military intervention in cases of grave humanitarian abuse. Bush went on to describe the western allied air patrols below the 32nd parallel as 'human rights surveillance'. Even the *New York Times* had difficulty in swallowing this line.

'Fighter jets bristling with missile are not obvious weapons for protecting a human rights monitoring mission'".

The reason why no Security Council resolution was adopted was that the allies could not get the resolution through the Security Council, so unilaterally they set up the no-fly zone. Having done so, they went ahead to say that if Saddam incurred breaches of the no-fly zone, they had the authority to take him out. Of course, not having obtained authorisation in the first place, they did not get it in the second instance.

The Secretary of State talks about self-defence. That is clearly bogus. The former defence secretary of the United States, Dick Cheney, said that Iraqi missiles were so clapped out that they posed a greater threat to the Iraqi troops than the coalition forces.

It is vital that international law is stuck to, especially for countries in the third world. I want my Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen to accept that if they are to support the Government in these matters, it is surely the job of the Opposition to ensure that the Government stick to international law and do not take short cuts. There will come a time when the Opposition do not support the Government in the international arena and the Government will not have a leg to stand on.

8.55 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I know that several hon. Members still wish to speak so I propose to limit my remarks to five minutes. The reason why I speak in the debate is that the predecessor Defence Select Committee to that which I chair made two reports last year which are relevant to the Royal Air Force content of the debate. I wish to make some comments on them.

In the sixth report of that Committee, the European fighter aircraft was considered. The Committee made particular reference to three issues: first, the importance of Germany's continued involvement in the EFA programme; secondly, the scope for efficiency savings in the workshare arrangements; and thirdly, the dangers of making savings by reducing performance.

The fears expressed by that Committee were borne out by events. I am delighted that Germany—I congratulate my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench on their achievement—was persuaded to continue as part of that programme. We learned a great deal during those difficult negotiations about the efficiency possibilities in workshare arrangements and, indeed, to a certain extent, about the inadequacies of the workshare arrangements that were originally agreed. Those lessons must be learnt for the future when we enter other collaborative agreements with our allies.

I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence referred in his opening speech to the dangers of making savings by reducing performance. I understand that he gave the assurances that I seek, that the British will buy an EFA which is capable of defeating any other aircraft in the sky at the time of its production. That is vital. I apologise to my right hon. Friends that I was not able to be present for that opening speech. The Defence Committee had a long-standing commitment to visit NATO today. That is where I was and from where I returned about half an hour ago.

The second report of the previous Defence Select Committee dealt with short and medium-range air-to-air missiles. It is a development of the same theme as that of the sixth report. I gather that there were substantial difficulties in the collaborative projects which were initiated to replace our short and medium-range air-to-air missiles. Those difficulties have now been resolved. As with the EFA project, there is a great deal to be learnt about the way in which such arrangements are dealt with. Difficulties must be anticipated rather than merely solved with great difficulty during such negotiations.

Turning to the report of my own Committee, we were concerned that the RAF, like other elements of our armed forces, is likely to become severely overstretched. We are concerned that some Jaguar crews are already returning to Incirlik for their third tour. We are concerned about the helicopter and air transport resources available to support operations and the shortage of tankers, given the likely role of the RAF in international peacekeeping affairs.

I would be grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence if at some point he could tell the House what has happened to the decision to order 25 utility EH101s that was announced to the House six years ago by the noble Lord Younger, who was the then Secretary of State for Defence. Since then it appears that no advance has been made on putting that purchase into effect.

I congratulate the RAF on its achievements in the Gulf. We are all immensely impressed by the accuracy of the bombing which the RAF in particular carried out in the past week. The standard of expertise is exemplary. When I was fortunate enough to be at strike command headquarters the day after the Tornado strike, it was noteable just how accurate those strikes had been. The RAF can rightly be proud of its standard of workmanship and we should be proud of the RAF.

Finally, I wholly support, as does the Defence Committee, the Government's efforts to support the United Nations resolutions and to ensure that Saddam Hussein does not go beyond the bounds of reasonable behaviour and contravene the standards that the United Nations has laid down. Clearly, he has been testing the resolutions as hard as he can for the past month or two, trying to take advantage of what he perceived as a potential weakness during the change of presidency in the United States. I have no doubt whatever that we were right to back the efforts to enforce the no-fly zone and to make sure that he did not try again to cross the border with Kuwait and start another incident.

My only worry is that there is a certain lack of clarity about the parameters within which the United Nations should exercise control or those around which we should limit the action that is being taken against Iraq. It must be right to enforce the no-fly zone and ensure that Saddam Hussein does not do any damage to his neighbours and to make sure, in so far as we can, that his behaviour towards the Shi'ite people in the south of Iraq and the Kurdish people in the north remains within the bounds of civilised

human behaviour. However, there are limits to the extent to which we are right to bomb Baghdad or take other retaliatory action which puts at great risk civilian life.

I hope that the Government will take note of the resolution of the House to back the United Nations in its efforts to curtail Saddam Hussein, but equally that we do not go too far in provoking unnecessary conflict.

9.2 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Although I intend to vote against the Adjournment, I welcome certain aspects of the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), who said that we should now seek agreement from the United Nations on all future action. However, if we adopt such an attitude, there should be some feedback in our attitude towards Iraq.

We cannot ignore the position of the United Nations and argue that everything has taken place with the agreement of the United Nations and is entirely justified by past resolutions. There seems to be some inconsistency if we say that in future we shall always act in a certain way, but that the past is the past and does not relate to what we are now seeking to achieve.

In trade union discussions a distinction is drawn between procedural agreements and substantive agreements. That analysis should apply to the United Nations. The United Nations tends to adopt long resolutions suggesting that certain action should be taken, with no provision for follow-up measures. Nor do United Nations resolutions establish which agencies are supposed to act on their behalf. That needs to be contained in the original resolution, and if it is not, we need to return to the United Nations to pass fresh resolutions which agree to action in different areas. I might not necessarily agree with the substantive agreements reached if we did so. I do not agree with many of the measures passed in this Parliament and often seek to speak and mobilise hon. Members against them. If we return to the United Nations and pass fresh resolutions, it will make the actions taken under them legitimate.

What have we got at the moment? Resolution 687 concerns the ending of hostilities between Kuwait and Iraq. During recent events much has been unreasonably built on that resolution. Resolution 688 essentially concerns the Kurds in the north of Iraq and was used initially to justify action in the southern no-fly zone—a zone that does not enter into resolutions 687 or 688, but was decided afterwards. No-fly zones are justified in such circumstances. They are justified in Bosnia, where they have been determined by a United Nations resolution. However, that is not the case in Iraq.

No United Nations resolutions justify the action and no United Nations forces are involved. Forces are not going into action wearing light blue berets and helmets. The United Nations did not decide on the no-fly zone and there is no United Nations command structure for the action in the Gulf as there is in Bosnia, despite all the problems there.

The retrospective endorsement of the United Nations Secretary-General is the only justification for the action. Secretaries-General sometimes get things wrong. It does not follow that because a Secretary-General—even one as prestigious as the United Nations Secretary-General—has said something, it is the correct interpretation of the resolutions that we are acting under.

There can be no justification for the action taken outside the no-fly zone. It is peculiar that the actions taken inside the zone were justified in international law as self-defence. The no-fly zone was established in violation of the sovereignty of Iraq. We told Iraq that as it intended to take action against us, we were engaged in self-defence. That would apply if the no-fly zone happened to be in another country, but not if it is in Iraq.

I was opposed to the liberation of Kuwait, but that action was taken to defend Kuwait's sovereignty against Iraq. On this occasion, we are invading the sovereignty of Iraq. Nothing contained in international law or the United Nation's resolutions can justify the action that has been taken, although there might be developments to justify it.

9.7 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words before the winding-up speeches. I shall not follow the remarks of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), but wish to identify myself with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) about training and the Royal Air Force reserves.

It is fair to say that, since the 1950s, areas of operation for the Royal Air Force steadily shrank until about a year ago. It is ironic that, in the past 18 months, since the end of the cold war and the destruction of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact, there has been an increase in the number of areas in which the RAF has operated.

We saw how effective the RAF was during the Gulf war, and in the recent raids over Iraq we have seen the effectiveness of modern weapons systems such as the Tornado and laser-guided bombs. That shows that air power is highly effective. It is both flexible and speedy, it results in minimum loss of life to the aircraft crews taking part, compared with the use of ground troops, and it provides a most effective deterrent in many cases and a key element in peace-keeping, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) said.

I believe that in the future we shall see increased use of air power because of the features of flexibility and speed of response. In this respect, it is very important that the Royal Air Force has modern, capable aircraft. Obviously, I am delighted that the Eurofighter 2000 is going ahead, with all four nations taking part. This aircraft is a vital part of the RAF's future. It will provide a first-class air platform on which increasingly sophisticated and advanced systems can be mounted. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), I am in favour of updating the Tornado GR1 with a stand-off weapon, thus enabling it to carry out raids of the sort that it carried out over Iraq, but with less likelihood of its being shot down.

We must look very closely at our transport needs if we are to have the flexibility of response to which I referred. We need a replacement for the Hercules and we need it soon. It will be necessary, more and more, to use helicopters. As has been said, the EH101 procurement is now very urgent and I hope that there will be action sooner rather than later.

I am convinced that, more than ever, this country needs a balanced, modern and flexible Air Force equipped with

[Mr. Keith Mans]

all the main components of air power and able to respond effectively whenever the need arises, as, tragically, seems likely to occur ever more frequently in the future.

9.11 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): It is right that the House should be debating today the situation in Iraq. Although, from the point of view of the RAF, particularly on the 75th anniversary of its creation, this debate arrangement is less than satisfactory, it is proper and appropriate that the House should have the opportunity to consider the development international crisis and deteriorating military situation in Iraq. Had the change of business not been announced, I should certainly have sought, on behalf of the shadow Cabinet, an emergency debate on the subject of Iraq.

I express my personal congratulations to and support for the RAF on its 75th anniversary. I also support the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) at the beginning of the debate.

I want to begin by stating our position quite clearly. The position of Labour is support for United Nations resolutions, for decisions of the Security Council and for actions based firmly and clearly within the terms of those resolutions. If international order and decisions are to mean anything at all in an increasingly disordered world, I can see no course other than to act on that basis through decisions of the Security Council.

I expressed our position on these issues in a letter to the Foreign Secretary as long ago as 20 August 1992, when I said that we would support the creation of a no-fly zone in the south of Iraq, just as we had supported the establishment of the no-fly zone in the north. Both those decisions were based on requests from many countries and on many international demands that action be taken to prevent genocide against the Kurds and the Shia Muslims in Iraq. I said in that letter, and I repeat now, that we would not support air strikes against other targets in Iraq. For the sake of clarity, I shall quote from my letter:

> "I also want to make clear our position in relation to any proposed military attack on ground targets in Iraq. I strongly believe that no such attack can be justified or should be made unless and until the United Nations Security Council has considered the matter."

When the attack took place last weekend, following consultation with my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields and the Leader of the Opposition, we immediately demanded the recall of the United Nations Security Council to discuss the situation and to establish clearly what the position was.

It was right for us to have done that and we were pleased when other countries joined in that call. As has been said in the debate, we were sorry that Her Majesty's Government did not immediately adopt that approach. I was sorry for another reason: I did not believe it right that in the last 48 hours of his mandate, the then President of the United States should be initiating that sort of action.

I wish also to make it clear that we cannot accept, nor do we regard, the decisions of any President of the United States as synonymous with decisions of the UN Security Council. It is important for us to be clear that the authority of the UN, which I support and want to see upheld, including in Iraq, must have the widest possible coalition of support. It is dangerous for the United States to jeopardise the coalition for action and the wide-ranging support that has been established.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I will not give way yet.

I hope that the new President of the United States, whose election I warmly applaud and whose success has delighted my hon. Friends and me, will be extremely cautious about moves against Iraq—or, for that matter elsewhere, including Bosnia—to ensure that whatever is done has the legitimate suport and agreement of the UN Security Council. I cannot make my position and that of my party clearer than that.

Saddam heads a bloody, villainous and deceitful regime, but the position of Her Majesty's Government has not been altogether coherent or consistent in regard to that regime. It was all right for the west and the allies to help create the monster war machine in Iraq. It was all right for that to be built up year on year so long as that war machine was aimed at Iran. It was a different matter when that same war machine turned against western interests, as ultimately it did in Kuwait, and there was horror and dismay at those events.

Again, my party supported the decisions of the UN —it was right for us to do so; I support them strongly, then and now—to take action to dismiss that territorial aggression. But the record of Her Majesty's Government in all those matters should not be ignored or obscured in the present circumstances. I regret to say that, even now, the British Government are giving confused signals to Iraq.

During Foreign Affairs Question Time last week, I raised with the Secretary of State details of an article in the *Sunday Mirror* of the previous week-end. There was a degree of derisory laughter on the Conservative Benches because the *Sunday Mirror* had disclosed that our Foreign Secretary was issuing visas to authorise visits to this country by Iraqi business people—agents of the Saddam regime—to discuss new deals with GEC. Far from laughing now, Conservative Members look sombre. They should, because the Foreign Secretary confirmed to me in a letter this week that he had authorised such visits and that discussions had taken place.

It is deplorable—I am not suggesting that any deal has been done—even to be discussing with the Saddam regime deals on the one hand, while, on the other, we are sending our airplanes against them in support of UN Security Council resolutions. With the Conservative party, business is always business. That is the view they take. Business is always business, especially when the chairman of the company involved is none other than Lord Prior, a former Conservative Cabinet Minister.

I strongly urge the right hon. Gentleman, in the interests of keeping the coalition together on this issue and of better understanding and clearer messages to the Saddam regime, not to issue any more such visas to Iraqi business men to come to this country unless and until we have the situation in Iraq under control; until Saddam has accepted the decisions of the United Nations; until military efforts have ceased and that dialogue has begun. In those circumstances it may be acceptable, but certainly not until then.

Mr. Madden: Will my hon. Friend contrast the ease with which Iraqis have been able to obtain visas to come

here to buy arms and sophisticated telecommunications equipment with the extraordinary difficulty I have had in persuading the British Foreign Office and Home Office to give visas to a 63-year-old Iraqi woman who urgently needs medical treatment in this country?

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend makes his point effectively, except that I am not suggesting that these latest visits were to discuss arms contracts, but the previous visits were. That is the case.

I reiterate that we support United Nations Security Council resolutions on Kuwait and we supported the establishment of the air exclusion zones because it was quite apparent that Saddam was practising genocide against his own people, using poison gas against the Kurds in the north. If anyone doubts what is going on, they should read the excellent report of my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who has just returned from Iraqi Kurdistan to report to us that thousands of Kurdish villages have been obliterated by the Saddam regime—reduced to rubble—and people slaughtered, including women and children.

While I give second place to no one in deploring what happened at the al-Rashid hotel, the reality is that Saddam himself has killed many thousands more of his own citizens in trying to suppress the development of democracy in his own country. So we fully and wholeheartedly support the actions in support of the air exclusion zones. We cannot accept a situation in which our own pilots and air crews, in pursuit of those air exclusion zones, can be threatened by Saddam's forces on the ground.

I want to see an end to all these military actions and to see stability return to the region. I guess that those aims and objectives are shared by everyone in the House, but until Saddam Hussein is willing to accept the terms of the ceasefire and to accept the right of the United Nations and the force of the Security Council resolutions, it seems to me unlikely that those actions can be put in abeyance.

I want to make one other important point about stability in that region which has been the most threatening region to world peace for at least the past four decades. We need to keep together in the coalition the Islamic nations that have supported the action against Saddam Hussein from the outset. Therefore, we need to demonstrate to them our even-handedness and the even-handedness of the United Nations in pursuit of Security Council resolutions.

We warmly welcomed and rejoiced in the election of a Labour Government in Israel but we deplore their treatment of the Palestinians, which is clearly in breach of international law, specifically the fourth Geneva convention. We have told them in no uncertain terms that they should rescind their decision immediately. I make that clear again. In that connection I urge the Foreign Secretary to respond to the PLO's request to meet him in Israel together with representatives of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to discuss this and other matters and the peace initiative generally which, as everyone agrees, is important. The Government of Israel have persuaded their Parliament to agree to talks with representatives of the Palestinians and there is no reason why our Government should not take the same approach. I urge the Foreign Secretary to do so.

I have spelt out our position on these matters. I shall now deal with the escalating situation and the deteriorating international scene. I supported much of what the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who spoke for the Liberal Democrats, made one of the best speeches in the debate. We simply cannot continue tit-for-tat indefinitely. The Foreign Secretary has my sympathy and, in most respects, he also has my support because I realise how difficult it must be to deal with a regime that is entrenched in suppression, torture and extermination.

We should be working through the United Nations in the best interests of all the people of Iraq for greater stability in the region so that acts of war, military actions, can cease and some kind of dialogue can begin. I do not rule out more action, but we must try to persuade Saddam Hussein to accept the decisions of the international community authorised by the Security Council. He must promise to stop actions against his own people in the north and south or elsewhere in Iraq. If he can be brought to those terms, some dialogue must be initiated.

To bring additional pressure on him, I urge the Government and the coalition allies greatly to improve and strengthen their communications, links and dialogue with the democratic organisations which represent various groups of Iraqi people in capitals around the world. That should be used far more effectively than it has hitherto to bring pressure to bear on Saddam's regime.

Our support can be based only on that kind of approach; on legitimate decisions, actions and objectives agreed internationally in the United Nations. The sad fact is that the United Nations is currently overloaded with demands. It is weak, underfunded, under-resourced and overstretched. Support for the Secretary-General is nowhere near sufficient to enable him to respond to the demands that are continually heaped upon him and his staff.

I hope that we will see a change in the Government's attitude towards support for the United Nations. Perhaps I had better reiterate that I am a strong supporter of the United States of America, and certainly of that country's newly elected President. However, we cannot allow the United Nations to be denied subscriptions from the USA on the one hand and to be persuaded to take military action in lieu of those subscriptions on the other. We should not accept that kind of pressure on the United Nations.

I hope that problem can be tackled—as we intend to tackle it in our developing dialogue with the new Administration in Washington. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I am not surprised by the looks of amazement on the faces of Conservative Members, but it is clear that they do not have many friends in the new Administration. Any hope that they had of a flying start was rather derailed by the kind of person and the nature of the campaigning ideas that they sent to support President Bush in the American elections.

Mr. Mans: So that we may get the record straight, will the hon. Gentleman say how many other nations that are members of the United Nations are not up to date with their subscriptions?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, I regret to say that the number is large. I am not suggesting that the problem is only with the United States of America. I am merely urging the Foreign Secretary to start taking action to resolve the general

[Dr. Cunningham]

underfunding of the United Nations. I do not for one moment suggest that the fault is wholly that of the United States of America.

Before I conclude, I want to mention the circumstances of Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright, who were arrested and are being arbitrarily detained, having committed no crime other than to wander innocently over the border into Iraq. Again, that is an illustration of the nature of the regime that we must face and with which we must try to deal.

I have discussed their case with the Foreign Secretary on more than one occasion, and I know that he is acting consistently on behalf of those two men. I urge him again tonight to redouble his efforts to seek the safe release of those two British subjects—as my hon. Friends the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) have consistently done.

We have never pretended from this Dispatch Box that the problems are easy to resolve. We do not suggest now that the solutions are simple. However, there is, or appears to be, a lack of any coherent strategy towards resolving the problems of Iraq and of securing greater stability in the whole region.

We urge the right hon. Gentleman and the Cabinet to adopt a change of course in that regard if, and only if, the commitments that I have spelt out can be secured from Saddam Hussein. If they cannot, and if Saddam Hussein persists with threatening the coalition forces and with acts of genocide against his own people, we shall be as authoritative as anyone in calling for continued action against his regime.

I hope that Saddam Hussein will listen to reason. That would be the best outcome for everyone—including, I regret to say, Saddam Hussein himself, to whom I offer no sympathy or support at all. Neither does anyone sitting on the Opposition Benches. If Saddam Hussein will not listen to reason, he should be left in no doubt that the will and authority of the international community must be made to prevail. That will and authority, based on Security Council decisions, will have our implacable support.

9.34 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The House will be grateful to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for his concluding words.

The debate has two perfectly respectable parents—the Royal Air Force and the Gulf—but it has emerged as a mongrel. I apologise to hon. Members who have raised points related specifically to the RAF. I shall ensure that they are answered by Defence Ministers, as has been requested.

I wish to respond to the part of the debate that, as it were, intruded on the original debate. I have been present for most of it, but I missed two speeches that were clearly outstanding—those of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). I did hear some exceptional speeches, however, including the shrewd contributions of my right hon. Friends the Members for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and for Bridgwater (Mr. King), and the eloquent tirade of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

I do not think that there is any serious doubt or confusion about our objectives in dealing with Iraq. We have three: to maintain the integrity of Kuwait; to eliminate the threat of Iraqi nuclear and chemical weapons; and, as far as we can, to deter Saddam Hussein from attacking the Kurds and Shias who live within the frontiers of Iraq. Those aims have two things in common: they are all underwritten by the United Nations, and an attempt has been made to undermine all three in the past fortnight.

The underwriting by the United Nations is clear. The first objective—the maintaining of Kuwait's sovereignty—is contained in UN resolutions 678 and 687. The second, relating to nuclear, biological and chemical missile capabilities, is dealt with in resolutions 687 and 707, which authorise the inspection teams. The third is contained in resolution 688, which demands a stop to repression of the Iraqi civilian population. Resolutions 706 and 712 are sometimes forgotten, but they could become important again. They allow the sale of oil to finance humanitarian relief, including relief for the Kurds.

As I have said, each of those objectives has been threatened in the past few weeks. Let us take the first, the integrity of Kuwait. On the Kuwait border, Saddam Hussein sent organised armed teams into what is now legally Kuwait to retrieve Silkworm missiles. He refused to return the missiles, and failed to evacuate police posts in the demilitarised zone by the deadline set by the Security Council. As for the second objective, relating to nuclear and chemical weapons facilities, Saddam did what he has done before. He presented several obstacles, and sought to impose several conditions, to prevent the UN Special Commission from carrying out its appointed task. He refused to allow UN Special Commission flights to enter Iraqi territory, and placed restrictions on the use of aircraft and helicopters inside Iraq.

As for the third objective, Saddam deployed missiles threatening coalition aircraft in the no-fly zone. In the north, Iraqi forces repeatedly harassed and attacked humanitarian convoys taking much-needed food and medical supplies, forcing them to be temporarily suspended.

Why was the effort made, quite suddenly, to undermine all three of the objectives of our policy, which were underwritten by the United Nations? I do not believe that Saddam Hussein is a madman, but he is certainly a gambler. He thought that he could gamble on what he perceived as a moment of uncertainty and weakness in the west because of the end of the current United States Administration. He was wrong, and it was desperately important to prove him wrong. That sums up the point of the action that has been taken in the past few weeks.

If Saddam's challenge had gone unanswered, he would have gained a substantial advantage in the world. Our aims would have been put at risk, and our friends—including some who, perhaps a little belatedly now that President Bush is out of the way, have expressed criticisms—would have been the first to evince nervousness and apprehension, and to suggest that we had begun to lose our nerve and desert our objectives.

I am sure that it was right to respond legally and proportionately, and the result has been that, for the moment, the wrongdoing and undermining have stopped. The news today is not all about peace—I readily acknowledge that—but the UNSCOM flight has now arrived in Baghdad with United Nations personnel

aboard. We shall have to see how those United Nations representatives are treated and how they are able to operate when they get going.

As the House has heard, there has been an incident in the northern zone today, in which Iraqi radar may have locked on to a coalition aircraft resulting in that aircraft firing a missile. That incident is very recent and the facts have not yet been fully established. I mention it to the House to show how careful one has to be if one is to ensure that the pause for which we hope is sustained.

The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) and others have referred to the legal position. I believe that, unlike Saddam Hussein, we have paid scrupulous attention to international law. In response to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd), I would say that we believe, and we are advised, that we have acted throughout in accordance with the charter—which is not always the same thing as specifically acting under a specific resolution. Hon. Members will know of that important distinction, which has always been sustained. We have to operate within international law; we intend to do so, and have done so.

Mr. Benn: Can the Foreign Secretary tell the House whether, in all the recent cases, Boutros Boutros Ghali was brought in to the consultation before the military action was taken, as he made no statement after the first bombing? We were told today that he had retrospectively endorsed it, but was he consulted by President Bush and the British and French Governments before the decision to take that action was made?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot, without notice, give the right hon. Gentleman the dates of the contacts between the western Governments and the Secretary-General, but those contacts have been consistent and continuous. The right hon. Gentleman is clutching at straws. He knows perfectly well that, when the Secretary-General has been given the opportunity, he has made his views known very specifically in support of the action. The right hon. Gentleman is on to an entirely false point.

The coalition and its permanent representatives in New York made clear to Iraq the basis for the no-fly zone: indeed, that has been clear to Iraq for a long time. The zone was created as a result of Iraq's failure to comply with resolution 688. The House has discussed this before and hon. Members will be aware that we believe that the no-fly zones are fully justified in international law by the need to protect people whom they own Government will not protect or who, as in this case, are repressed by their own Government. The right of self-defence flows from that assumption and that action.

We also believe that the action against Iraq's nuclear facilities was fully in accordance with international law. In its statements of 8 and 11 January the Security Council —whose statements have to be approved unanimously—determined that Iraq's actions, such as the obstruction of UNSCOM flights, were material breaches of resolution 687, the resolution that established the formal ceasefire. In those circumstances, other parties to the conflict in the Gulf have the right in international law to take necessary and proportionate measures to ensure that Iraq complies with the terms of the ceasefire. I believe that we acted in accordance with internaional law, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Was the bombing of Baghdad really justified because there were logistical problems involving United Nations observers having to travel through Jordan to get to Baghdad instead of flying through the no-fly zone? That is what it amounted to at that stage.

Mr. Hurd: There was a great deal of discussion with the Iraqis on that point in New York. What became perfectly clear—not the first time but the second time, because we gave the Iraqis a pause on this matter—was that the Iraqis' aim was to impose conditions and to put the United nations teams in a position in which they flew by grace and favour of Saddam Hussein. That is contrary to the United Nations resolution and to the statements of the Security Council to which I have just referred. That was the aim. What the actual condition suggested was of secondary importance. The aim was to remove the unconditional right of the United Nations teams to operate to show the world that the threat of nuclear and chemical weapons had been removed.

The hon. Member for Tottenham made a sincere speech. However, I ask him to consider his line of thought that the world and the west are manipulating the United Nations against Muslims. I ask him to think about Afghans, Somalis and Kuwaitis who have been helped in recent years, at some sacrifice to others, by the international community. They are Muslims, and injustices do not simply affect Muslims. The world is full of injustices against all people. I hope that the hon. Member for Tottenham will pause before he pursues that line of argument.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised a specific point about the relationship between Customs and Excise and the Department of Trade and Industry. As the hon. Gentleman would expect, I must say that that issue will fall to the Scott inquiry. However, the hon. Member for Linlithgow should bear in mind the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) that our reputation among the Iraqis, who were in a position to know, was not of looseness but of tightness in comparison to others in respect of administering controls.

Mr. Dalyell: The problem arises when one part of the Government, the Customs and Excise, does the enforcing while another part of the Government lays down the policy. If the enforcers—the Customs and Excise—do not know, as is claimed, what happened in DTI negotiations, that makes justice impossible.

Mr. Hurd: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's coherent point. However, the question clearly falls within the remit of the Scott inquiry and I will not deal with it tonight.

We have heard much from some Opposition Members about the imminent collapse of the coalition. I would take that point more tragically if I had not heard exactly the same prophecies over and again in our debates during the Gulf war. We did not have a debate in which I was not solemnly informed by newspapers or by Opposition Members that the whole thing was coming apart, that everyone was deserting, and that it was only the majority on the Conservative Benches who were sustaining the policy. That is nonsense.

Of course, misgivings have been expressed and I do not complain about that. That is natural enough when the situation is fast moving and decisions have to be taken.

[Mr. Hurd]

However, as I have said, those misgivings would have been much greater if we had sat back and done nothing and allowed events to unfold without any reaction. People would then have been disturbed. The coalition would then really have begun to come unstuck.

I want now to consider double standards, but only briefly because I will not be able to do it justice. The issue of double standards loomed in the debate, as it looms in criticisms, particularly from the Muslim world. Hon. Members on both sides of the House who are close to the Muslim world quite rightly reflected the issue in their speeches.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations told me last week that there are about 25 points of conflict in the world. Are we to do nothing because we cannot do everything? We cannot be content with many of those points of conflict. We must exert ourselves, but we must exert ourselves in different ways according to the different natures of the conflicts.

In that regard, I will mention only one conflict because reference has been made to it and because it is the other big conflict in the middle east. That problem is the plight of the Palestinians. We need to demand action from Israel on that matter. The deportations are illegal and a menace to the peace process.

I have already explained my view about the matter in person to the Foreign Minister of Israel. When he meets the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve on 1 February, we will have an opportunity to ram that point home, unless, as I hope, a solution to the problem has been found by then. We believe that the deportations are not simply wrong, but, as has been said, are a serious mistake, even allowing for the provocation of the killing of Sergeant Major Toledano.

Even today, we are trying to help. In response to a request that we have received, we will tell the parties concerned that, if they can agree on a further humanitarian visit by the Red Cross to those who have been deported, RAF helicopters from Cyprus will be available to help as necessary, provided that we can be satisfied about the security aspects of the operation. This is a small but important example of the way in which, because we are there, because we are skilled, because we are willing, we can quite quickly help to unravel and defuse a situation.

I should like to mention the plight of Mr. Ride and Mr. Wainwright——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will give way to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross).

Mr. Ernie Ross: I appreciate that the Foreign Secretary has many areas to cover and many points to make, but it really does the House no good—we discussed this on Tuesday—and it does those who are trying to keep the middle east peace process on track no good simply to say that the 415 Palestinians who are stuck somewhere between Israel and Lebanon are the major block to people accepting that we are being even-handed in the middle east. Every single day, Israel breaks international law, and one simply cannot get away with saying that some helicopters will be sent and that this will answer the problem. Something specific must be done. Why go ahead with the meeting on 1 February when they are still there? Why not make some gesture?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member has made his speech; he must not make it again. It is unfair to pick out the point about the helicopters. I simply used it, as it is a piece of news, to illustrate in a particular way the kind of thing we could do to help. Of course it is not a total response. The Israelis must find a way of dealing with this particular problem which they created, under provocation. A lot of work is going on to bring this about. The hon. Member knows that because I told him the details, but he probably knew it already. I hope and believe that the work will be successful. If it is not successful by 1 February, our meeting with the Foreign Minister of Israel will not be a sort of reward for Israel but an occasion on which to make this point very clear. It is partly why I am saying it now.

We are not leaving this aside or saying that it is negligible, because it is going to be an obstacle in the way of removing the injustice that the hon. Member has devoted a large part of his life to removing. We want to remove it. It will be removed by the peace process. It will be removed not by sanctions but by the peace process. We must liberate the path to the peace process, and that is what we are trying to do.

Dr. Cunningham: I appreciate the Foreign Secretary allowing me to intervene when time is short. If he wants to do something concrete and specific, why does he not, as the Israeli Government have now agreed to do, meet and discuss these matters with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Israeli Government have agreed to no such thing. They have agreed to remove a law which makes it illegal for Israeli citizens to do so—quite a different proposition. We have constant contracts with the PLO which are valuable to us and, I think, to the PLO. We last saw Mr. Qaddoumi in Tunis a few days ago. Ministerial meetings have been suspended since the Gulf war, for good reasons. I regard this as a matter of usefulness. If I could be persuaded, which I have not yet been, that it would be useful to us or to the peace process, we could change the level, but that is the position at the moment.

I was about to refer to Mr. Ride and Mr. Wainwright, who are suffering what we regard as grotesque sentences of imprisonment, sentences which are disproportionate to the offence. The hon. Member for Copeland, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) and the hon. Members for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) continue to press me; we continue to make sure that the men are visited and we will do all we can to secure their release. Russian diplomats in Baghadad visited both men on 15 January and again yesterday, 20 January. They reported that the men are physically well and have suffered no adverse treatment in recent days.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West stressed the suffering in Iraq, and other hon. Members have rightly referred to it. I entirely agree with her. We must do our best, despite all the political turmoil, to get help through. That is why, although it is imperfect, I support the Secretary-General's memorandum of understanding to enable the humanitarian activities to continue in Iraq. Obviously I support what we are doing

steadily to build up the help that we give through the Overseas Development Administration both in northern Iraq and in the south.

I will spend the last few minutes on the plea which has come from many parts of the House for forward thinking and for a strategy. It is more easily asked for than provided, but nevertheless it is a perfectly legitimate demand, and this is the moment at which we ought to meet it.

As regards Iraq, I do not dissent from the closing part of the speech of the hon. Member for Copeland. The first step is for Iraq to show in practice that it is complying with the resolutions. Until that happens, we have to keep all our options open, as the hon. Gentleman said. Of course, Gulf security is the framework of this.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) referred to Iran, as did other hon. Members, and quite rightly. It is a factor, and there is understandable anxiety about the policies of Iran.

Obviously, in an ideal world, Gulf defence is best carried out by Gulf countries. This is something that I urged on all the Gulf states after the Gulf war. I must admit that I have been disappointed by the extent to which they have come together, and come together with Egypt and Syria, despite the Damascus declaration, in order to provide worthwhile machinery for their own defence. Iraq is not a helpful factor in that; it is a threatening factor at the present stage.

I thought that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup was a little churlish about Kuwait. I first went to Kuwait, as he reminded the House, in his company, under his tuition. He went to Kuwait in 1968 so that he could explain to the Kuwaitis how he would defend them for a long time, and how Mr. Denis Healey, as Secretary of State for Defence, was wrong in proposing that we should cease to defend them. I believe that that instinct of my right hon. Friend was perhaps rather more soundly based than the instinct on which he spoke today.

Of course, we cannot be rash or seek to do things beyond our strength, but we have an obligation to work closely with the Kuwaitis in meeting their defence needs, and an interest in doing so. We have had no request to send a battalion of troops, so I am not talking about that. I am talking about our memorandum of understanding, the kind of joint air exercise that we had last December, visits by the Royal Navy and the advice that we give on defence. I believe that that kind of co-operation between Kuwait and Britain, in the situation in the Gulf, is reasonable and should continue.

As regards Iraq, we will continue to enforce sanctions. We will insist on inspections. We respect the integrity of Iraq and we know that it will remain an important middle eastern country. But, before it can fit into a general framework, it needs to comply with its international obligations. They are onerous because we are dealing with a country which was a recent aggressor. We are vigilant because of the past record of deceit, and, with our allies, we have to insist on compliance with these obligations and maintain our vigilance.

I turn finally to the general point to which the House ought to return—the question raised by several hon. Members of peacekeeping in these 25 trouble spots. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made a notable speech on this yesterday to the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies. This will be one of the big questions and problems for all of us: the role of the United Nations, which, as has been shrewdly pointed out, is moving from dealing with acts between one state and another to dealing with acts within a state—South Africa first, resolution 688, and Somalia since then. This is a big move, but the United Nations is not equipped to deal with it, partly for financial reasons and partly because of the lack of staff and equipment available to the Secretary-General.

Then there is the role of the United States, the only super-power, but not wishing to dominate. Right hon. and hon. Gentlemen are simply misguided about that. They will find great continuity between President Clinton and former President Bush. They will find a desire to make sense of what they call the new world order and they will want a good deal of help from their allies in doing that —not in a relationship of master and servant, giving orders and carrying them out. When the records of the conversations over this last weekend are revealed, as when earlier records are revealed, they will see that that was not the relationship. The position of the United Kingdom and the role which we should play, not always but when we can, to make a British contribution by those means will lead to a slightly safer and more decent world.

Question put, That this House do now adjourn:—

The House divided: Ayes 21, Noes 156.

Division No. 119] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene	Loyden, Eddie
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	McAllion, John
Bennett, Andrew F.	Madden, Max
Canavan, Dennis	Mahon, Alice
Chisholm, Malcolm	Pickthall, Colin
Cohen, Harry	Simpson, Alan
Corbyn, Jeremy	Skinner, Dennis
Dalyell, Tam	Wise, Audrey
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*	
Galloway, George	**Tellers for the Ayes**
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*	**Mr. Bob Cryer and**
Hood, Jimmy	**Mr. Harry Barnes.**
Livingstone, Ken	

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan	Elletson, Harold
Alexander, Richard	Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Amess, David	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Arbuthnot, James	Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Evennett, David
Ashby, David	Fabricant, Michael
Baldry, Tony	Fishburn, Dudley
Beggs, Roy	Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Forth, Eric
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Booth, Hartley	Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Boswell, Tim	Freeman, Roger
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*	French, Douglas
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia	Gale, Roger
Bowis, John	Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Brazier, Julian	Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Bright, Graham	Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Burns, Simon	Hague, William
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Harvey, Nick
Cash, William	Heald, Oliver
Clappison, James	Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Heathcoat-Amory, David
Congdon, David	Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John	Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Cormack, Patrick	Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Devlin, Tim	Jack, Michael
Dorrell, Stephen	Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Eggar, Tim	Jessel, Toby

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

Question accordingly negatived.

OSTEOPATHS BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act of the present Session resulting from the Osteopaths Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenditure incurred by the Privy Council under the provisions of the Act relating to the default powers of the Privy Council.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

PETITION

Pit Closures

10.10 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg leave of the House to present a petition organised by the Welsh region of the Coalfield Communities Campaign. The petition is against the colliery closure programme announced by British Coal and the Government last October. It has been signed by more than 28,000 people from all parts of Wales and states:

Whereas your petitioners pray that your Honourable House decide to halt the proposed pit closures and to re-examine the total economic case and instruct the Government to withdraw the proposals by British Coal to close the collieries previously identified.

To lie upon the Table.

Manufacturing Industry (Dunstable)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.12 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to have a short debate about the future of manufacturing in the Dunstable area, which has made a massive and sustained contribution for many years to the prosperity of Bedfordshire and the country.

The debate has been caused by two press announcements in December. The first was from Renault Trucks and stated:

"The production of the 50 series vehicles and Midliners at Dunstable will cease in the Spring of 1993 and the headcount will be progressively reduced from 520 to 240 employees."

One week later, our local newspaper, the *Dunstable Gazette*, covering the employment situation, stated:

"The announcement adds further to the depression already felt locally following the receivership of Renault's truck neighbour, AWD and the selling off of the business in October."

Continuing sustained efforts are being made by the work force at Renault to try to get the decision to end production reversed. Help is being sought—if it can be—from the European Community, and negotiations are under way. One sentence stands out from the submission that the work force have made to Renault management:

"The work force is proud of its capabilities and its commitment to flexibility, economics and quality."

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will understand how, even at this late stage, everyone in Dunstable hopes that a solution can be found to keep Renault manufacturing trucks in Dunstable, as it has done successfully in the past. Trucks are to Dunstable what steel was to Corby—a town not far from Dunstable near the Bedforshire border. Dunstable can recover, but we need help—as Corby had help.

Dunstable has a great bank of industrial skills and benefits from an innovative and imaginative education service, provided by Bedfordshire local education authority, as well as two grant-maintained schools in the town, plus a highly successful college of further education.

I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister for some action and help along the following lines. First, there is a strong case for a derelict land grant for our area. I want the Department to talk urgently to South Bedfordshire district council, which is greatly concerned—as am I, and the people in the town—about our industrial base. The need to find out what can be done about the former AWD Bedford site is especially urgent, as it will need considerable adaption to attract new industry. Discussions should not be confined to the AWD site, as the entire Dunstable and Houghton Regis area needs an urgent and in-depth study so that it can try to obtain a derelict land grant.

The figures for spending on derelict land grants show that, in 1991-92, £18·25 million was spent in the north-west and a mere £0·65 million in the south-east. That is an imbalance, which should be corrected given the recession that we are suffering in the south-east.

Secondly, the Urban Regeneration Agency will soon be created, once the Housing and Urban Development Bill gets through the House of Commons and another place. I urge on my hon. Friend the importance of the fact that the activities of that agency are not directed away from the south-east, as we have a problem that I believe that the agency can attend to and help us with.

Given the situation in Dunstable and the problems in the truck industry, discussions continue on whether we could qualify for enterprise zone status. I and every hon. Member will welcome the announcement by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade about one-stop shops and his invitation for bids to set them up. I think that I am right in saying that the bids must be with the Department by 29 January.

On page 10 of the document that sets out what the Department of Trade and Industry want are these words:

"Bids should take the form of a detailed strategy document for the creation of a 'One Stop Shop' in a defined area and should demonstrate, where appropriate, how this development fits within the context of the broader economic development strategy for the area."

That is what we are looking for in the Dunstable area—an economic strategy for us, given the difficulties that we face.

I hope that one final matter can be attended to. Training and enterprise councils are a thoroughly welcome back-up for areas that suffer sudden and severe increases in unemployment. To work properly they must respond quickly and flexibly to unemployment, which means moving funds swiftly to areas that they cover which are suddenly confronted with great employment difficulties. The Bedfordshire training and enterprise council is effective, but, given the difficulties of the Dunstable area, it needs an extra boost. What is needed is Government help to attract new industry into the area.

I should like to end with a word of warning and a word of encouragement. The word of warning is about housing. Before the employment base in the Dunstable area has been sorted out and re-established, we must take another look at the numbers and types of houses that we are required to build under Bedfordshire's structure plan and at the time scale for that building programme. A big imbalance between housing development and employment opportunities is arising in the south of the county. Now is the time for a fresh and urgent look at that balance.

Then there is my word of encouragement. We need to emphasise constantly what the Dunstable area has to offer to prospective new industry. I have mentioned the education that we provide. There is also our long history of industrial harmony on the factory floors, our bank of industrial skills, our modernised railway lines on both the east and west sides of Bedfordshire, the forthcoming widening of the M1 and, of course, our excellent regional airport at Luton, which could handle far more air traffic, passengers and freight than it does at present.

Dunstable has suffered a great industrial reverse—one of the greatest yet seen in the south of England. In view of all the help that has been given to the various regions of this country since the end of the second world war, I hope that the Government will be able to respond favourably and positively to the specific requests that I have made for help for our area. The town can recover, but we need help.

10.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) on his success in securing a debate on this

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

important issue. I know that he is assiduous in the interest he takes in all matters affecting his constituency. The House will be grateful for his comments.

I share my hon. Friend's concern over the rise in unemployment, although I note that the rate of unemployment in the Watford and Luton travel-to-work area remains below the national average at 9·5 per cent. Naturally, I very much regret the redundancies that have taken place at Renault Trucks and AWD. However, while Renault's manufacturing operations at Dunstable are to cease at the end of March, the French parent company has assured the United Kingdom management that the Dunstable site remains a key part of its European strategy. Dunstable will still employ 240 people involved in customising imported vehicles, engineering design and sales and training.

Of course, my hon. Friend has been actively involved in helping Renault to formulate its future plans for Dunstable. Furthermore, although AWD has ceased manufacturing operations at Dunstable, the acquisition by Marshalls of Cambridge of its four-wheel-drive production has safeguarded 30 jobs in Cambridge and may create another 30 new jobs in the future.

Despite the job losses which my hon. Friend has described, there are a number of promising signs that local industry will be well placed to take advantage of the rise in demand as the recovery gets under way. The United Kingdom car industry has continued to perform well despite a difficult economic climate both at home and overseas. Indeed, there are encouraging signs of renewed growth in the United Kingdom market. There was not only a marked increase in car sales in December, but a slight but encouraging increase for 1992 as a whole over the previous year. Production in December was up by 19·8 per cent. compared with the same month in 1991. Prospects are also improving overseas. Exports in the three months to the end of October—the latest figures available—were up 7·5 per cent. over the previous quarter. This is a most impressive performance in view of the economic slow down abroad.

I am also encouraged to see that the commercial vehicle market—this will particularly interest my hon. Friend—is emerging strongly from the recession. Makers of heavy trucks, which were probably worst affected, will, I am sure, be encouraged by the strongest monthly rise in sales in five consecutive months of recovery. Sales of vans, trucks and buses overall were 7·7 per cent. higher in December than in the same month last year.

Indeed, the local motor industry has been part of the promising national signs of recovery. Vauxhall has remained competitive in a difficult trading period. The company has exported surplus production to the German market through its General Motors sister company. I note with satisfaction that it has had considerable success in improving productivity per employee and that last year's figure for the Luton plant was 9·4 per cent. up on 1990. Production increased from 40 to 47 cars per hour, and 70,725 cars were exported in the same period.

A similar picture of increasing productivity and strong order books is seen in the exciting joint venture between General Motors and Isuzu—IBC Vehicles—where the Frontera range is doing extremely well. At nearby Leighton Buzzard, Boss Trucks, one of the world's leading fork truck manufacturers, is planning a 400,000 sq ft extension to its existing factory. That not only safeguards the position of the present work force, but offers the potential for an additional 500 new jobs.

The strength of those vehicle manufacturers creates opportunities for other related companies in the Luton-Dunstable area. Local component manufacturers, including General Motors components manufacturer AC Delco, benefit from supplying Vauxhall, which last year spent £117·7 million on components and £71·3 million on other services from companies in Bedfordshire.

My hon. Friend cited the example of the closure of the steel industry in Corby as a parallel to the position in Dunstable, but there is an important difference. Dunstable is set in a much larger urbanised area which, until recently, was one of the most buoyant parts of the country. In contrast, Corby was much more isolated. Dunstable is within easy commuting distance of the expanding city of Milton Keynes, where my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) recently reported that over 6,500 jobs had been created in the past few years.

However, I am much aware that Dunstable has not been able to isolate itself from the broad effects of the downturn in the national and world economies. By the same token, as the United Kingdom pulls out of recession, so we can expect to see the tide turn for the economy of the Dunstable area.

Government economic policy is aimed at hastening that recovery. In his autumn statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out clearly the Government's new framework for economic policy. I believe that the measures announced will promote recovery, to the benefit of all enterprises—large, medium and small.

I have no doubt, for example, that the housing market will benefit from the £750 million available this financial year to buy up some of the empty properties in the owner-occupied sector. The construction sector will be given a further boost by the temporary relaxation of rules governing the use of capital receipts. Housing and construction have faced particular difficulties in the past two years and those measures will help to provide a much needed boost to confidence.

The temporary rise in capital allowances from 25 to 40 per cent. for the first year of investment in plant and machinery should also help to bring forward private sector investment. The abolition of special car tax will provide a direct boost to the motor industry, an industry which lies at the heart of British manufacturing and is particularly significant to my hon. Friend's constituency.

I note my hon. Friend's comments on the Urban Regeneration Agency. Its primary aim will be to bring vacant and derelict land in urban areas back into use. It will be expected to concentrate on urban priority areas and assisted areas, but—this will be of interest to my hon. Friend, as he made a point of mentioning it—it will also take over responsibility for derelict land grant and will be able to assist local authorities and the private sector with the reclamation of derelict land wherever the need arises. However, it will need to consider any such requests against its priorities for urban regeneration and wider land reclamation.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment operates the derelict land programme to deal with problems of dereliction. The derelict land survey showed that, in 1988, south Bedfordshire had 76 hectares of derelict land justifying reclamation.

Historically, there has been little demand for derelict land grant in Bedfordshire, because market forces have generally been strong enough to secure the reclamation of derelict sites. Resources have therefore, for obvious reasons, been directed to sites that needed extra assistance. From 1989 to 1991, two schemes received aid totalling £106,000. In 1992-93, three will receive grant totalling £60,000, and 93 per cent. of this money will be paid to local, authorities and the remaining 7 per cent. to private bodies. The amount of grant available in Bedfordshire in 1993-94 is not yet determined, but a number of applications have been made to my right hon. and learned Friend's Department, and grants will be made as resources permit.

I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware of the specialised nature of the AWD and Renault premises. Their suitability for re-use or redevelopment is best assessed by prospective buyers. If they consider that the premises pose significant problems, they are at liberty to apply for a grant from my right hon. and learned Friend's Department, or, when established, the urban regeneration agency. Grant could then be awarded for any eligible works, subject to the availability of resources at the time.

I have taken careful note of what my hon. Friend has said today, and I will make sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment are made aware of his concern. I hope that he will be reassured by what I have said about derelict land grant.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is aware of the general stagnation in the housing market across much of the country including south Bedfordshire. He is also aware that housing need exists in many places which could be helped by bringing into use some of the empty houses at present standing unsold. The Government therefore announced in the autumn statement a £750 million housing market package which will be channelled through the Housing Corporation to a selected number of housing associations which will buy houses in the market.

The aim of the scheme is to stimulate the depressed private housing market by buying up around 17,000 homes from a variety of sources. This will need to be done before the end of March.

In south Bedfordshire, this will be undertaken by the Bedfordshire Pilgrims housing association, which will be handling the package allocated to the whole of Bedfordshire, except for Luton. A total of £6·5 million has been allocated to the Bedfordshire Pilgrims housing association, which, in conjunction with some half as much again from the housing association's own resources, borrowed by it from the finance market, should allow the purchase of approximately 190 housing units. Possibly one third of these would be in south Bedfordshire. Some will be purchased from builders who have empty houses that they have completed but have not been able to sell. Some will be from estate agents who have empty houses on their books awaiting sale. Some will be from building societies which have empty houses which they have repossessed through mortgage default and which are at present unoccupied.

Among the range of options available to the South Bedfordshire district planning authority in promoting urban regeneration and economic activity is the establishment of simplified planning zones. As a result of this debate, I will make sure that there is proper liaison between the local district council and my right hon. Friends in the Department of Environment. I hope that that is of help to my hon. Friend's constituency.

Simplified planning zones supplement the enterprise zones which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has designated in various parts of the country. They establish an alternative approach to the control of development which allows the planning system to work more effectively and efficiently in designated areas. Under the procedure for establishing simplified planning zones set out in the Department of the Environment's planning policy guidance note No. 5, it is for the local planning authority to consult widely on the desirability of such zones and before the preparation of such a scheme. The provision of enterprise zones is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, and local planning authorities must apply to him for the designation of zones where they consider that there is a special case which cannot be addressed through the use of simplified zones.

My hon. Friend asked about the responsiveness of training and enterprise councils to major redundancy announcements such as the one in his region. TECs are, of course, designed to be responsive to local needs. Their boards are made up of business men and others drawn from local communities. The DTI regional office in Cambridge expects to receive the Bedfordshire TEC business plan for the next financial year at the end of this month. It is anticipated that the TEC will be seeking to deliver business counselling, a business information service and business skills training. The business plan will apply to the whole of Bedfordshire, but will certainly take into account the particular needs of the Dunstable area.

Once a business plan is agreed, it is not set in stone. The plan can always be revised in the course of a year to respond to unanticipated events affecting the labour market. As a result of the debate, I shall ensure that our DTI regional office is made fully aware of the problems to which my hon. Friend has alluded, and we shall have to see how the TECs can be best encouraged to help my hon. Friend's constituency.

My hon. Friend will be aware of the wide range of help that is available to businesses in his area to enable them to become more competitive and expand their markets overseas. More than 1,000 companies in the county of Bedfordshire have benefited from the expert advice of the DTI's enterprise advisers, and 390 of these have gone on to receive subsidised consultancy help intended to improve and strengthen those companies' performances.

Many companies in my hon. Friend's area also take advantage of the wide range of services that are available to help the exporter develop sales in new markets and identify new market opportunities through the overseas trade services. Together with the Bedfordshire chamber of commerce, the DTI has an extensive programme of seminars and clinics on helping companies to penetrate new markets.

My hon. Friend has a first-rate record on helping companies in the export field. He will be aware of the efforts being made by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to promote exports. Again as a result of the debate, I shall ensure that our new export promoters in the DTI are made fully aware of my hon. Friend's concerns about export promotion.

Support for technology-based businesses is available through grant aid for individual companies under the

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SMART competition and the SPUR scheme. The former is for companies employing up to 50 persons and the latter for those employing up to 500 people. Both are for innovative product and process development. Almost £500,000 has so far been awarded to Bedfordshire firms under these schemes.

In addition, the Department, with EC support, is providing substantial support for collaborative research. It is also funding the establishment of an industrial unit at Luton college to ensure the commercial exploitation of technological developments in the area. My hon. Friend's area is particularly noted for its technological prowess, and I hope that we can ensure that any available money is channelled to companies with worthwhile schemes there.

My Department's very popular "Managing into the 90s" programme, aimed at exposing senior management to the very best management practice, was hosted by Texas Instruments in Bedford in one of the first management action briefings. My first ministerial visit was to Texas Instruments, and I have taken a close interest in the company ever since. Since that time, Cranfield school of management has co-ordinated the "competitive edge" manufacturing workshop programme, and following the DTI east launch of the regional "Managing into the 90s" programme on 9 December, we will be offering firms from the county the opportunity to explore management best practice in some of the medium and small companies in the region as well as staging a further series of specialist management seminars.

My Department, through its regional office in Cambridge, is working closely with local agencies, particularly the Bedfordshire and district chamber of commerce and the Bedfordshire training and enterprise council to improve and widen the range of services available to business. The DTI gives financial support to the chamber's export development adviser, whose role is to give advice and help to new and passive exporters. We have supported the chamber's recent very successful mission to Malaysia and Singapore, which included a number of Bedfordshire companies, and we will be supporting missions in 1993 to the USA, Malaysia and Singapore.

We are working closely with the TEC, the chamber, local authorities and other bodies to improve collaboration and co-ordination of services to medium and small enterprises by delivery through a single site in Luton, which could form the basis for a bid under the DTI's new one-stop shop competition, which my hon. Friend particularly mentioned. His area could be successful in that competition. No doubt my hon. Friend will wish to encourage these developments and will ensure that the submissions by the organisations in his area are of the highest calibre. I hope that there will be successful bids from Bedfordshire.

My hon. Friend will appreciate that this substantial and wide range of advice, help and financial support will be of longer-term significance in establishing a strong base for the future growth of business in the Dunstable area.

I fully understand the importance of manufacturing to the Dunstable area and to the economy of Bedfordshire as a whole, and my hon. Friend put his case forcefully tonight. The latest employment census shows that 30 per cent. of the Bedfordshire work force are engaged in manufacturing. I assure my hon. Friend that the Government are committed to the maintenance of a strong manufacturing sector and recognise the crucial role that it plays in the national economy.

Manufacturing accounts for more than one fifth of our total output, one fifth of total employment, and four fifths of visible exports. The Government believe that the recession should not be allowed to obscure the manufacturing achievements of the 1980s, which saw high growth rates and sustained improvements in manufacturing performance.

United Kingdom manufacturing output is up by more than one fifth on 1981—the trough of the last recession. Productivity is up by nearly two thirds, investment by one third, and export volume by four fifths. Export volume since 1981 has grown faster than in France, Germany, the United States of America, Japan and Italy.

Despite the recession, exports and productivity are both at record levels. The gains of the 1980s will not be wiped out by the recession, and manufacturing is well placed to benefit from the resumption of growth.

Businesses in Bedfordshire are particularly well placed to take advantage of the anticipated upturn and to repeat the benefits that will come from the completion of the single market. I assure my hon. Friend that my Department will play its part in ensuring that businesses in his constituency are in a good position to derive their full share of the benefit from the recovery.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 22 January 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Stoke Mandeville Hospital

9.34 am

Mr. David Lidington Aylesbury): It gives me great pleasure to present a petition about the future of Stoke Mandeville hospital, in my constituency. It is signed by 12 residents of Aylesbury and the surrounding area. However, the sentiments expressed therein are common to a much larger petition signed by about 27,000 people in Aylesbury and the surrounding area but the wording of which did not conform to the regulations of the House.

The petition reads:

That Stoke Mandeville Hospital has for many years provided health care of a high standard to local people, that the Hospital has gained a high reputation, not only locally, but nationally and internationally and that people are now fearful that this high quality health care may not be available in the future.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House may urge Her Majesty's Government to make proper provision so that Stoke Mandeville Hospital can continue to offer medical treatment of the highest quality to all patients referred there.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Visitors (Right of Appeal)

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I have pleasure in presenting a petition, which I strongly support and which is signed by many of my constituents and residents of south London, mostly from local churches and voluntary organisations, about the removal of the right of appeal for visitors which is contained in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill which will come back to the House from another place.

The petition reads:

That Great Injustice will be done by the Provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill in removing from those wishing to visit the United Kingdom any appeal against refusal of a visa or Entry Certificate; that under the present system a substantial number of appeals against refusal of leave to come to the United Kingdom as visitors are upheld by independent adjudicators; that friends and relatives wishing to come together for family occasions or in times of bereavement as well as joy may be prevented without any recourse to appeal and this will cause much resentment and hardship and injustice.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will reject the Provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

My constituents and the petitioners hope that the petition will have some effect in correcting what they regard as a gross injustice against them, their relatives and their friends.

To lie upon the Table.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I have the honour to present a petition urging that St. Bartholomew's hospital should not be closed but saved. The House will recall that Professor Tomlinson dismisses 900 years of history in seven paragraphs. Millions of people around the country do not wish St. Bartholomew's to close. The petition is signed by 126,000 people, in addition to the 500,000 people who delivered a petition to 10 Downing street only a month ago.

The petition reads:

The Humble Petition of the patients and friends of St. Bartholomew's Hospital
Sheweth

That St. Bartholomew's Hospital is an indispensable resource for the health and welfare of the local community, a national centre of medical excellence, and provides all patients with a high quality of care.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House do all within your power to ensure that St. Bartholomew's Hospital remains open for the benefit of local residents and patients who rely on its services and would be harmed by its closure.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

The petition is strongly endorsed by me, thousands of my constituents, and hundreds of thousands of Londoners.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Shops (Amendment) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I have not selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) but, of course, its subject matter may be referred to in the course of the debate.

9.39 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am pleased, Madam Speaker, that you are in the Chair to call me to open this important debate. I intend to cut short my speech, which would normally take half an hour or 45 minutes if Second Reading were being moved by a Minister or by one of our Front-Bench spokesmen. I am aware that many hon. Members wish to participate in this major debate and, although I am the promoter of the Bill, it would not be fair to deny hon. Members, whatever their opinions, the opportunity to speak simply because it had taken 45 minutes to move Second Reading. I hope that my attitude will be reflected in the time taken by other hon. Members who speak.

I am glad to see that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have now taken the Chair, because when you were elected to your position you promised me that you would take the opportunity of calling me on 22 January. The House will note that you have not even been able to do that—and that since you were elected you have not called me at any time.

I introduce this Bill on behalf of my sponsors. Sometimes sponsors simply add their names to private Members' Bills and forget that they have done so, but that has not happened with this Bill. The sponsors have met regularly for discussion, and the Bill has been dealt with collectively, as an all-party Bill, from the day that I presented it until this morning. I am glad to report to the House that the Bill was presented with unanimous agreement. Hon. Members from the Conservative and Labour parties, and the deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats, discussed it at the meetings.

This is not a Labour party private Member's Bill. I do not know whether it has the backing of the Labour Front Bench—perhaps we shall be told that later, if at all. I pay tribute to my sponsors and hope that they will be able to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have given the Bill exceptionally loyal and industrious support and encouragement.

I thank, too, the Keep Sunday Special campaign workers, especially Michael Schluter, David Blackmore, Paul Diamond, Hannah Reed, Claire Barford and John Alexander, who have worked so hard for such long hours for so little remuneration to prepare the way for today's debate. I also thank Garfield Davies and Bill Conner of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers—and especially my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner), the chairman of the Co-operative parliamentary group, and the members of RECOST, the Retailers Council on Sunday Trading, especially retailers such as CWS, the CRS, the John Lewis Partnership, Iceland, C and A, Etam and Greggs, as well as many others who have given unstintingly towards developing and preparing my Bill.

I also thank all the main church denominations which over the years have continued to uphold the principles of keeping Sunday a special day for friends, family and voluntary activities. Those are the principles for which my Bill stands. Ten minutes ago we had prayers. I should like to thank the people who have prayed for me and for my sponsors, and who have prayed that the House will consider the question seriously on behalf of church denominations and organisations throughout the country.

At this point I declare my interest, in the hope that others who may have an opposing view will declare their interests, even if they are not mentioned in the Register of Members' Interests. Because of selfish interests, millions of pounds are being spent in the fight by those who oppose the Bill. I am proud to be the senior sponsored Member of Parliament on the USDAW parliamentary panel. I represent in the House the interests of 350,000 shop workers, and I seek to promote their concerns whenever I can. They are among the poorest paid workers in the country, and the measures that we are debating are vital to protect their income and their quality of life.

I believe that Lloyd George once said that democracy means government by discussion—but it becomes effective only if one can stop people talking. I hope that that will be a lesson to us all. Let us hope that our contributions will be brief so that all hon. Members may participate.

Before outlining the Bill, I shall put three questions to the House. First, should not right hon. and hon. Members ask why it has taken the Government from 1986 to November 1992 to offer the House a measure to reform Sunday trading? Why has it taken six and a half years for the Government to spring to life when the need for reform has been evident to everybody?

The second question is, why has it been necessary to delay until the end of January the Second Reading of a private Member's Bill which was drawn number three in the ballot in May 1992 and had its First Reading in June 1992? Is there a hidden agenda to prevent this Bill from reaching the statute book? *[Laughter.]* I warn Conservative Members who are laughing that one of the opportunities that the House gives to Back Benchers is the right to introduce private Members' Bills. If we are lucky in the ballot immediately following an election, and come out at number three, even in a long Session such as the present Session, we do not expect to wait eight months before our Bill is given a Second Reading debate.

The Government know that we have only until November before a new Session starts. With three months for the summer recess, and a month or so for Easter and Whitsun together, four months of that time will be taken out. What earthly hope have Back Benchers of their Bills becoming law, even in a long Session, when the Government do not allow the House to debate Second Reading until eight months after their Bill is presented? That is scandalous, and it is time that something was done in the House to protect Back Benchers' rights.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Powell: I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman may be called later. I know that a number of hon. Members who share the hon. Gentleman's opinion want to be called as well.

My third question is why a Government who are committed to law and order enforce every Act on the

statute book except for one. Is there any financial link between the retailers who break the law and the party that allows them to do so? That question should be replied to. It is no good the Government hiding behind the cloak of Europe or behind the other cloaks they have used for two or three years and allowing their supporters flagrantly to break the law, which is causing concern throughout the retail industry.

I shall now deal with the goals of the Bill. Today's debate is not about the details of the Bill, because they will be debated and sorted out in Committee. Our debate today is about the cause for legislation. Our debate is about ends, not means.

I have here a booklet entitled "Towards a New Shops Act." I hope that all hon. Members have received a copy. I have sent copies to all 650 hon. Members to ensure that they are aware of the Bill because it is so involved and complicated. On pages 6 and 7, I have set out the seven goals which are the basis of the Bill.

The first goal is to guarantee a common day off for family and community activities, including church worship. The second is to protect the right of workers not to work on Sunday. The third is to protect vulnerable smaller retailers from pressure to work a seven-day week.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Powell: I have already said that I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman and I get on very well in the House, but I do not want interventions which take up a lot of time.

The fourth goal is to protect our high streets and those who use them. The fifth is to protect those living near shopping centres or main roads. The sixth goal is to provide for the reasonable needs of consumers and the seventh is to prevent unfair competition. I hope that hon. Members will note that consumers' convenience is only one factor in resolving the Sunday issue. It would be unfair only to consider consumers instead of striking a balance among the various groups with an interest in whether shops open on Sunday.

Some hon. Members who speak today may wish to spend the time of the House in pointing to minor problems and anomalies in the drafting of the Bill—*[Laughter.]* It is nice to have a laugh. We do not have the backing, as some hon. Members have, of the big retailers and, therefore, of their legal teams. We do not have the services of Government-paid parliamentary draftsmen. Even if we had, I remind the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who is a supporter of the Government, that, whenever a Bill receives a Second Reading and goes into Committee, a ream of amendments is tabled, not by members of the Committee, but by the Government. The hon. Gentleman should not laugh at a Bill that is constructed by people who are volunteers. Let us have some substance in the debate today and not shibboleths.

There is one decisive question before the House today: do we want to keep Sunday a special day or not? No other legislation, apart from the Bill, will guarantee to keep Sunday special.

I have some words for those who object to my proposals. Some say that we can deregulate without any adverse effects. That is an attractive argument because it implies that we can have our cake and eat it. Advocates of that view say that we should look at Scotland where there is already Sunday trading. My reply is that we should indeed look at Scotland, but that we should look at it carefully and not superficially.

In the major cities, Sunday trading is already the norm for many Sundays of the year and it continues to grow rapidly. Many shop workers are on single time and have no day off in lieu. Church attendance has dropped sharply, which may or may not be associated with the growth of Sunday shopping.

Closer to home, let us consider what has happened to Good Friday in England and Wales. It was once a quiet day like a Sunday. Competitive pressures have now made it like any other shopping day because we did not pass legislation to protect it.

It is said that people want Sunday shopping. That argument rests on opinion polls. After the election, hon. Members must have realised how unreliable those polls are. Some years ago, I attempted to introduce a ten-minute Bill to stop the taking of opinion polls during elections and by-elections. I had tremendous support from the House, but, unfortunately, as usual, the Government did not afford me the time to get the Bill on the statute book.

It is true that 5 per cent. of the population go to supermarkets on Sunday—I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) is one of them. It is also true that 95 per cent. of the population do not. They are the silent majority who neither want nor need Sunday trading. I well understand why my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow may occasionally shop on a Sunday. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is in the House of Commons from dawn to dusk every day of the week.

It is said that there is no feasible way to design a law on Sunday trading which will work. How are such laws made to work in almost every other European country? Almost 300 million people out of the 340 million in Europe are governed by laws restricting Sunday trading. The House knows that where there is a will, there is a way.

I shall now deal with the key points of the Bill, which are set out in the booklet "Towards a New Shops Act". I will not repeat them except to outline the four main areas. First, certain types of shop would be allowed to open. The Bill is based on a list of shops and not on a list of goods. Shops that opened could sell all the goods in the shop. Secondly, the types of shop that we wish to allow to open are summarised in the word "REST", which stands for recreation, emergency, social gathering and travel.

Thirdly, we propose a system by which shops will register with the local authority if they want to open. That would ease enforcement and the registration system would be self-funded. Fourthly, there are detailed provisions for employee protection. Given the difficulty of enforcing employee protection in practice, the employee protection in the Bill stands on two legs. The first leg is that most shops would be shut, so most employees would not be asked to work. The second leg is statutory protection for the minority who would have to work.

If the House gives the Bill a Second Reading today, I should welcome discussion in Committee on a number of controversial details of the Bill, such as whether we should allow do-it-yourself shops to be included in some form of definition. We could also discuss whether the size of the corner shop should be increased from 1,500 sq ft and whether all shops should be allowed to open for two or three Sundays before Christmas. I realise that strong views are held on each of those points, and we shall be able to consider the arguments in detail in Committee.

[Mr. Powell]

As I have just said what I expect to discuss in Committee, let me once again quote Lloyd George:

"I would rather be an opportunist and float than go to the bottom with my principles around my neck."

That is important when we consider whether to accept the option that we are proposing.

Pages 31 to 33 of "Towards a New Shops Act" contain a list of organisations. Appendix 2 lists those who support the REST proposals. Hon. Members will note that that represents a formidable number of people, but it is by no means the entire list. I have been heartened by the amount of mail that my sponsors and I and the Keep Sunday Special campaign have received supporting the REST proposals.

I am sure that all hon. Members in the Chamber today will have received a considerable amount of mail in support of the REST proposals. I received a card last week which stated, "Chin up." It was a note of encouragement from no less a person than Joy Brodier of Bedford who sent that now famous postcard to Terry Waite. In her card to me, she said that any help that she could give on the REST clause would be readily available.

On her card, Joy Brodier wrote that she had sent Christmas cards and requests for Keep Sunday Special proposals to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for Employment as well as to that Education chappie whose name she could not remember —and we can all understand why. She also said that today's debate would be taking place the day before her 40th birthday. She hoped that it would be a cause for rejoicing. I share her sentiment.

Retailers who have written to me claim that it is not commercially viable for most retailers to trade every day of the week. Six days trading would merely be spread over seven. There is no extra money out there to be spent and, as margins in food retailing leave no room for manoeuvre, seven-day trading would inevitably increase costs and they, in part, would have to be passed on to the customer.

Currently, some supermarkets claim that Sunday trading is boosting turnover. All I can say is that they are stealing business from those who are upholding the law. One major retailer stated on that issue:

"We have a human side too and staff welfare and community issues have also played a major part in our argument. Of our 11,000 staff, 80 per cent. work in the stores and many of them would be called upon to work on a Sunday rota. For some it may not be an inconvenience, indeed for a few it may be welcomed, as double time may well help the family budget. But for most it would be an unwelcome intrusion into their family lives."

Of course, supporters of deregulation are making great play of their support for workers' rights and many of the big names have promised to ensure that only volunteers will work the Sunday rota. However, business cannot operate on a voluntary basis. Pressure will be brought to bear and, within a few years, Sunday working will become the norm for up to 2 million retail and supporting staff. Hon. Members should note that up to 2 million staff may be affected by our decision today.

Smaller shops are not restricted to the high street. Most street corners and village centres have a local store that serves the immediate community and, dare I say it, provides the Sunday newspapers and other essentials that are part of what makes Sunday special. Many of those stores are suffering now and more will be forced to close if Sunday becomes a free for all.

How do community issues fit into the equation? I use that concept in the broadest sense to encompass quality of life. Sunday trading must encourage the move to out-of-town shopping. Malls, retail parks and superstores are most likely to attract the Sunday shopper. The high street is already under threat in many areas. If inner-city life is to be encouraged to thrive, its lifeblood of trade must be preserved.

Let us be clear: Sunday trading will devastate shopping as we know it. That will happen not tomorrow, not next year and perhaps not in this millenium. However, the next generation will certainly suffer the consequences of shopping totally geared to suit the articulate, better-off and more sophisticated members of society.

The Bill, based on the REST proposals, clearly states that those small shops should be alllowed to trade. However, for them to argue their own case against deregulation would obviously be seen as protectionist. Indeed, it may be, but the implications of those community shops disappearing affect us all. We will be affected by noise, pollution, transport and the general hustle and bustle that are part of the rat race that we endure today. Surely Sunday trading can only make life more hectic and disruptive. One day of peace and rest, for whatever recreation one cares to follow, must be sacrosanct and it should be preserved.

We feel that the only people who want Sunday trading are non-shop workers. However, do they realise that if Sunday trading is approved, they too will eventually have to work? After all, people have only one wage packet per week, in whatever way or on whichever day they spend it. More hours to work would mean larger wage bills and that would put many small shops out of business.

Most shop staff work overtime at Christmas and in respect of late night shopping six days a week. Sunday trading would mean late nights and seven working days. That would mean 365 days a year of shopping and 365 days of hustle and bustle with no pause after six days to recharge. There would be no time for family lunches, family teas or family visits. There would be no time to visit mum or dad, grandma or grandfather, no time to worship and no time for recreation.

Shop workers would have no chance to spend one day a week with friends and family. There would be more pressure on young people to work the whole weekend. There would be more pollution, more noise, more traffic wardens. Security officers, cleaners and caterers would be forced to work. There would be no proper compensation for working unsocial hours. One's life would be controlled by one's employer for seven days a week. There would also be higher prices as retailers covered costs. At that rate, shop workers and all those involved in retailing would surely be returning to Victorian times.

I am sure that hon. Members will be glad that I have now turned to the last page in my notes. Winston Churchill once stated:

"Sunday is a divine and priceless institution . . . a necessary pause in the national life . . . it is the birthright of every British subject . . . our responsibility, privilege and duty to hand on to posterity."

Most of us will unreservedly agree with those sentiments.

Let me appeal to all right hon. and hon. Members, because this may be the last chance to protect the

traditional English Sunday in the form that so many of us enjoy. I ask the House, not from any financial interest or for reasons of private gain or for selfish motives, but for the sake of our grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters and our future grandsons and granddaughters and generations to come, to let them live to enjoy what we have enjoyed. The House should vote for my Bill today and keep Sunday a special day for ever.

10.10 am

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): It is a great honour to speak second in this debate, following the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), as one of the co-sponsors of his Bill. If I may say so, the hon. Gentleman has manifested the qualities of patience, doggedness, subtlety, courtesy and, occasionally, ruthlessness. That is the prerogative of Members of the Whips Office in every part of the House down the ages. As part of my association with the hon. Gentleman, I hope that I shall never lack a pair on a critical Bill.

It is both daunting and intriguing to reflect on the fact that, whatever view we take about Sunday trading and whatever side we are on, we have in common that we are all trying to conquer a peak—the formulation of a reasonable framework of acceptable Sunday trading laws. The formulation of such a reasonable framework has baffled and defied the most expert political and parliamentary mountaineers throughout the century. Endless Back Benchers have tried and failed to produce a sensible framework for Sunday trading. Even Baroness Thatcher found this particular peak beyond her extraordinary political skills. So the question is: will we, this generation of the House, be the crew which will pull off the final assent? Will my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who is sitting on the Front Bench this morning, be the Minister who goes down in history as the guy who got to the top?

Against that background, it is reasonable to remind ourselves of the common ground which both assault teams share, so to speak. I doubt whether there are any hon. Members in the House who do not subscribe to the practice and principle of a day of rest for ourselves and our fellow human beings. We will probably go further on the same common ground and specify that the day of rest should be in the proportion of one in seven. The seventh day off, but not necessarily Sunday, seems satisfactorily sanctioned by culture, tradition and the natural rhythms of exertion and relaxation, whatever one's religious views may be.

I would go further and argue that there is another important reality in the amount of common ground which is shared on both sides of the debate. Supporters of both options lie in different parts of the House. The approach of the Keep Sunday Special campaign is echoed in the Bill. The other element of common ground between, say, the Keep Sunday Special campaign and the Shopping Hours Reform Council is not only the validity and necessity for a day off but that the day off should be the same day off for as many people as possible.

I am struck by the extent to which those who want more Sunday shops to open or more Sunday shopping hours than the present Shops Act 1950 allows argue that Sunday shopping is an important aspect in itself. Sunday shopping is a family and social recreation. Shopping is essentially something that Mum and Dad and the children can do together precisely because Sunday is a general day off from work and school.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I will be brief. This is very much a British matter and a matter of important domestic legislation for us to put right, and therefore one should not look too much overseas or to Europe at other examples.

It is interesting to reflect, however, that in Germany, for example, the national day of rest is solemnly enshrined in its constitution as a sacred principle. The most successful welfare capitalist economy in Europe enshrines the national day of rest as a sacred principle, and German retailers fully accept that. Why can United Kingdom retailers not accept the same principle? As we do not have a written constitution in the United Kingdom, is not the excellent Bill sponsored by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) the best way of dealing with the problem?

Mr. Alison: I am not sure whether I am sad or glad about my hon. Friend's intervention because I was doing my best to emphasise common ground and therefore trying to keep Europe and religion out of the argument. If my hon. Friend insists on introducing Europe and religion, let me endorse the fact that the religious Catholic Italy, the secular non-religious France and the Catholic and Protestant Germany, as European partners and neighbours of ours, all subscribe to the common principle which keeps Sunday special. The Shopping Hours Reform Council shares the view that there should be a day off for most people and that that day should be Sunday. I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point.

The real issue about Sunday trading is not essentially one of principle nowadays; it is one of degree. Nearly everyone agrees that there should be a day of rest and that the day of rest should apply to as many people as possible for family reasons. The real question then is whether we should maximise the extent of Sunday trading, compatible with giving as many people as possible a day off and on the same day, or whether we should minimise within the agreed framework the extent of Sunday trading. I have no doubt that the answer is that we should minimise, not maximise, the extent of Sunday trading for the reasons that I have outlined.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, with the clearly established pattern of rest on Sunday for most of the population, the best way of preserving a single day of rest for most of the population is to leave things as they are, with suitable minor amendments as proposed by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell)?

Mr. Alison: I very much share my hon. Friend's view. However, I do not want to rest too much on the idea of leaving things as they are at present, because in place today is something positive and constructive but which introduces the notion of some change. I partially go with my hon. Friend, but essentially we agree.

To maximise the scope for Sunday shop opening, which is the approach adopted by the Shopping Hours Reform Council, for example, we might improve the quality of life at the margin for millions of people. I entirely endorse and recognise the improvement in the quality of life which

[Mr. Alison]

there might be for a large number of people. The trouble is that it would cause much more acute detriment to a smaller number of people. It is like that old joke about the pig and the chicken discussing the significance of bacon and eggs—the egg being relative and marginal for the chicken and the bacon being absolute and final for the pig.

The argument of proportionality should direct our attention, above all, to the smaller number of people for whom the detriment of more widespread Sunday opening is more akin to the fate of the pig than the inconvenience of the chicken. If Sunday opening is maximised, shop workers may have real difficulties with their jobs—their consciences, getting the premium rates of pay which all agree they should have if they must work on Sunday, their family life and so on. The same applies to various ancillary workers who would have to be drawn in to sustain and support those who had to work on Sundays if the maximised approach were adopted.

In some ways, the most serious detriment would be suffered by the tens of thousands of small shops run by individuals or couples. For reasons of competition they would have to open seven days a week and they might literally find it lethal—this is getting close to the fate of the pig—to have to open seven days a week with no relief.

So the detriment caused by maximising Sunday opening would be serious for certain categories, although they would represent relatively small numbers of people. Against that background, the detriment to the millions who would find Sunday shopping convenient and enjoyable, is relatively minor, although not without significance.

It is an interesting phenomenon that where shops open on Sundays without restriction there is a tendency for more and more people to switch their shopping to Sunday. We should weigh the implications of that. Once we liberalised the laws, there would be an intensification of the tendency to shop on Sundays and, therefore, of the detriment to those who are most vulnerable. The very fact that there is a tendency for shopping to move to Sundays when there are no restrictions emphasises, paradoxically, the essential postponability of shopping. If people switch their shopping to Sunday, it means that they give priority on Saturday or Friday afternoons or evenings to activities which are more important to them, such as sporting, cultural or family events. People might say that as the shops were open on Sunday they could leave the relatively minor task of hunting around for the spares or whatever they need to Sunday because it is less important. That shows the postponability and marginality of Sunday shopping for the millions of people for whom it is a convenience but not a critical factor in their lives. They are content to switch their shopping to Sunday if the shops happen to be open.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): If people want to do their shopping on Saturday should they have access to sporting activities on Sundays, which means that people have to work on Sundays? I am confused about my right hon. Friend's point about sporting activities on Sundays.

Mr. Alison: I did not touch on sporting activities on Sundays. I said that people who postponed their shopping to Sunday did so because they wanted to spend Saturday doing other things which had greater priority in their programme, including sporting events and so on. Therefore, it would be more convenient to them to do things which are less important to them on Sunday. That is the only point that I make in that context.

For the reasons that I have given, I believe that a minimalist approach to Sunday trading is both reasonable and humane. The Bill presents a rational but positive framework for Sunday trading based on the REST acronym of the hon. Member for Ogmore, which stands for recreation, emergency, social activities and transport. That gives us a reasonable framework of minimalist opening.

Mr. John Marshall: My right hon. Friend said that the Bill would help those who want recreation. Is he aware that it would close the vast majority of garden centres in England?

Mr. Alison: That point is disputed. My hon. Friend heard the speech by the hon. Member for Ogmore. He said that he was introducing essentially a negotiable framework against the background of a minimalist approach. If he is prepared in Committee to think about the prospects for DIY, he is clearly prepared to think about tidying up any doubts at the margin about garden centres. Essentially the approach is to allow garden centres to be open. If there is any doubt about that, let my hon. Friend join the Committee and table appropriate amendments. I am sure that the hon. Member for Ogmore will consider them.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman's experience is the same as mine. He might confirm that some of the fears expressed by garden centres were expressed by people who looked at earlier definitions than the one contained in the Bill, which refers to a wide range of goods, characterising those sold in garden centres, which can be sold under the Bill.

Mr. Alison: I am particularly glad to note the little firmness on the Benches immediately in front of me of colleagues who have picked out a specific item which worries them. Our essential approach in the House today should be to make the decision in principle on whether to go for maximalist or minimalist approach to Sunday opening. As the hon. Member for Ogmore has already said, if the House allows us to follow the Keep Sunday Special campaign lines, many of the technical and specific points will be negotiable in Committee within the framework of the minimalist approach.

I hope that the House will endorse the approach inherent in the Bill and think about the detriment caused to small numbers of people at the cost of relatively limited inconvenience to millions of others.

10.25 am

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): There are private Members' Bills and so-called private Members' Bills. Some are genuinely private Members' Bills, others are not. Those which are not are Government Bills masquerading as private Members' Bills. They are Bills which Departments of State have failed to have included in the Queen's Speech and which Ministers, or their Parliamentary Private Secretaries, hawk round among hon. Members who have won high places in the private Members' ballot. Those who accept them from Ministers

tread the primrose path to the statute book. They are given a drafted Bill, speeches and briefings for all stages, and the virtual certainty of achieving Royal Assent.

I sometimes think that such Bills should carry, parenthetically, after their short titles, the letter (G), so that people here and in the country will see just how many "private Members' Bills" are, in fact, Government Bills and, therefore, how much of the parliamentary time allocated to private Members is used instead for Government legislation. The point is one which the Select Committee on Procedure might like to consider.

The measure of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) is a private Members' Bill properly so-called and I honour him both for his independent spirit and his success in presenting a Bill so worthy of enactment. He has given the House a Bill which is the first serious attempt to reform Sunday trading law in a sensible and practical way. It respects the special nature of Sunday, while allowing a reasonable range of activities to be pursued. The Bill offers the best possible way of tackling a mess which gets messier week by week.

I have the honour to be sponsored by the Co-operative movement, the first ever Labour and Co-operative Member of Parliament for the city of Manchester. In declaring my interest, I declare also my pride in being a representative here of a movement whose traditions are among the most admirable this country has to offer.

While there are some details of the Bill we shall want to examine closely in Committee, in particular the case for increasing to 3,000 the square footage limit on small shops allowed to open and the need to allow travel agents to do so—they are concerned purely with recreation—the Co-operative movement supports the Bill as the best framework for reforming the Sunday trading law. In our view, it is far better than the alternatives, which offer only variations on the theme of total deregulation.

Our support for the Bill has four bases: first of all, social policy. We believe that the traditional Sunday, characterised by the opportunities that it gives for recreation with family and friends, is of high value and worth preserving.

Mr. Dicks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morris: In fairness to other Members who want to speak, I cannot give way; more especially as a Privy Councillor, I owe it to them to speak briefly if they are to have any chance of speaking at all.

We recognise that many people do work on Sundays and that some others may wish to do so; but we believe that for retail opening to become the norm would be a major step towards destroying the social benefits of the traditional Sunday for most of the British people. We recognise the need for some shops to open; we recognise that some people regard shopping as a leisure activity; we recognise that others might wish to shop because of their other responsibilities at home and at work. On balance, however, we believe that Parliament should not throw out the baby of demonstrable social benefit to the majority with the bathwater of occasional inconvenience to a minority.

I turn briefly to employment policy, the second basis for our support. We are a major employer, but we support the trade unions who represent the Co-operative movement's employees when they say that the best protection shop workers can have against exploitation in regard to Sunday working is a legal one. We know that there are shopworkers who want to work on Sunday because they receive premium payments, but the overall position is that people would rather not work on Sunday. All of us know that premium payments are by no means universal, nor are they permanent. In a recent survey completed by the Institute of Retail Studies at the university of Stirling, it was found that indeed 30 per cent. of Sunday workers receive no premium payments. Extension of Sunday working in a low-paid work force must result in worsening conditions and wages. At the same time, premium rates in all industries will be threatened if Sunday increasingly becomes a "normal day".

Consumer policy is the third basis for our support. Sunday trading is of most commercial benefit to large private multiples that have been able to invest large capital sums in big stores, often in out-of-town locations. They will be the main beneficiaries of deregulated Sunday trading. The existing illegal trade shows how well placed they are to swallow the trade of smaller shops, more especially food and convenience shops. Retailers who lose out because of Sunday trading are those who do not have access to large investment funds—small traders and the co-operatives. The legal structure of co-operatives, which gives them their democratic practice and allows only a limited return on capital, also limits their access to equity capital. They are unable, for these reasons, to match the recent massive rights issues of the big food chains. There is no need here to spell out why small traders have problems about capital, nor why deregulation will totally deprive many small villages of their only shops.

There would be an argument to maintain diversity of size and legal structure in the retail industry, even if consumer interests were not involved. But they are involved. Co-ops and small shops give particular consumer service to small communities where there is no superstore because it could not make money, and also to a huge number of consumers, a high proportion of them elderly and disabled people, with no access to a car for a trip to the out-of-town retail park. They will suffer if local shops close down from Monday to Saturday because the non-local supermarket opens on Sunday.

The fourth basis of our support is law and order policy. Over the past few years, a growing number of large companies have decided blatantly to ignore the Shops Act 1950 and to open for business on Sundays. We are not concerned whether this was avoidance, or evasion, or finessing or flouting of the law. There is no escaping the reality that a number of large companies have traded illegally. Their conduct debases the law and demeans Parliament itself. The effect is that the law in general is brought into disrepute. The public reaction is that there is one law for the rich private multiples and another law for their poor consumers, who may buy illegally but must not shoplift from the law-breaking retailer—even on Sundays. How can parliamentarians, who make the law and work to uphold the rule of law by discouraging crime, possibly agree to a new Sunday trading law that would, by mass deregulation, serve only to reward transgressors by scrapping the law which they broke?

Of course, other traders have been in touch with me as well as my trading colleagues in the Co-operative movement. An enterprise which has two grocery stores in my constituency tells me in a recent letter:

"For staff, the possibility of unrestricted Sunday trading is extremely worrying.

[Mr. Morris]

> Quite simply, many if not all staff would be required to work at least occasionally on Sundays, possibly on a shift system. This would be offensive to their religious beliefs and disruptive of the social and family life of shop employees. While we would not attempt to force any dissenting employee to work on Sundays, there would almost certainly be perceived pressure on store staff to do so, despite any legislated protection. People in most other walks of life are not suddenly forced to give up their Sundays. Why should shop staff?"

The letter goes on:

> "The unemployment situation would be worsened further by the higher costs involved by Sunday trading in food retailing in particular. Finally, the small local self-employed High Street convenience stores, which currently survive on Sunday trading, would progressively be forced out of business, throwing whole families out of work."

This is one of many letters that I have had in support of the Bill. They demonstrate that the Bill is both worthy of and enjoys widespread approval in the country. Again I pay tribute to my hon. Friend and wish him all success in promoting what is a sensible and reformist Bill, whose enactment has become an urgent necessity.

Friday is often regarded as the "a" in etcetera of the parliamentary week. With my hon. Friend's Bill to debate, that is certainly not true of this week. He merits our highest regard and appreciation and that of everyone who is now prepared to challenge those who have treated the law of this country with studied contempt.

10.38 am

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) on promoting this private Member's Bill on what has undoubtedly been an exceedingly controversial topic for years. I am happy that he has done so because it is high time that the subject was debated in the House, where a broad set of views are represented which we can consider and determine when voting on his proposals.

I disagree with the Bill, not least because it is inconsistent and does not keep Sunday particularly special. The Bill seems to sanction Sunday shopping by trying to update the Shops Act 1950 and bring it into the 1990s.

As the predecessor of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, I spent much time talking to many people whose interests were almost entirely concentrated on ensuring that we change the Shops Act 1950. When I first approached the subject, I thought that we should try to stay within the existing framework and create as few changes as possible. I am a person who believes in as little change as possible, which is why I am a Conservative. I like to see things remain more or less as they are.

I studied the 1950 Act carefully. I looked at its provisions and wondered how they could be reshaped to suit today's circumstances. The first factor to strike me when I looked at the practice of shopping and retailing was that I could not compare the position in 1950 to that of the 1990s. It is as unlikely that we shall be able to compare what happens in the 1990s to what will happen in the year 2030.

If we produce a Bill that merely updates the Shops Act 1950—as I believe the Bill of the hon. Member for Ogmore does—it will not stand the test of time. The House should be in the business of enacting legislation that is both simple and lasting. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's Bill will achieve those ends.

It is not just our shopping habits and the sort of goods that we purchase in today's economy that have changed, but there has been a dramatic change in our way of life. People's lifestyles today are different from those of 1950. We may regret that—part of me regrets it. It would be nice if things were much the same today as they were some years ago, but they are not. The economic realities of life mean that a substantial number of households no longer contain one person who stays at home and one person who works. They do not contain somebody who is available to carry out all the tasks within six days and devote himself of herself entirely to the family at home on Sunday.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): The right hon. Lady will recognise that the changes that she has described apply to other European countries? Will she explain how the French, Germans and Italians, who have experienced the same changes in social practices and economic factors as we have over the years, have been able to retain a Sunday without the commercialised opening of shops which she and her supporters appear to advocate in Britain?

Dame Angela Rumbold: I can explain that easily. I am a British citizen and part of the British legislature; I am interested only in what affects people in this country. I am not legislating for France, Germany, Italy or any other country, nor would I try to do so.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Dame Angela Rumbold: No, I am sorry, but I shall not give way as I realise that many other hon. Members wish to participate in the debate.

I have set out why I believe that it would be enormously difficult to encapsulate all those factors simply by updating the Shops Act 1950, as the Bill does. I realise that we must make changes, but I want to keep them simple. I want simple changes to accomodate the needs of modern life. The simplest, most straightforward solution to the problem is deregulation, with protection for Sunday shop workers.

When I was a Minister and listened to debates on Sunday trading, I was forcefully struck by the fact that it would be difficult to persuade the House to accept total deregulation. I was pragmatic and realised that some concessions would have to be made to those people who wanted to restrict Sunday shopping.

We must consider carefully how to restrict Sunday trading. We could consider ways to restrict goods. We could decide to restrict certain goods from being sold on Sunday, but it would be almost impossible to make a durable list of items that could not be sold on Sunday. That is simply because, in 10 years' time, goods will have been invented that were not originally contained in the legislation. That would create anomalies, such as those that currently exist in the 1950 Act, which allows one to buy a Chinese takeaway, fried chicken and kebabs, but not fish and chips, which is nonsense.

If we rule out restricting what can be bought on Sundays, we could consider restricting where one can buy goods. The Bill tries to do that. It has been suggested that we could restrict the size of the premises from which goods may be bought on Sunday. We could restrict large

hypermarkets and supermarkets from opening and allow to open only small corner shops, which people have, for many years, used by custom and practice. The hon. Gentleman's Bill also tries to do that, but we would create a mess if we tried to legislate for that.

We could allow all shops to open, but only within certain hours. Such restriction does work and is possible. If we restricted opening hours on Sunday, we would have to think carefully about whose businesses we should serve. Newsagents want to open first thing on Sunday morning as people like to read their newspapers with their breakfast. Chemists will have to open to provide medicines in the case of emergencies.

We could restrict commercial family activities on Sundays until after midday or 1 pm. We could ensure that everyone wanting to visit a garden centre or partake of similar activities would have to go in the morning, which would keep Sunday afternoon shopping-free. However, such regulation would not help in the case of licensed premises. People tend to drink alcohol on Sunday, as well as Saturday and Monday.

We would also have to consider new industries that have grown up, such as video shops, many of which would be forced to close down if they had to close after 2 pm on Sunday—that is a sad fact. I am not in hock to the video production industry, but I know that employees of its employees work on Sunday and a large number of people enjoy the opportunity to use video shops. We would have to build into the legislation provisions to cover such activities. If one wants the legislation to provide for exceptions, each one must be built into it. Over a period they will become untenable and the legislation will have to be amended.

Mr. Dicks: People who want to keep Sunday special for recreational activities often do not want professional recreational activities on Sunday, which is another anomaly. People who want to watch professional football or go to the races on their day of rest should be able to do so but it means that people will have to be employed at those events.

Dame Angela Rumbold: That is absolutely true—my hon. Friend makes a good point.

Another exceedingly worrying aspect involves those employed in the retail business, who may come under pressure to work seven days a week. I considered that subject carefully. Clearly, one must accept that a number of people in this country currently work on Saturday and Sunday. Like it or not, legions of women find working on Saturday more satisfactory and more beneficial to their family life. They work on Sunday so that their partners can participate in family life and be with the children. They also work on Sunday because the current economic circumstances—which have existed for some time—mean that it is important for women to contribute to the family finances. Are we to say that we will not allow such women to work on Sundays? The House should think seriously about that.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The right hon. Lady's Government are busy trying to get rid of the wages councils, which are one of the few protections for low-paid women workers. Does she seriously suggest that women work on Sundays out of choice and not because they are driven to do so by appallingly low wages, which are still universal for the sort of jobs about which the right hon. Lady speaks?

Dame Angela Rumbold: It is obvious that the hon. Lady does not speak to the kind of people who come to speak to me about the importance of being able, if they choose, to work on Sundays. The hon. Lady might get a surprise if she spoke to some of those women because she would realise how important it is for them to have a choice.

Like it or not—and many do not—Sunday shopping has become a family activity. People like to go out as a family, even if only to the garden centre. Many people also enjoy Sunday shopping together. That is surprising to me because I intensely dislike shopping in a supermarket. I am greatly bothered by the notion of trying to restrict Sunday trading because many of the people—usually women, but occasionally men—who have to do the weekly shopping are forced by the restrictions to do it at the same time as everybody else. Many people have not experienced pushing a loaded supermarket trolley in a large crowd of people. People who work hard six days a week should not be told, perhaps by those who do not have to push loaded trolleys, that they will not be allowed to shop on Sunday. Such arrogance is unacceptable in this day and age.

It is no part of our work to restrict people's choice about when they should shop or their ability to work on days which many others might regard as unsocial; for some people such days and hours are a lifeline. I share some of the worries about making Sunday like Saturday or Monday, but I do not think that deregulation would cause that to happen. It does not necessarily follow that because shops are allowed to open they will. Apart from the times when they opened just before Christmat in the past two or three years or so, that has not been perceived generally to happen.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Angela Rumbold: No, because I am coming to the end of my speech.

Mrs. Winterton: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Dame Angela Rumbold: Yes.

Mrs. Winterton: It is generous of my right hon. Friend to give way towards the end of her speech, to which I am listening carefully. Does she agree that a totally deregulated Sunday allowing opening for even six hours a day would be a gamble as to whether the things that she mentions survived? She spoke in great detail about why, when she was in the Home Office, she had come to her conclusion that shops should be open for at least six hours. Why did she not have the courage of her convictions then to introduce such a measure?

Dame Angela Rumbold: As my hon. Friend knows, my career in the Home Office was, sadly, brought to an untimely end. I do not think that it is a gamble. We live in a reasonable and responsible society. We have to trust retailers and the British public to operate a voluntary code about how they behave on a Sunday as opposed to a Saturday, a Friday or a Monday. That is deeply built into the way of life in this country. I do not think that it would simply change overnight and it is somewhat hysterical of those who oppose that view to worry about it too much.

I share my hon. Friend's concerns about employee protection and it is important to establish that those

[Dame Angela Rumbold]

currently in work should not be subjected to unreasonable pressure to work seven days a week when that is not their wish. It would be possible to establish a voluntary code of practice for retailers. However, it may not be possible, and on that issue alone I need to be reassured. That might be achieved by legislative protection to ensure that people could not be pressurised to work more than six days a week. I admire the hon. Member for Ogmore for introducing the Bill, but there is no way in which I will support it.

10.55 am

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The House is indebted to the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) for the adroit and humorous way in which he introduced his Bill on which we can base new laws. It commands support throughout the House, but it also has its opponents. I hope that it will be victorious.

I listened to the speech of the right hon. Member—I presume she is right hon.—for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold). Her time at the Home Office may have been brought to a premature conclusion, but it was not entirely clear from the exchange between the right hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) whether the right hon. Lady had been elevated to that title. I shall assume that she has.

The right hon. Lady gave a variety of reasons for being opposed to the measure. She said that the legislation would not last for eternity; but no legislation does and that is not a reason for voting against it. We regularly reform legislation: this is a reforming Parliament and, of course, no legislation is cast in concrete. Whatever the House decides on Sunday trading, I should be surprised if in 40 years' time we did not consider the issues again.

The right hon. Lady said that many of the changes in this country had not been for the good of our nation. Many of us agree when we look at the social ecology and at many of the things happening in our land. An estimated 1 million elderly people do not see a friend, relative or neighbour in an average week. One in three marriages end in divorce and the breakdown of family life, and there has been a great rise in criminality.

I agree that many of the changes in our society are not for the better, but that is another reason not for being defeatist, but for recognising that those are challenges and that we must do all that we can to enshrine family and community life and the values which, on other occasions, the right hon. Lady would certainly espouse. We must examine legislation with a view to seeing how we can keep relationships together and give people time together.

The right hon. Lady said that because we are British we do not need to take any notice of what is happening elsewhere in Europe. Given that we are making slow progress on another Bill, most people agree that that argument does not stand up.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I did not say what the hon. Gentleman says I said about this country. I said that I am in the British legislature trying to influence legislation for this country and for our people. That is my main point. Therefore, I do not need to take into account what happens in other countries.

Mr. Alton: That is a reversal of arguments that have been advanced in debates over the past few days. Ironically, the hon. Member for Congleton, who intervened in the speech of the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden, and the right hon. Lady would find themselves in different Lobbies in Divisions on the other legislation. It is slightly paradoxical for Europe to be quoted in this way.

Every other European Community country has been able to enshrine in its statutes legislation to safeguard their workers and Sundays—and I shall return to that point in my speech. It is not impossible for us to do the same in Britain. We do not have to do what everybody else does, but it is absurd to suggest that it is not possible to legislate in that way because we are British and somehow do not have the same capacity as our friends across the channel to introduce safeguards.

The right hon. Lady also said that there were anomalies in the Bill. The hon. Member for Ogmore has already generously stated that in Committee he will listen to the arguments and that, to use his words, he will be reasonable and pragmatic when considering any anomalies and any concerns that are raised then.

It is an interesting new theory that no legislation to be presented to the House in future by any Government will contain no anomalies. Many of us will be relieved to know that that will be the case. We were also told that registration might be too complicated. That will come as good news to everybody who has to pay value added tax. Presumably, therefore, VAT will be abolished. Why bother to register for elections? It is very complicated. People cannot put their minds to it. The whole House knows that these are pretty implausible arguments. All that came from the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden, who was responsible for trying impartially to change our laws. It is no wonder that so many of us were suspicious of her when she was in her former post.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Bill would require a large number of small businesses to register the nature of their turnover in a way that they probably do not even record at present? At a time when we are trying to lift the burdens on small businesses, is not that just what we ought not to be doing?

Mr. Alton: There are 200,000 small retailers in this country, many of whom will be forced out of business unless we ensure that the hypermarkets and supermarkets are unable to trade on Sundays, thus forcing them out of business. To suggest that it would be beyond the wit of a small retailer to fill in a registration form if he wished to trade on Sunday is absurd.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: No, not at the moment. I have given way on a number of occasions already.

The right hon. Lady referred to the question of choice. She said that choice should be elevated to the position of a religion or a philosophy. It was the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, who, in his recent excellent book "The Persistence of Faith", said that the word "choice" comes from the same Greek root as the word "herasis". It may be that the word "choice" could be regarded today as a modern heresy: that it is my right to do whatever I want, regardless of the consequences. Choices are invariably

made at other people's expense. Nowhere is that more likely to be the case than here. As the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) said earlier today, there are plenty of opportunities for shopping. In the average retail week, 51 hours are available for shopping, so there are plenty of choices already.

It is worth recalling that, when we last considered this issue in 1986, a cross-party coalition in Parliament said that it did not want Sunday to be deregulated. It was the only time during that 13-year period that the Government were defeated on a whipped vote. But did they give up? No. They continued to come back to the House to try to find ways around it.

The story line has constantly changed. We were told to wait for the decision of the European Court; but it came out in favour of keeping Sunday special. No longer, therefore, were we told to wait for the decision of the European Court. We were then told to turn a blind eye to anyone who broke the law. That was said by people who on other occasions tell us that they belong to the party of law and order. That is no example to set to people in our cities and communities who are becoming more and more lawless.

The Home Secretary now offers us his well-known three-card trick. That is through the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill: if there are many different options, he will eventually get what he wants because people will be so confused. I have news for the House: I do not believe that that will happen.

If we had the Home Office's preferred option, which is riven with anomalies and confusion, we could end up with no legislation whatsoever, with no reform of the Shops Act 1950. That is why it is so good that the hon. Member for Ogmore has provided us with this practical alternative. It is not based on the principle of he who pays the piper calls the tune. It is based upon his experience of working with shop workers throughout the land who are entitled to protection, a view which has cross-party support in the House because it provides the best means of ensuring that Sunday is not turned into yet another Saturday.

As the European Court has recognised, workers are entitled to a common day off to be used for family and community activities, including time to go to church. Sundays also guarantee equilibrium and stability in busy and pressurised lives by balancing stressful work with time for leisure and recreation. By limiting retail activity on Sundays, we also protect shop workers and those employed in ancillary services from pressure to work unusual hours. For close on 1,000 years, Britain has had laws regulating commercial activity on Sunday, so it is not an impossibility. We have done it for nearly 1,000 years. It was Churchill who once said that our most prized institution is Sunday. He spoke wisely when he used those words. We should remember them today.

As the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) mentioned earlier, safeguards are enshrined in the German constitution. If one looks at the effects on the German economy, one can see that those safeguards have not caused economic chaos or the disintegration of the German economy. It may be the secret of Germany's success—the recognition that workers need time off, that their rights should be enshrined in the constitution and that they should be accorded dignity and respect.

Shop workers are already in a low-paid and vulnerable sector of the economy, for 70 per cent. of retail companies pay their workers less than £3·50 an hour. There is pressure, as we heard from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), for even further deregulation in that respect. Shop workers who refuse to work unsocial hours will not get jobs; they will not be employed; they will not be promoted; they will be the first to be given redundancy notices. Deregulation will lead to inescapable pressure, particularly on women, to work on a day that they would prefer to spend with their families and children.

There is also the problem that faces people who live alongside shopping areas. Only a week ago residents in the Allerton road area of Liverpool came to see me at my advice centre to tell me about the problems that they are experiencing because Woolworths had decided to open its shop there on Sundays. That has led, in the streets of little terraced houses adjacent to that store, to early-morning deliveries, to car doors being banged, and to the roads being congested with parked cars. Even on the one day that they did not have to suffer that commercial activity, they now have to put up with the bustle of hectic business and the consequntial noise, hassle and stress. Most absurdly, of all, no extra money for shopping is available, anyway. If the advocates of Sunday secularisation could only see beyond their greed, they might realise that the financial gain will be negligible.

There is one more reason why I shall support the Bill. In a country where a crime is committed every two seconds and where one in three families experience divorce and the breakdown of family life, the Government are presumably concerned about the reasons for our chronic social maladies. Many of our problems stem from the inadequate time spent together by families. There is no substitute for parental interest, guidance and support. If the Home Secretary gets his way, many children and young people, to say nothing of the elderly relatives who enjoy a Sunday visit, will have even less time spent upon them in future. The social costs far outweigh any supposed advantages of unlimited shopping free for alls.

The Bill protects workers and family and community life. It recognises the basic human need that we all have for unpressurised time for leisure and recreation. It rightly takes a stand against the cult of materialism and the sheer greed that motivates so many other decisions that are taken today. The Home Secretary has made his position clear: a totally secularised, deregulated Sunday. Therefore, I am glad that we are in a position to ask someone else, who is opposed to that objective, to steer through the House a Bill that reflects the will of Parliament as it was expressed in our last vote on the issue.

It is for those reasons that I hope that we shall give the Bill a Second Reading today.

11.8 am

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): For me, Friday mornings are very precious indeed—second only in importance to Sundays—because, like most north-western hon. Members, I like to be at home, in my case in Lancaster, on Fridays. I am here only because I regard the Bill as absolutely essential to the maintenance of family life.

My favourite occupation on Fridays, come what may, is to go around—we are lucky to have it—our covered shopping market. It is an old Victorian market which, sadly, was devastated by fire, but nevertheless it survives. I wander around the aisles of that lovely old market, do my

[Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman]

shopping and natter to people. I vividly remember the previous time when the matter of Sunday trading was before the House. I saw a highly respected confectioner rushing around the market like a steam engine. I said to her, "Mrs."—I will not reveal her name—"what on earth are you doing? I have never seen you go around so fast." "Ooh," she said, "it's my birthday tomorrow, and if the Bill to deregulate Sunday goes through, it will be the last Sunday that our family will ever be able to spend together, because at least one of us will have to be on duty." That business is a family-run concern. That is concrete example of what will happen throughout the land.

I also represent a delightful country area. We are dependent on two things: our schools, which thankfully we have managed, with something of a battle, to maintain, and our village shops. These would be substantially threatened if we allowed the deregulation of Sunday and did not preserve Sunday by this Bill which strikes an admirable balance. I am proud to say that I admire the promoter of the Bill, the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), for saying that he is willing to consider clearing up any uncertain matters in Committee, for example in relation to garden centres.

Whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are bringing up a family—I have a rather hefty sized family—or attempting to keep law and order in the Chamber, which is by no means an easy job, or keeping law and order in the country, your prime duty is not to give in to law breakers. One does not give biscuits to a bad child. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should not call an hon. Member who is obstreperous—that includes me—and the Government should certainly not reward large, wealthy retail chains by scrapping the law that they have so flagrantly violated for the perfectly simple reason that they can afford the fines.

I am in favour of law and order, I am in favour of family life and I am very much in favour of the Bill.

11.12 am

Ms. Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): Thank you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Whatever our views on Sunday trading, many hon. Members are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), who, by pursuing his private Member's Bill has at least given us an opportunity to have this debate—an opportunity which has so far been denied us by the Government, despite the Home Secretary's statement to the House on 26 November, when he declared his determination

"to settle the vexed question of the reform of the law on Sunday trading in England and Wales."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 997.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore has brought forward his Bill in a genuine and honest attempt to sort out the current mess and confusion over Sunday trading. My hon. Friend declared his interest. I should like to declare my long-term interest in this matter. Before I entered the House, when I was a prospective parliamentary candidate, I worked in my constituency as the northern region organiser for the Shopping Hours Reform Council.

As legislators, we must ask ourselves whether the Bill will achieve consensus and establish a satisfactory situation in respect of Sunday trading or whether it will merely serve to sustain circumstances which meet neither the wishes of consumers nor the rights of shop workers. Our overriding priority must be to bring the Sunday trading debate permanently to a close, achieve consensus, and reconcile the rights and conditions of employment of shop workers with the desire of the public to shop on Sundays.

It is essential that any reforming legislation takes sufficient account of reality to command the respect of the general public. Without public support, many local authorities will regard enforcement of this legislation as having as low a priority as that of the current law. Also, the provisions need to be simple and easy to enforce.

The problem with the Bill is that it flies in the face of public opinion. Surveys carried out over 18 years by the well-respected Consumers Association have consistently shown a two thirds majority in favour of liberalisation of the law on Sunday opening, yet in many ways the Bill is more restrictive than the Shops Act 1950. It would close some shops that are currently permitted to open, such as convenience stores and some newsagents if they are larger than 1,500 sq ft. It would also close coin-operated launderettes which can currently operate legally. Moreover, it would close the very shops that most people want to use on Sundays. Although I welcome my hon. Friend's statement that he would be willing to consider concessions on DIY stores, there is a significant question mark over garden centres.

In the view of the Consumers Association, the Bill contains so many complexities that it will create as much confusion and uncertainty as the current Act causes. The main reason for that is that it continues the type-of-shop approach, which was rejected by the Auld committee on the ground that it would not be any easier to select a defensible list of shop types for exemption than it would be to select a list of goods. That view is also upheld by the eminent QC, Eldred Tabachnik, who concluded that

"far from removing the themelessness which characterises the 1950 Act, the Bill is every bit as, if not more, anomalous than the current law"

and that

"the categories of trading on Sundays permitted by the Bill comprise an arbitrary hotch potch."

There are numerous illustrations of the types of problems. No doubt some are due to drafting errors, but most are simply inherent in any such type-of-shop approach and they are exacerbated by the 80 per cent. rule. In effect, the Bill would close almost all petrol stations on Sundays. To be exempt from the closure requirement, a petrol station is required to sell only petrol. If it wished to sell any other product it would have to apply for class A registration. In order to be eligible, it would need to be less than 1,500 sq ft, and 80 per cent. of turnover would need to be from sales of goods from the prescribed list. Petrol is not included in that list.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): It is important, whatever else we do, to get some of our facts right; we might differ on our opinions. Is the hon. Lady aware that the House of Commons Chamber measures 68 ft by 45 ft 6 in? It is a little more than 3,000 sq ft. I have no small shops of that size in my constituency. We are talking about 3,000 sq ft, and 1,500 sq ft is still half of the Chamber. I do not know of many garage forecourt shops that will be seriously inconvenienced if their sales area is restricted to that size.

Ms. Anderson: Many motorway service stations would fall into that category. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is arguing that the House of Commons Chamber should be open on Sundays—perhaps he is.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Anderson: No, I will not give way.

The Bill permits the purchase of a ladder from a garden centre but not from a DIY shop. However, many DIY centres have a garden centre section. DIY retailers might consider sectioning off parts of their store to enable illegal trading in that section to continue. The list of anomalies goes on. I am simply seeking to illustrate the point that the Bill will not end the debate and division on Sunday trading, but will guarantee that they continue.

I know that the position of shop workers has greatly exercised my hon. Friends; it is also a matter of great concern to me. I can do no better than to quote from the general secretary of my trade union, John Edmonds of the GMB, which represents some 60,000 shop workers, the overwhelming majority of whom are women. In a recent letter to hon. Members, Mr. Edmonds said that the

"continuing confusion over Sunday shopping has become intolerable for employees within the retail industry."

He also said that local authorities, businesses, shop workers and the public need clarification of the law to put an end to the ridiculous charade which blights the nation's Sundays. He said that it is unacceptable that people should be forced to work on Sundays against their will; I know that most hon. Members would agree.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am aware of the remarks in that letter, but, as a fellow member of that union, I believe that it was a mistake. My hon. Friend has already accepted that there is a need for the House to debate these issues and resolve them. Because of the lack of any Government Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) has provided us with the opportunity to do that. Given the request from the general secretary of the GMB, does my hon. Friend agree that it would be best for the Bill to be given a Second Reading, so that all the issues to which she referred could be properly debated in Committee? Will she therefore support the Bill's Second Reading?

Ms. Anderson: I know that my hon. Friend's views command a great deal of support in the House, but I am afraid that I disagree with them. We should have an opportunity to consider all the possible options and that is why I hope that the Government will not renege on their promise to bring forward appropriate legislation soon.

Mr. Edmonds said that he believed that it was unacceptable that people should be forced to work on Sundays. I agree, because that would contradict religious freedoms, jeopardise family life and be intolerable for existing employees. The GMB and I would support legislation that includes the voluntary principle and carries with it sensible guarantees for trade union recognition rights to enforce that voluntary principle.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms. Anderson: No. I must get on because I know that many other hon. Members want to speak.

Mr. Edmonds also went on to say:

"We do not believe that Ray Powell's proposals match our policy, nor that they will clarify the position. They would rather add further confusion."

I understand that Mr. Bill Morris of the Transport and General Workers union has sent a similar letter to some of my hon. Friends.

As a Member representing a northern constituency and as the mother of three teenage children, I must tell the House that the only time that I get to do my weekly household shop is on Sundays. The same is often true for the more than 70 per cent. of married women who now work outside the home. I also know that there are many women in my constituency who welcome the opportunity to work on Sundays when they do not have to pay for child care because they can rely on their partners. Women want to shop on Sundays and women want to work on Sundays. The Bill does not recognise those demands.

11.22 am

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) not only on her speech, with which I totally agree, but on displaying what must be the ultimate courage in the House—opposing a Bill proposed by her own pairing Whip, the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell).

Before the hon. Member for Ogmore leaves the Chamber, I should like him to know that I shall follow the two injunctions that he made. I shall try to speak for as short a time as possible—he spoke for nearly half an hour—and, in response to his request, I shall declare my specific interest in the Bill. Until the recent growth in Sunday trading among supermarkets and large shops, it was impossible for me, given that I work six days a week at a minimum, to shop with my family. My family life has been enriched by the recent opportunities to shop that have arisen. *[Laughter.]* I am sorry that hon. Members regard their days off as so limited that they would not wish to broaden their horizons. They will find that the 4 million people who now regularly shop in large stores on Sundays would agree with me.

The hon. Member for Ogmore referred, rightly, to the document that has been distributed, at considerable expense, to every hon. Member of the House, entitled "Towards a New Shops Act". That document sets out the aims of the Bill. I should like to do the hon. Member for Ogmore the honour, despite the fact that he is no longer in his seat, of referring to the aims set out in the document. It states that the Bill is designed

"to guarantee a common day off"—

but not for those people who, for whatever reason, would wish to have a different day off. It is also designed

"to protect the right of shopworkers not to work on Sundays."

It says nothing about those people who want the right to work on a Sunday. It states that the Bill is designed to protect smaller retailers from pressure to open. It says nothing about those smaller retailers who wish to open. It also states that the Bill is designed

"to provide for the reasonable needs of consumers."

That is something on which the consumers are not entitled to have a say; they must accept whatever the hon. Member for Ogmore defines as their "reasonable needs". The document also states that the Bill would prevent unfair competition. It will do that by preventing all competition in any circumstances.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stern: I am conscious of the fact that the promoter did not give way during his speech and I am anxious to make sure that other hon. Members have the opportunity to speak. However, I shall give way to the hon. Lady if she is brief.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I shall be brief. Does he accept that 25 per cent. of the business of small shops comes from trading over the weekend and on Sundays, but only 2 per cent. of the business of supermarkets comes from such trading? Therefore, when he says that he is concerned about competition, is not he really concerned about protecting the supermarkets from the smaller shops?

Mr. Stern: I have no way of checking the hon. Lady's figures and I am happy to accept that they are correct. However, if she considers the trading patterns of supermarkets and the profit margins to which they work she will find that 2 per cent. can be a major factor when determining the viability of a business. As for competition with the small shops, the hon. Lady will find that many people, given the opportunity, prefer to work and to shop in larger stores.

Mrs. Dunwoody: So the hon. Gentleman is protecting the larger stores.

Mr. Stern: We should not single out those people who should be protected.

The aims set out in the reasoned amendment standing in my name and that of several hon. Members are the reverse of those in the Bill. In any legislation on Sunday trading, employment and business opportunities should be encouraged and meaningless distinctions between one shop and another should be abandoned. Such legislation should protect the quality of life of most people, as they choose to lead it. It should avoid the imposition of extra duties on local authorities and extra burdens on businesses. Above all, it should not destroy jobs. More than 140,000 shop workers would lose their Sunday work and earnings if any Bill remotely like the one before us today were passed. About 50,000 of them would lose their only employment. Is it really the job of the House to destroy employment on such a massive scale, especially since, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) said, most of these people are women who have been the beneficiaries of one of the great liberalisations of our society in recent years —for the first time, they have an equal opportunity to choose when and how to work and how to organise their family lives instead of being tied to a previous view of society supported by law?

The Bill contains other anomalies with regard to encouraging employment. I represent a Bristol constituency and must therefore very much resent the fact that in a tourist area such as Bristol, which is not by the seaside, tourist shops would be barred from opening because only seaside tourist resorts are covered by the Bill's exemption.

Another aim is to encourage business opportunities. As I said, about 4 million customers now pass through and buy at the four leading supermarket groups that currently open on Sundays. The report of Eldred Tabachnik QC, which has been made available to most hon. Members, states that the United Kingdom is no longer a nation of small specialist shops. An increasing number of shops were never contemplated by the 1950 Act and are not even considered by the Bill.

For example, bureaux de change provide a great service to tourists, but they would not be able to open on Sundays. Professional offices increasingly find that their clients can see them only Sundays because they also have to earn a living, but they would also be debarred from opening—I speak as a former full-time practising chartered accountant. The Bill would destroy many of the opportunities for businesses that have opened in recent years.

The Bill perpetuates rather than ends the meaningless distinctions between one shop and another. The hon. Member for Ogmore said that he would accept amendments, but he must stand by the Bill as he has presented it to the House—either he meant what he said in the Bill or he did not. What is the point of getting rid of the 1950 Act when, under the Bill——

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stern: No. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I have undertaken not to give way because many other hon. Members wish to speak.

If the Bill were passed unamended, the vast majority of garden centres would have to close—we have that from the garden centres themselves. The remainder of the garden centres which are able to register to open under the Bill can be closed on an arbitrary basis if, by accident, their sales of particular and ill-defined goods happen to go over the limit set by the Bill.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Stern: No, I am sorry, but I shall not give way.

The hon. Member for Ogmore claimed that video hire shops would be unaffected, but he may not have noticed that video hire shops also sell videos and, under the terms of the Bill, if they sell one video too many on a Sunday, they will be closed.

The Bill covers the sizes of shops which are permitted to open. There is a good working rule which hon. Members could apply to shops in their constituencies—if a shop has one window, it is under 1,500 sq ft and would be allowed to open. As a general rule, a shop with two windows will be more than 1,500 sq ft and will be forced to close

Mr. Lord: Nonsense.

Mr. Stern: It is not nonsense—it is based on survey.

With reference to the anomalies which will arise under the Bill, I refer to a letter that I—and, I believe, many other hon. Members—have received from the Boots Company. It states that some brands of toothpaste will qualify for sale on Sundays, others will not and some

"food supplements and vitamins will be legally saleable, others will not."

It asks how it will be

"possible to differentiate between items in a pharmacy that can be sold only for two hours on a Sunday and those . . . that can be sold . . . without restriction?"

The letter points out that the Bill allows

"baby foods to be sold in garden centres, nappies on garage forecourts, and condoms in video hire shops all day Sunday but none of these to be sold at any time in Pharmacies."

What ridiculous legislation.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Ogmore is not here to listen to what I regard as one of the major defects of the

Bill. Despite his not being here, I make this point to him as the proponent of the Bill with all honesty and sincerity, as a member of an ethnic minority. The explanatory document that he has caused to be circulated refers to regulations which are and are not in the Bill relating to Jewish and Muslim shops. The document states that

"shops owned by Jewish proprietors are permitted to open on Sunday mornings, provided the shops also shut on Saturdays."

That is a provision of the 1950 legislation which is not changed by the Bill.

The hon. Member for Ogmore has clearly not noticed that most Jewish shops in urban areas found it impossible to survive without expanding under the 1950 Act and that most such shops, especially the successful ones which are permitted to open on Sundays, would be forced to close because they comprise more than 1,500 sq ft. That would certainly apply to most urban Jewish butchers.

There is an equally thoughtless reference in the Bill and the explanatory document to Muslims. The document states:

"We did not consider it necessary to make a special provision for Moslems because their religion only requires them to be at prayer for 2 hours on a Friday."

Are not Muslims entitled to take their own view on how to spend the remainder of their day of rest? Do they have to have a licence to practice their religion and nothing else? If a shop is permitted to open on Sunday because of the religion of the proprietor, surely the proprietor is entitled to decide how best to organise his own business even if he is a member of an ethnic minority.

I deal now with the notion of protecting the quality of life. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen for highlighting some of the Bill's anomalies in relation to petrol forecourt shops and motorway service area shops. If the Bill were passed unamended it would be very much more difficult for ordinary people to travel by car on a Sunday because there would be far fewer petrol outlets and far fewer shops on motorway service areas for chance purchases.

If the Bill were passed unamended, people could forget the idea of buying fresh fruit and vegetables on a Sunday because greengrocers would be forced to close. They could also forget the idea of doing any DIY on Sundays and could find, as I frequently do, that they are short of a screw —*[Laughter.]* Following Mr. Kelvin MacKenzie's evidence to the Select Committee on National Heritage yesterday, I see that Camillagate has had a greater effect on the House than was originally anticipated.

Under the Bill, DIY stores would be closed and the practice of DIY, which is commonly carried out on Sundays, would be severely limited. Markets would also have to close and, certainly in my constituency, markets are extremely popular on Sundays. Under the Bill, a total of 145,000 shops in England and Wales which now open on Sundays would be forced to close.

Time is short, so I shall leave it to colleagues to deal with the impossible burdens that the Bill would place on local authorities and businesses. A vast bureaucracy would be established merely to enforce what are, in essence, unenforceable provisions.

In conclusion, I shall describe, as I promised, the overall damage that the Bill would do to jobs. I shall read out and, if necessary, table a letter that I received yesterday from a constituent. The lady, who has asked that her name and address should not be used, lives in an area of my constituency which was a socialist fiefdom in local authority terms until last May, when the people saw the light. It is one of the poorest areas of my constituency. My constituent writes:

"I am a mother of two children aged 4½ and 2½ and I am expecting a third child in April. I work in Asda, Cribbs causeway, Bristol on Sundays. I intend to return to work again after my baby has been born. I am a Sunday only worker. I work on Sundays, because I want the best for my children, not the worst. They have a lot more extras and holidays, clothes and outings and they wouldn't have had any of it, if I didn't go and work. When I leave the house on Sunday mornings I leave happy in the knowledge that my husband will be caring for them and that they will all enjoy some "quality time" together. I also get a well needed break from the children and household each week and I look forward to my own independent time . . . I don't believe in dumping my children on childminders to go to work in the week."

I see nothing wrong in anything that this lady says in her letter. Yet the Bill would debar her from the quality of life that she wants for herself and her family.

The Bill would arrogate to the House the right to determine employment patterns, business opportunities and trade. In a civilised and moderately free society, I do not believe that the House should have that right.

11.41 am

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) in his fairytale and, if I may say so, screwy misinterpretation of the Bill promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West made out a case for total deregulation—"Set the people free"—but his proposed deregulation would enslave many more people.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned ethnic minorities. I believe that one of the great virtues of the Jewish tradition is the tradition of family life—parents together with children. The Jewish community is one of those least likely to break the law, partly because of the strength of its family life. After all, it was the creation ordinance which set aside one special day, and that has had a profound effect on the Jewish tradition over the centuries. That one day set aside has a relevance for today. It is part of a pattern, and the Old Testament creation ordinance has a special meaning now, when there is so much social fragmentation.

I shall first consider the history of the Bill and the other measures to reform the clearly anomalous Shops Act 1950. In 1986 a miracle happened. The Government had a majority of more than 100, and the Bill was whipped—yet it was defeated, because the good sense of the people of this country, as reflected in the House, did not want total deregulation. The people realised that there was value in having one day set aside, away from the pressures and heavy rhythms of life.

Since then the Government have done nothing, and we have had the law breakers—those who have chosen to defy the 1950 Act. First, there was just a little defiance, on the four Sundays before Christmas. That reminds me of the housemaid's explanation: "It's only a little baby". Then the law breakers moved on from those four Sundays to total defiance of the law, with the acquiescence of the Home Secretary and the Attorney-General.

Then there was the reference to the European Court of Justice. Anyone who practises at the Bar, as I do, knows that that process is very tardy. Indeed, that was the motive behind the reference. There was no prospect of the

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European Court ruling against our practice under the Shops Act 1950. As has already been said, all the European countries except one have their own special legislation concerning Sundays, so there is no possible case for suggesting that our practice would be deemed to be in restraint of EC trade.

The motive behind the Government's acquiescence in the actions of the law breakers was an attempt to buy time and to create facts. That is part of the reason why I support the Bill.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I have been trying to restrain myself from intervening because I do not want to take time away from other hon. Members, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that he is embarking on a course which he knows is wrong. The Government did not take the Sunday trading case to the European Court; it was referred there by the House of Lords, because, due to an earlier judgment by the European Court, the courts could not determine their judgments. The Government have always argued that our laws were on all fours with the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Anderson: If the Government had been so concerned, they would not have said that the law was in abeyance; they could have supported the local authorities, which were frightened because of the potential financial impact on their poll tax payers. Instead, the Government said that they would not support Kirklees, Torfaen and the other councils, but left them to their fate in the certain knowledge that the local authorities would not be able to oppose the big boys, the superstores, the sharks who are happy to swallow up the minnows and the small people. The Government acquiesced in lawbreaking by not supporting the local authorities, which wanted to be protected about any costs that might have been awarded against them. The Attorney-General could have intervened and taken over the action on behalf of the local authorities. But the Government failed to do so; they acquiesced.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the Government had to abide by the conclusions of the court. The Attorney-General cannot overturn them. The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House with his account of the legal position.

Mr. Anderson: Is the Minister seriously suggesting that the Attorney-General could not have taken over the actions from the local authorities? That is nonsense. Is he seriously suggesting that the Attorney-General could not have said to the local authorities, "We are prepared to stand behind you and guarantee the costs that may be thrown away in a prosecution"? Of course he is not. The local authorities were left on their own, and because of the cost pressures they could not proceed in legal actions.

We now have a Home Secretary who, on his own admission, wants total deregulation. That has been the Home Office view ever since it got a bloody nose over the 1986 Shops Bill. The Government have acquiesced in law breaking, seeking to create facts, although they know that most people in this country do not want Sunday to be just like any other day. If we accept the Government's position and wait for a Government Bill, more time will have been bought for the big boys. Another year at least will go by, and another Christmas. Facts will be created and then they will say, "Look, that is the tradition. All the barriers have been thrown away." That is my charge against the Government—that they have acquiesced.

This is an all-party Bill. If I wanted to advance a conspiracy theory, I could say that we should consider the way in which B and Q finances the Tory party dance—and how the Tory party has danced to B and Q's tune thereafter—but I shall not go into that because this is an all-party Bill.

The substantial reasons in favour of the Bill are as follows. I believe that the mass of the people want Sunday to be different. They want it to be a time when the family can be together—husband and wife, or wife with her children, if she is a single parent. Deregulation would have profound effects on the family. In the public interest, the Government should do nothing to increase the pressures on families. Of one thing I am confident: total deregulation would being greater pressure on family life, greater fragmentation, and a great increase in the social problems that we face today. I am equally confident that there would be an acceleration in the closure of smaller shops and in the move towards out-of-town shopping, which has adverse social effects.

The *Swansea Herald of Wales* has carried out a survey of market traders in Swansea market. It shows overwhelming concern about the fact that families will be forced to work on Sundays. Their freedom will be diminished, yet the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West claims to be in favour of freedom.

The Government will put forward options after a decent lapse of time when the positions have been established. Essentially, there are only two options. The Shopping Hours Reform Council's proposal is not a realistic option. It is a slippery slope—a halfway house. The council wants total deregulation. It cannot have it directly, so it has put forward a proposal which it knows will slip from hour to hour to hour, in the way that the pub licensing provisions have. That is the council's motive.

By contrast, the REST—recreation, emergency, social gathering and travel—proposals, which are the foundation of the Bill, have a coherence and logic. More importantly, they have a stopping place, whereas under the Shopping Hours Reform Council's proposal it would be easy to say, "Just an extra hour: it does not really matter." It is what is called a creeping commitment in planning law, with the plea, "Just another house on this site."

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore and those who drafted the Bill, which has coherence and logic. More importantly, it accords with the spirit of what most people want. We do not want Sunday to be just like every other day of the week. Profound and adverse social effects will follow if we give the unfettered freedom of total deregulation, which the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West and his friends in the Shopping Hours Reform Council want.

11.51 am

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am grateful to be called to speak in this important debate. You will have noticed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Shops Bill is No. 3 on the Order Paper today. It also seeks to bring some sanity to Sunday trading. I am the promoter of that Bill and if I talk a little about it, I hope that you will forgive me. I shall try to do so only in the context of this Bill. I

congratulate the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) on having come higher in the ballot than I did. If our positions had been reversed, we might have been discussing my Bill rather than his.

In 1986, when the Government introduced the Shops Bill, which was defeated on Second Reading, I spoke in favour of total deregulation. At that time, the only two options on offer were either total deregulation or living on with the inconsistencies and anomalies of the Shops Act 1950. In the past six years, other options have developed. The options offered by the Bill by and large carry on the restrictions and presumption to closure of shops on Sundays contained in the 1950 Act.

My Bill—I shall move its Second Reading if we reach that point today—presumes a rather different position. It presumes that shops will be allowed to open, with small shops opening over a wide number of hours on a Sunday and large shops opening over a far more limited period of six hours between 10 am and 6 pm.

One of the tests for any legislation should be that it will enjoy public support and confidence, that it will be easy to understand and to enforce where necessary, and that it will stand the test of time. I shall seek to prove that this Bill would not stand the test of time or fulfil the other two conditions, whereas my Bill would.

We have heard much about the anomalies in the Shops Act 1950 which have produced the present unsatisfactory position. The ludicrous anomalies include the fact that it is legal to sell partly cooked tripe, but not a tin of tuna. It is legal to sell fodder for mules, but not cat food. It is legal to sell bandages, but not nappies. It is legal to sell pornography, but not bibles. I remember the debate in 1986 and those positions were exhaustively debated.

If the Bill proceeds, it will produce a set of anomalies that are at least as confusing, complex and difficult as those contained in the 1950 Act. The Act is, without doubt, out of date. At that time, only 26 per cent. of married women worked. Now 70 per cent. go out to work. In 1950, most shop workers were full time, whereas most now are part time. Shopping has changed since 1950. Do-it-yourself centres and garden centres were unknown. Video shops and out-of-town shopping centres were unheard of. Since 1950, sadly, Christian religious observance has declined while that of Muslims, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said, has increased.

There has been extreme difficulty in enforcing the Shops Act 1950. Some 145,000 shops are reckoned to open on a Sunday and almost all of them sell things that are prohibited under the Act. Only 4 per cent. of those 145,000 shops are large stores. It is overwhelmingly small and convenience stores that open on Sunday.

There are provisions about tourism in the 1950 Act whereby seaside towns have a limited exemption for shops to open during the summer season. Those provisions would continue under the Bill. The problem is that shops in Scarborough could open whereas those in York could not. Shops in Great Yarmouth could open, but those on the Norfolk broads could not. Shops in Margate may open, but those in Canterbury or Rochester may not. Shops in Torbay may open, but those on Dartmoor may not. That is clearly nonsense. I shall not go into all the anomalies in Bill which have already been listed.

The hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) courageously made her stand against the Bill and she did so on a number of sensible grounds. She prayed in aid the letter from the general secretary of the GMB, John Edmonds. He is the representative of 60,000 shop workers, so the House should listen to his advice.

We have also heard of the inconsistencies in pharmacy. It is worth noting that many pharmacies are legally obliged to open on Sundays under NHS rota agreements with family health services authorities. A restriction to only two hours would often place pharmacies in breach of their obligation. The 80 per cent. threshold could mean that they would be excluded from opening at all.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West brought into sharp relief the question whether we would be able to buy family planning aids on a Sunday. We certainly should not be able to buy them from Boots, according to the letter that he and I received from that organisation.

The hon. Member for Ogmore stated that he was proud to declare his interest on behalf of the Union of Shop, Diestributive and Allied Workers. It is worth examining that point. USDAW represents many thousands of shop workers, many of whom will be disadvantaged if the Bill becomes law. That is something which we should all be well aware of in these days of difficult employment conditions. One hundred and forty thousand jobs would be at grave risk as a result of the Bill.

We have heard much about turning Sunday into an ordinary day. The charge is that if supermarkets opened, the high street shops would open and Sunday would be just another Saturday. That was the thrust of the comments of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). In that regard, I need simply refer to Scotland. There is total deregulation in Scotland. I would not propose total deregulation and I suspect that not many hon. Members would support it at the present time. Scotland enjoys total deregulation, but comparatively few shops—about 25 per cent.—actually open on a Sunday.

Mr. Donald Anderson: The hon. Gentleman gave the game away when he said "at the present time". With regard to Scotland, will the hon. Gentleman consider not the static picture, but the dynamic picture and consider how the number of shops opening has accelerated over the past few years?

Mr. Couchman: I am told that over the past three years, when there has been an atmosphere of uncertainty about Sunday trading, just 2 per cent. of shops in Scotland which did not open on Sundays before 1989 have decided to do so. That does not reveal a great dynamic in terms of shops opening in Scotland. Scotland has had deregulation from time immemorial as I understand it.

Mr. Lord: My hon. Friend is taking great pains to criticise the Bill. However, he said earlier that he favours deregulation. Some of us believe that the proposals for the Shopping Hours Reform Council are deregulation by the back door. My hon. Friend is very honest. If he believed that total deregulation could be approved by the House, would he support it?

Mr. Couchman: Yes, so long as there was a measure of worker protection. I want to make the position clear. My Bill on the Order Paper includes a substantial measure of worker protection. No one is compelled to shop on a Sunday and no one should be compelled to work on a Sunday. That is terribly important. I also believe that those who work on a Sunday should be rewarded with

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premium payments although I stop short of the position in the Shops (Amendment) Bill which prescribes double-time payment for Sunday working.

That provision would have an enormously detrimental effect on small shopkeepers who would find it very difficult to afford to pay double time as it is a very big premium. It is also worth noting that the majority of shops in Scotland open on the four Sundays before Christmas. That is their premium time. However, immediately Christmas is over, they return to their normal pattern.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): It is an absolute myth that the majority of shops open in Scotland on Sundays. I live in Linwood and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that certain shops do not open. However, the experience with Sunday opening in Scotland is not happy. If I get the chance, I will explain that in detail later. We have lost thousands of shop workers' jobs in Scotland and many small shops have shut. I do not know whether that is the result of unfair competition.

Mr. Couchman: I look forward to hearing the comments of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham).

Mr. John Marshall: Is my hon. Friend aware that Scottish Office Ministers have said on several occasions at Scottish Question Time that they have received fewer than half a dozen complaints over the past year about the shops legislation in Scotland?

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who will no doubt repeat that point later, if he has the opportunity to speak.

I do not want to take up too much time now, because it is just possible that we might reach my Bill and I will have to speak again when I move its Second Reading. I am also aware that many hon. Members wish to participate in this debate.

It was my considered view in 1986 that I would support total deregulation. I have changed that view to the extent that I would need to see worker protection written on the face of any Bill seeking to bring the Sunday trading regulations up to date. The Bill would have to be simple and easy to enforce and I was keen to ensure that in my Bill. That is why I have decided to include small shops up to 3,000 sq ft—as has been said, the size of the Chamber. That is the size of many convenience stores, which is rather more realistic than the 1,500 sq ft suggested by the hon. Member for Ogmore. Those shops could be registered easily with local authorities in case of a dispute because the Inland Revenue valuation office already keeps such figures.

Shopping has become popular. Many people shop on Sundays for the very recreation that the hon. Member for Ogmore included in his REST proposals. I am minded of the Sundays that I enjoy when I visit antique fairs. I do not look forward to those Sundays being prohibited by the Bill. Many hundreds of thousands—and perhaps millions—of people go to Sunday markets and to car boot fairs. They will lose that recreation on a Sunday under the terms of the Bill. Where both partners work, people may want to visit a travel agent or an estate agent on a Sunday either to book a holiday or to obtain house details. That will be prohibited by the Bill.

I conclude with the opinion of Eldred Tabachnik, who I believe is well thought of in Labour party and union circles:

> "The Bill is rife with ambiguities and uncertainties. The particular exemptions permitted and the division between exception and registration appear to have no coherent theme. And on crucial issues like the 80 per cent. rule and the effective scope of the registration provisions, the Bill provides no clear guidance for retailers."

That sums up very well why the House should reject the Bill. Although the hon. Member for Ogmore has given a generous promise of amendments in Committee, I believe that the Bill is fundamentally flawed. It is designed to close shops rather than to open them. The Bill should not receive its Second Reading today.

12.7 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I disagreed with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), but at least I found his remarks far more logical than those made by the hon Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) who claimed to speak on behalf of that great city. He expressed concern about the commercial and tourist trades. He would have been far more plausible, at a stroke, if he had supported us when we fought to remove tolls on the Severn crossing. Those tolls are a positive deterrent to cross-channel trade and the reason why so few people from Wales now visit Bristol. They are also a major burden for people from Wales who work on the other side of the channel.

I recognise that the Sunday trading issue is very complex. I have noticed that many of the big companies have not been prepared to accept the law as it stands. Likewise, some of our local authorities have, for various reasons, been reluctant to take action against them. It has been said that the law is an ass. With such conduct on the part of the big companies, the law has certainly been undermined. As parliamentarians, we should certainly safeguard against that. There are anomalies in the list of goods which can be sold on Sunday. Overall, there is now a recognition that the Shops Act 1950 needs to be brought up to date.

The Bill introduced by my good friend the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) meets the needs of the day. My hon. Friend is a staunch trade unionist who hails from the Rhondda valley. Throughout his life he has fought for the interests of working people. I feel sad and disappointed that the trade unions have not been able to present a united front on this issue. There is something in the old adage: united we stand, divided we fall. That may be the case on this occasion.

It has been said that the Labour movement in Britain owes more to Methodism than to Marx. That may be so, but I know that in the Labour movement a person has the right to exercise his or her conscience. I intend to exercise my conscience today and vote in favour of my hon. Friend's Bill. What is more, many of my constituents have written, urging me to do so.

Mr. Jenkin: Does the hon. Gentleman not see the irony in that he takes upon himself the right to exercise his conscience and, by doing so, seeks to take away the right of citizens to exercise their individual consciences?

Mr. Hughes: I have no wish to do that at all. I am here as the bona fide representative of the people of Newport, East and I have been elected on eight consecutive occasions at general elections.

I would not claim to be a devout Christian, although I attend church from time to time. However I do not wish to walk down the main street of Newport or of any other town in the United Kingdom and witness all the shops being open as they are on the other six days of the week. Over the years—indeed, over the centuries—the rhythm and pattern of our lives has been shaped by the seven-day cycle and the fact that one day of the week—Sunday—is different from the rest. To ignore and try to change that pattern can lead only to more stress and more nervous disorders, which are already prevalent in our society today.

Sunday is different, and long may it remain. It is a day perhaps for the family. I have been blessed, Mr. Lofthouse, with a happy family life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hesitate to intervene. It is probably because we have spent so much time in Committee in the past week that the hon. Member has lost his way. With all his experience in the House, I am sure that he knows how to address the Chair.

Mr. Hughes: We need to pay more attention to family values if we are to maintain the stability of our society. The partial breakdown of family life, together with heavy unemployment, has played a major part in the ever-escalating crime figures which give such cause for concern.

In conclusion, I fully realise the need to bring the law up to date. In that regard, the principles of the Bill are worth supporting: first, to guarantee a common day off for family and community activities, including church worship; secondly, to ensure rhythm in people's lives, balancing work and recreation; thirdly, to protect vulnerable sections, the retail work force and those employed in ancillary services, from pressure to work unusual hours.

We had an important case in Newport only a matter of weeks ago when Spar grocers insisted that their work force work until 11 o'clock at night. When the workers objected, they were arbitrarily dismissed. That is the reality of the matter as I see it.

I can support the principles contained in my hon. Friend's Bill with a clear conscience. I will be supporting the Bill in the Lobby this afternoon. The second Reading is essentially a debate on principle. There can be no mass adjustments in the Committee on the Bill, but the principle overall is a good one. Keep Sundays special is a declaration which the House should wholeheartedly support.

12.16 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I hope that it will assist the House if I intervene with a Government view at this point. First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell)—I am sorry that he is not in his place to hear this—on winning such a high place in the ballot for private Members' Bills and on the sincerity and humour, which I much enjoyed, with which he introduced his Bill this morning. It was natural and right that he should devote his opportunity to Sunday trading because I know, having listened to him before, that he has taken a long, close and principled interest in the issue.

Like the rest of us, the hon. Gentleman feels that the Shops Act 1950 is outdated. Again like the rest of us, he is deeply concerned that it is so little respected, so widely disregarded and difficult for local authorities to enforce. Like him, the Government and, indeed, the whole House believe that it is high time that the issue is resolved so that the law is clear, commands general respect and can be effectively applied. Where views diverge is how that is to be achieved.

My predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold), whom I am delighted to see in her place, made an excellent and thoughtful speech. She voluntarily spent much time trying in vain to create common ground between the different campaign groups.

Similar differences of view are to be found on both sides of the House. That is why the Government are taking the unusual course of preparing a Bill which will put before the House the three main options for change—the Scottish option of total deregulation, the Shopping Hours Reform Council scheme and the Keep Sunday Special model. The options have established support in the country, in the retail trade and in Parliament. The House can examine them, contrast them and compare their likely effects before coming to a conclusion.

We are working on that Bill now. The speed with which it will be completed depends very much on what prompt guidance and clarification the Shopping Hours Reform Council and the Keep Sunday Special campaign can give us about their detailed intentions, as compared with their well-understood, overall objections, so that we can reflect them accurately in the drafting of the Government's Bill. I shall be disappointed if we cannot have our Bill ready in a few weeks so that if a legislative opportunity presents itself this Session, we can take it. That is what I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary would like to do. But I have to tell my hon. Friends and the House that the overhang of business currently before the House is such that I do not hold out much prospect of introducing the Bill before the beginning of the new Session in the autumn.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend wants to intervene. I am anxious not to be diverted on a range of questions. I will give way to my hon. Friend on this point, but I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not do so much more.

Mr. Cormack: It is important that this point is clarified beyond any misunderstanding. Can we take it from what my hon. Friend has said that there is no realistic chance of the Government's Bill being on the statute book before next Christmas?

Mr. Lloyd: It is extremely unlikely, but I never give up hope.

Today we are debating not the Government's planned Bill, but the Bill which the hon. Member for Ogmore has presented to the House today. As the hon. Gentleman made clear, it is very much the Keep Sunday Special option. It is on that Bill and that option that I shall concentrate during the rest of my speech. I do not wish to range too widely. As I have just said, I shall not seek to

[Mr. Lloyd]

respond to the points made during the debate, much as I am tempted to do so, because I am aware that many right hon. and hon. Members are anxious to take part. I, for one, should like to hear all of them before we come to a conclusion at 2·30 pm.

The overall objective of the Bill is to keep Sunday as a special day—at least as far as retailing is concerned—but to make fair and reasonable allowance for shopping activities that the hon. Gentleman regards as consistent with the specialness of Sunday by allowing smaller shops to remain open on Sunday to sell goods required for recreation, emergencies, social gatherings and travel.

Large and medium-sized foodstores, DIY shops, carpet and furniture stores of any size will be shut. For some purposes listed in schedule 1 an outlet of any size may open to sell only petrol, or only medical and surgical appliances. Off licences, restaurants and take-aways may also open. That is a clear and very limited list, to which is added another category which may prove to be anything but clear and not nearly as limited as the hon. Member intends. That is any shop situated at a railway, bus or coach station or in the terminal buildings of a harbour, seaport or hoverport.

I suspect that the hon. Member may be surprised at the vigorous retail development that he may unleash at such travel points if his Bill becomes law. The parade of shops at Victoria station may give him a restrained pretaste of what could be in store.

Elsewhere only some shops of less than 1,500 sq ft may open on a Sunday. That is shops of, say, 50ft by 30ft or less. Anything larger will have to shut. That size limit is clear—although I think that there will have to be a more detailed definition to determine whether, for example, the Bill means selling area or includes store rooms.

What is less clear is which small shops will be able to open under the categories set out in schedule 3. I take it that the hon. Member for Ogmore and his friends have sought to get away from the Shops Act 1950 list of goods which may be legally sold on Sundays and which has created so many anomalies and excited so much derision, and to restrict in future by the type of business that the shop does.

We can all sympathise with that objective, but the hon. Gentleman has set himself a deceptively hard task of devising a formula that effectively permits the categories that he thinks should be free to open to do so, without creating massive loopholes through which every other small retailer can scramble. He has sought to do that by permitting to qualify for opening on Sunday only those small shops that have 80 per cent. of their annual turnover from products listed in one of the categories in schedule 3. I realise that that is to ensure that a store which, for example, sells mainly carpets but also stocks some confectionery and magazines cannot pass itself off as a newsagent.

However, if I have understood the hon. Gentleman's intentions aright in his anxiety to prevent abuse, I fear, like the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson), that he will find he has shut many more small shops than he expects. To take the first category in his list, I suspect that many small shops that seek to trade as convenience stores will find that more than 20 per cent. of their turnover is in goods other than those in the very short list in schedule 3. What about light bulbs, for example, or fuse wires to go with domestic cleaning material? I realise that any list will create anomalies. They cannot be avoided with any restrictive law. However, most successful small convenience shops, which effectively serve local community needs, generally cover a wider range of goods than he allows. Of course, they will not be able to restrict their range on Sundays, like such small shops which currently obey the 1950 Act, because the test will no longer be what they sell on Sundays but what proportion of their trade in the past year was in the permitted goods—80 per cent. is a high threshold.

Again, I should be surprised if the hon. Gentleman's Bill did not close a large number of newspaper shops that now legally open. For under his newsagent category, 80 per cent. of an eligible newsagent's turnover in the previous year must have been in newspapers, magazines, stationery, tobacco and confectionery. Many small shops, thinking themselves, and being thought of by their customers, as bona fide small newsagents, will find that more than 20 per cent. of their turnover had been in other products. They will nevertheless have to shut.

I wonder whether the hon. Member for Ogmore and his friends have done any formal study or research to determine what the impact will actually be. I am merely giving voice to my expectations, having read his Bill with great care. But the Government intend to publish alongside their own Bill a formal critique commissioned from London Economics as to the general effects of reform, so that before Members vote on the Government Bill, they can see what they are letting their constituents in for. I shall seek to ensure that we can throw some objective light on the questions that I have just asked.

Mr. Ray Powell: I have worked with the Minister for several years and I have always found him amiable and helpful. The Government have made promises on the REST proposals of the Keep Sunday Special campaign. I hope that help will be forthcoming even though the Government have their own option of total deregulation.

The Minister has made nit-picking points about our proposals. Only this week the Library produced a study for me of the number of amendments that the Government table on their own Bills immediately after they are presented on Second Reading. I shall not go into the figures. They are formidable. On the monstrous Bill on which we have had all-night debates, the Government tabled some 400 amendments. There is no doubt that my Bill is far more controversial than the Maastricht Bill. *[Laughter.]* But the Minister should have listened to my opening remarks. Of course, Keep Sunday Special is prepared to listen to all his arguments in Committee. The Sunday trading shops unit that he has just set up could have been set up six and a half years ago. The 42 paragraphs are being looked through and Keep Sunday Special's legal advisers have the answers to most of his questions.

Mr. Lloyd: I shall come to some of the issues that the hon. Gentleman has just mentioned. Of course, we shall co-operate with Keep Sunday Special to ensure that the campaign's objectives are properly reflected in the Government Bill. I do not accept, however, that I am nitpicking, because cumulatively my arguments go to the heart of the Bill and what it will mean in practice. I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's opening speech and I

hope that he will listen to me and read mine. It is supposed to be helpful to his campaign so that the legislation can be drafted in a form that meets its intentions and the House can vote on them, rather than voting on measures that they do not intend, which would happen with the present Bill.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, but I am giving way in ways that I said that I would not.

Mr. Anderson: During the time that that exercise is carried out, until the Government Bill comes into operation some time in 1994, are the Government prepared to countenance continued law breaking?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that the present law is crystal clear on one point. The enforcement of the law belongs to local authorities, which have a duty to consider a number of factors and the best way to enforce the law in their area. It is difficult for local authorities to enforce the law when this legislation is before the House and it is apparent that the Government intend to introduce legislation. At present, it is up to the local authorities to decide and until the law is changed that is where responsibility must finally lie.

Mr. Lord *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: I shall not give way again because I have done so too many times. I am conscious that other hon. Members wish to speak and that I should help the House to come to a sensible conclusion by making other matters clear.

I shall take one more of the seven categories in schedule 3. Souvenir, postcard and fancy goods shops of the sort that cater for tourists may open, according to the Bill, if their turnover is at least 80 per cent. in the permitted range of goods and if they are situated in a seaside holiday area. That would mean that such shops would have to close in inland holiday areas such as Bath, Harrogate or London, which attracts more tourists than any other part of the country. In summer, it is hardly possible to move along the pavement in Westminster, so great is the press of foreign visitors. I wonder whether the hon. Member means to discriminate in that way.

The 80 per cent. rule will also close a great many garden centres, as has been said this morning. Power tools, lawn mowers, garden furniture, paving stones and sheds will, in many cases, make up more than 20 per cent. of their turnover during the year. Their representative trade body believes that closure will be the result.

Again, I wonder whether the hon. Member can tell the House what studies have been done. Can he enlighten the House as to the proportion of garden centres that he will be closing? It is an issue which the Government hope to be able to illuminate with some objective data when the Government Bill comes before the House, as we believe that it is essential for information of that type to be available if hon. Members are to come to an informed conclusion.

Apart from the uncertainty of the effect, to which I have referred, there is a practical difficulty with the qualification tests. Shops would need to keep special records specifying turnover in particular goods for particular periods. Many do not keep such records at present. Shops with computer-operated tills would probably have no great difficulty in doing so, but that means that the Bill discriminates against small traders, which the hon. Member rightly wishes to encourage.

Local authorities will be obliged to collect turnover data and process it, because they will have a duty to enforce the Bill. That would be a considerable bureaucratic task and the cost of that bureaucracy would be passed on, through shopkeepers, to customers.

I must mention another area of uncertainty. The Bill gives local authorities discretion over whether to permit registration for opening. That could close all shops, apart from the few listed in schedule 1 to the Bill. Local authorities would be able to decide whether to permit general convenience stores, newsagents, video hire shops, and shops at galleries, museums and zoos to open on Sundays. Some—no doubt most and perhaps all—would register those shops that met the basic criteria in the Bill, but others might take a more stringent attitude and could, as the Bill is drafted, be fully within their rights to refuse registration for reasons that have nothing to do with retailing, or for reasons that are outside the shopkeeper's control, such as litter. That could easily lead to variations in the application of the law within and between authorities. Similar competing businesses could find themselves subject to different decisions.

Mr. Graham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: No, I shall not give way as I must make progress.

Local discretion is a valid approach, but the way that the Bill is drafted could result in shopkeepers changing the thrust of their marketing to meet the turnover requirement, install complicated machinery to measure turnover in the way required by the Bill and even shift walls to fit into the space requirement, only to find that, having done all that, the local authority turns down their application for registration for entirely unconnected reasons.

There is another effect of the Bill to which I should draw attention. It uses an entirely new definition of a shop. The perfectly valid and understandable aim is to ensure that estate agents, travel agents and perhaps some businesses offering financial services—such as insurance brokers, banks and building societies—should no longer be able to trade on Sundays. But, in doing that, the hon. Member has also brought within the ambit of the Bill a wide range of other businesses. Those include osteopaths, dentists and doctors, accountants and lawyers and could even take in breakdown services such as the Automobile Association. I very much doubt whether that is the hon. Member's intention, as many such businesses offer essential emergency services. But that is, I believe, the effect of the Bill as drafted.

The hon. Member is rightly concerned that local authorities should neither be out of pocket nor make a profit from operating the registration scheme required in the Bill. The Bill therefore provides that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary should set fee levels for each local authority separately, so that each recoups its costs but no more. To do that, it would be necessary to collect very detailed expenditure information from each local authority with a responsibility to enforce the provisions of the Bill, to process the data and predict what

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the likely volume of business for each will be in the following year. That would constitute an expensive and unwieldy bureaucracy.

The hon. Member intends to provide local authorities with penalties which have real teeth. Under the Bill, shopkeepers trading in defiance of its provisions could go to prison for up to a year. I am sure that many hon. Members will agree that the penalty is disproportionate. It is contrary to the widely held view that imprisonment should be restricted to violent and persistent crime where there is no alternative. It cannot be right that a shopkeeper should be liable to a stiffer term of imprisonment for opening his or her shop on Sunday than if he or she were to assault a police officer in the execution of his duty.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: No, I shall not give way. As it is, there are a number of other issues that I would have raised had I not already taken more time than I intended.

I began by congratulating the hon. Member for Ogmore and I did so sincerely—I realise that, as much of my speech has been critical of his Bill, my congratulations may not have seemed sincere. The hon. Gentleman seeks to legislate on a notoriously difficult and complex subject. It is right for me to explore some of the problems inherent in his approach before the House comes to a decision.

Earlier this week I was delighted to receive a letter from Dr. Schluter—to whom the hon. Gentleman paid tribute —confirming that the Keep Sunday Special campaign will work with officials at the Home Office to help us to give clear legislative effect to the intentions of the Keep Sunday Special campaign section of the Government Bill. I hope that, by highlighting some of the problems, I have assisted in that process. It will not serve the interests of the Keep Sunday Special campaign if its model is widely seen to be inoperable or flawed. It will not help the Government satisfactorily to resolve the general issue if they know that, should the House choose it, one of the models in their Bill will have to be heavily amended to make it work. Much more drafting attention and thought must be lavished upon the Bill if it is to be coherent legislation giving full effect to the hon. Gentleman's intention.

I am encouraged by the fact that the hon. Gentleman has said that he is prepared to be flexible. However, the changes that are needed are more than can easily be managed in Committee on a private Member's Bill. As I have said, the best way to untie the Sunday trading knot is to examine and debate the competing solutions that will be on offer in the Government's forthcoming Bill. The hon. Member for Ogmore has been instrumental in bringing about a useful debate and for that I and the House are very much in his debt. I hope that he will agree that the best course is the one that I have suggested and that he will not press his Bill to a Second Reading so that it can rematerialise more perfectly drafted as part of the Government's options Bill.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Minister suggests that we should not press the Bill into Committee. I intend to do so. A booklet published by the Library on Shops Acts and their history since 1667, when the first such Bill was introduced, shows that most were private Members' Bills. Perhaps the Minister will remember that before he rejects the Bill.

Mr. Lloyd: I appreciate that the Shops Act is very much the product of private Members' efforts. Perhaps that is why we are in such difficulties. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I entirely understand why the hon. Gentleman wants to press his Bill to a Second Reading, but I hope that he will reflect on what I have said and not seek to do that. By following my suggestions he will not merely expedite the business of the House but will do a practical service for his own cause.

12.41 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) on his success in the ballot and on his persistence in trying to bring new regulations to the chaotic practice of Sunday trading. My hon. Friend teased me at the beginning of his speech. I told him in advance that I would not be able to support him in the Lobby. A private Members' Bill is subject to a free vote and in due course I shall explain the tradition of the Opposition Front Bench in the matter.

I have great sympathy with the sentiment that Sunday is special. I like nothing better than to lie in bed on a Sunday morning feeling that I have no reason to get up and wishing that everyone else had the same choice. I would prefer that people were not rushing off in their cars and that there was still a sense that Sunday was a day of rest. However, I am in a minority.

It is quite clear that the major changes in our society that have led to the commercialisation of Sunday have not been democratically decided. None the less, most people are positive in their acceptance of a changing way of life. The House should be in no doubt that Sunday trading debates, while focused on the regulation of shopping hours, reflect major changes already under way in society and have far-reaching implications for its future development.

Sadly, there has been far too little effective democratic debate and control over the nature of urban development in the past 30 years. Much of the changed way of life that we experience today has been dictated purely by commercial considerations by big companies. In 1950, when the Shops Act came into force, there were just under 700 supermarkets of more than 2,500 sq ft. Today there are more than 700 of more than 25,000 sq ft each. In 1950 there were 145,000 independent grocers. Today there are just 35,000. Some 30 years ago there were no do-it-yourself shops, no shopping centres or garden centres, and no video shops. As hon. Members have said, there has been a massive growth in out-of-town sites, with all that that implies for town centres, traffic flows, pollution and private car use. Decisions on where and how we shop have largely been made for us by the retailers, but when we shop is still subject to some controls. We cannot allow purely commercial interests to dictate the pattern of change.

Mr. Stern: I am very interested in what the hon. Lady says because many hon. Members who represent urban constituencies will be aware of the public anger that is caused by, for example, applications to develop new supermarkets. An application has been made for a new supermarket in my constituency. If the hon. Lady is saying, as I take it she is, that the Opposition intend to look at proposals for changes to the planning law, or to other areas of the law that affect these developments, may

I ask her to make those discussions, on a genuine cross-party basis, as open as possible, for they are ones in which both sides of the House will wish to join?

Ms. Ruddock: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. I do not disagree with him.

I referred to the purely commercial interests that have dictated the pattern of change. Many of those commercial interests have in recent times attempted to dictate the pattern of change by flouting the law. It would be wrong if their actions were to find easy acquiescence in the House. We have a duty when debating the Bill to reflect not just on how things are and how they have changed but on the consequences of further change.

Those who have campaigned locally against the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore and those who have signed petitions opposing the loss of Sunday trading at their local supermarkets are making a judgment about the current state of affairs. Today, only a minority of large shops in England and Wales open on Sundays. Those who work on Sundays and those who shop on Sundays may well be satisfied by the present arrangements, but their views cannot be interpreted as support for new laws to give all premises the right to open on Sundays. Although people may oppose the loss of a facility, which would occur under the provisions of my hon. Friend's Bill, they may thoroughly approve of the fact that the majority of retail outlets still remain closed.

I believe that any decision of Parliament on Sunday trading will have a profound effect on our quality of life. Whatever the change, there will be an impact on working practices, on social life and on local environments. It is for that reason that Opposition Front-Bench Members believe that the matter must be decided by Government legislation, to be decided by the whole House on a free vote. That is why I shall abstain today.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Ruddock: No, I do not have time to give way.

I am outraged by the Minister's complacency in his acceptance that it will not be possible to bring legislation before the House this Session. We see it as our task to try to ensure that it does come before the House this Session and that the Government bring forward real choices, accurately representing the three or even four options that have been worked through by the pressure groups.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms. Ruddock: We also intend to continue to press for a free vote on every aspect of the proceedings that would be taken——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will my hon. Friend allow me to intervene?

Ms. Ruddock: —in the House on a Government Bill. I shall now give way to my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is my hon. Friend saying that Opposition Front-Bench Members oppose the Bill, not because it could easily be amended and not because there would be a free vote—hon. Members are perfectly capable of making up their own minds, if given the opportunity —but because the Government have not introduced a Bill outlining their alternatives and that even if we have to wait until another Session for the introduction of such a Bill the view of Opposition Front-Bench Members is that nevertheless we should not take a decision today?

Ms. Ruddock: We believe that the issue is so complex that the matters that need to be debated should be debated in Government time, when we could expect the participation of all Members of the House; but I repeat that we believe that the process must be undertaken on a free vote and that all stages of the proceedings should be conducted on that basis.

Mr. David Nicholson *rose*——

Ms. Ruddock: Let me refer now to some specific aspects of my hon. Friend's Bill. In spelling out some of the consequences of his proposals, many of my comments might seem——

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms. Ruddock: I am sorry, but I intend not to give way, or Back-Bench Members will accuse me of having taken their time.

Let me now refer to some specific aspects of my hon. Friend's Bill. I want to spell out some of the consequences of the Bill, and in so doing I might appear to be critical, but that is inevitable when a measure reflects only one aspect of the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend on fitting his proposals so neatly into the REST acronym. There is good sense in legislating for the opening of a range of outlets which clearly facilitate leisure activities, allow for emergencies and enhance social gatherings. No doubt all hon. Members envisage my hon. Friend's immense difficulties in deciding what should be exempted from the general prohibition on Sunday trading and what should not.

However, sadly, anomalies exist, particularly with regard to the list of goods and the 80 per cent. rule. Perhaps the greatest anomaly for the REST proposals is the exclusion of DIY centres. For many people DIY is a source of recreation, and there is clearly a proven consumer demand. Furthermore, the opening of DIY stores on Sundays offers a chance for families to shop and enjoy DIY together. I can readily understand my hon. Friend's difficulties in that respect. If a large DIY store is to open on an out-of-town site on Sundays, then why not the adjoining supermarket? I appreciate that that would appear to be the thin end of the wedge, but I have no doubt, either, that there will be considerable public anger if DIY stores that presently open on Sundays were to be closed. I am sure that the whole House will welcome the fact that my hon. Friend has accepted the need to examine that issue again in Committee.

The Bill attempts to protect small shops—a laudable objective with which most of us would agree. But there are those who regard themselves as owning small shops, such as relatively small grocery stores, and they are probably so regarded by the public. They would be obliged to close because they had a square footage slightly in excess of 1,500. Again my hon. Friend is well advised to accept the need to re-examine those space distinctions in Committee.

Although I felt it necessary to point out some of the difficulties, I acknowledge the extent to which my hon. Friend has obviously tried to balance different interests. We very much support and endorse his concern for those who work or might be pressed to work on Sundays. The

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position of the retail work force is crucial to the debate, but in order to put my remarks into context I should like briefly to consider current working practices in Britain.

The normal working day of nine to five is now a minority activity, involving 41 per cent. of men and a mere 26 per cent. of women. Both sexes now enter the work force later and leave earlier. Working patterns have been further radically transformed by the change in women's work. In 1950, only 26 per cent. of married women worked outside the home. Today the figure is 70 per cent. Also, 25 per cent. of the British work force now work part time, and 45 per cent. of working women are part-time workers.

There are many implications. For some people it is a matter of survival in a recession, taking the only work that is available to them, but for others it is a matter of choice. Part-time work often means work of lesser status, poorer promotion prospects and lower pay. Whatever the cause, the consequences of changed working patterns are important to the debate and are reflected, too, in changed domestic patterns, not least opportunities and time for shopping as consumers or working as retail staff.

In my experience, those who work on Sundays for companies such as Tesco with a recognised trade union do so voluntarily. They are paid double wages and they find the atmosphere in the shop more relaxed on Sundays. Many are young people without family responsibilities. But even women with families, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) pointed out, admit to welcoming a few hours out of the house, leaving father to take charge of child care for a change.

Statistics are difficult to come by and are subject to challenge by rival camps, but it is possible that as many as 500,000 retail workers now work on Sundays and that as many as 140,000 of them could lose that opportunity if the Bill became law.

People today do not want a prescription for Sunday behaviour, but, clearly, they want choice. No retail workers should be forced to work on Sunday. We totally deplore the move by some companies to issue seven-day contracts, which give people no control over their working lives and which deprive them of the opportunity to earn a premium wage on a Sunday. Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Equal Opportunities Commission found that more than half of the women respondents and a third of men would find it impossible or inconvenient to work on Sundays. That represents a powerful expression of public opinion which should be respected.

A survey conducted by the university of Stirling identified the prime reason for people's willingness to work on Sundays—premium pay. Without that, those who work on Sundays today would be unwilling as the rest of us to do so. I warn those who are enthusiastic for liberalisation that they are unlikely to find any support on the Labour Benches unless the rights and potential rights of shop workers are protected.

Mr. Ray Powell: It is important that we make the position clear. My hon. Friend said that those on our Front Bench have decided that they would prefer this matter to be dealt with by Government legislation, subject to a free vote. However, we have had no clear Government statement as to whether they are prepared to give a free vote on the question of employment rights and employment protection. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend will make it abundantly clear to the Government that such a Bill would not be acceptable in any shape or form to the Labour party unless there is a free vote on employment protection. That condition is important bearing in mind that the Government have already decided to dispose of what little is left of the wages councils.

Perhaps my hon. Friend will also look up the wonderful speech that was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in 1986 which led to the defeat of the Government Bill by 14 votes, with 72 Conservative Members voting against the Government. Perhaps my hon. Friend will then reflect and change her mind on the speech that she is making today.

Ms. Ruddock: I am aware, as I have already said today and on other occasions, that there will be support for liberalisation only, should that be the will of the House. That is the important issue. Support for liberalisation could not come from the Labour Benches unless it guaranteed employment protection. We have made that absolutely clear at all times.

I invite the Minister, if he would be so kind, to get to his feet now and tell us that if the Government offer the options to which he referred, and if they accurately reflect the views of the major pressure groups, in two out of three cases, they must and will contain provisions for employment protection. We suggest to the Government that they must conduct such proceedings only and properly on a free vote.

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Lady has made a great impact in this place, but she is relatively new to it. Perhaps she does not remember that Governments almost never give free votes on legislation that they introduce. The only true opportunity for a free vote is on days such as today, on a private Member's Bill.

Ms. Ruddock: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Home Secretary said that there will be a free vote; that is on the record. We have pressed for clarification, and we want a free vote on every stage of the proceedings. The Minister seems to be refusing to get to his feet, and I am sure that hon. Members will take note and decide accordingly.

I was warning hon. Members who are enthusiastic about liberalisation of the unlikelihood of their receiving any support from my colleagues unless shop workers' rights, and potential shop workers' rights, are protected. I suspect that that will be anathema to the Minister whose colleagues have been so active in dismantling workers' rights and who, even now, in face of this debate, seek to remove the protective floor of shop workers' wages by abolishing the wages council.

Mr. Couchman: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Ruddock: I cannot because I should exceed my time.

While more people may be willing to accept more flexible working patterns, they do not expect to be treated as robots. The debate on hours and patterns of work is of Europewide concern. The European Community draft working hours directive is another possible influence on the "keep Sunday special" debate. The directive establishes a 48-hour working week, four weeks' paid holiday and at least 35 consecutive hours off each week. Predictably, the directive is being strongly resisted by the Government, but

its significance for Sunday trading lies in the fact that it applies to full-time and part-time workers. There is a debate in continental Europe about whether the 35-hour rest period would cover Sundays.

Clearly there are many aspects of the debate that need to be pursued and which lie outside the scope of my hon. Friend's Bill, for example, the proposals of the Shopping Hours Reform Council reflected in today's speech by the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), and the proposals of the OPEN Group which appear to be something of a compromise between the positions adopted by the Keep Sunday Special campaign and the SHRC.

There is also much concern and confusion in some sectors, exemplified by representations made to me on behalf of the Trustee Savings bank of anti-competitive practice that might become embodied in reform.

What cannot be in doubt is the long-overdue need to legislate. The Government have allowed themselves to become a laughing stock, with many of their closest political allies openly flouting the law. Sunday trading anomalies abound in the types of goods that can currently be sold legally in England and Wales and, most obviously, in the fact that over the border in Scotland any goods, with the exception of alcohol, may be legally sold on the Sabbath.

Profound changes have occurred in society since the Shops Act 1950 was passed, and it seems likely that a consensus for change now exists in the House. That consensus supports a more liberal position than that adopted by my hon. Friend's Bill, but only a further and more comprehensive debate in Government time can determine that matter.

In bringing us to this debate, my hon. Friend has provided an excellent opportunity for hon. Members to exercise their minds on this issue and for the public to be alerted to the complexity of reforming the law. I am particularly anxious that it is the public who will have been engaged as a result of our deliberations because a paradox must be resolved.

I have no doubt that most people welcome the opportunity to shop on Sundays, but, at the same time, they still feel that it is and should be a slightly different and special day. In our modern and multicultural society, Sunday's religious significance has been diminished; but for most families, it is still the day when they are most likely to spend some time together at a meal or in some shared leisure activity. For many town dwellers it is a day when the roar of traffic is somewhat diluted, and it appears safer to walk in the streets.

Although I do not believe that today is the day on which we can decide the weighty issue of Sunday trading, I seriously thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore for enabling us to have what I believe will be the first of many important debates on the subject.

1.4 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and the sponsors of the Bill. The attitude of the Front-Bench spokesmen both for the Government and for the Opposition is to be regretted. I say that if we want a free vote on Sunday trading, today is the day to have it. Today is the day for the House to let the Front-Bench spokesmen on both sides know exactly what its feeling is. As one who helped to defeat the Government on their previous proposal for deregulation, I remind the Minister that the 14 Unionist Members of Parliament made up the majority at that time. I am glad that the House has learnt something from that experience and that we have the opportunity of the debate today.

After God created man and woman he gave mankind two gifts—first, the institution of a day of rest and, secondly, the institution of marriage. Neither of those gifts are negative; they are positive. I could say that Adam knew that they were very positive. He got a most beautiful woman as his wife and he had no mother-in-law. I am sure that he must have been very happy. Of course, Eve could have balanced that out by saying that she had no mother-in-law either.

Today I want to emphasise that man has a threefold relationship and each side needs to be fully catered for. He has a relationship to the world about him, a relationship to his fellows and a relationship to God. Except all three parts of man are fully catered for, he will not come to fulfilment or true, abiding happiness.

We should cherish and safeguard the cessation of our usual employment on one day of the week and the turning of our minds to things that are spiritual and bring rest and relaxation. That is for the benefit of all mankind, whatever their religious views may be.

This was said of a humble Back-Bench Member by the name of John Burns at the turn of the century:

> "He believed that the day of rest, commonly called Sunday, was the day which had done more than anything else to buttress and maintain that excellent institution called Home. Without Sunday the Home would cease to have that advantage which it had previously enjoyed, and no man could say that merely providing one day's rest in seven was as good as the universally accepted Sunday. In a word, the Sunday, as the day of rest, was from nearly every point of view a national treasure and an industrial advantage."

I fully endorse that statement.

A saying of Christ is often misquoted and misapplied with regard to Sunday observance. Christ said:

> "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."

I shall illustrate the real meaning of that. When I drive on the road I drive on the left-hand side because the Highway Code says that I should. But if a child dashes out into the left-hand side of the road I immediately swerve to the right-hand side to avoid the child, because the Highway Code was made for man and not man for the Highway Code. Christ made it perfectly clear that there was to be a clear distinction on Sunday concerning the exemption of works of necessity and mercy. Those works of necessity and mercy can be done freely on Sundays.

To get the best out of life physically, time is needed for relaxation. It is imperative for us all to relax physically, mentally and spiritually. Stress-related diseases are very common today. It is necessary for us all to have a period of unwinding. The frustration of tasks of constant repetition, the weary demands of an executive position and the strains of family worries mean that we all require a time of cessation from labour.

God who gave us this ordinance know what was good for his creatures and we should rejoice in the opportunity of having rest. This commandment stands in scripture in the same category as the laws "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not kill". We should always remember this commandment's standing in Holy Writ.

A famous Lord Chief Justice of the United Kingdom wrote four lines that are as applicable today as they were when he wrote them:

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

"A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content
And health for the toils of tomorrow;
But a Sabbath profaned, whate'er may be gained,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow."

That Lord Chief Justice knew what he was saying many centuries ago.

I welcome the main provisions of the Bill. It proposes a substantial increase in fines for illegal Sunday trading. The law and order Government should deal with the law breakers. I am amazed by those in my city of Belfast who say that they are catering for the general public by opening on Sunday, yet who say to their employees, "You must work on Sunday. If you work on Sunday, we shall give you 50 per cent. cash discounts on all you purchase." That is bribery and a threat and it should be stopped.

If the Minister intends to wait another year before getting legislation on to the statute book, he must take measures to bring people in line with the law. The Government will put off legislation until people are agitating for shops to be kept open because so many of them are shopping on Sundays. A lobby is being created to help the Government to deregulate. That is the whole idea of putting off legislation time and again.

I welcome the inclusion of worker protection in the Bill, but I hope that we can introduce protection for those who seek jobs. If a person seeking a job is told, "You cannot have a job unless you work on Sundays", he is immediately ineligible for that job. I welcome the fact that the precise definition of shops and retail businesses is spelt out in the Bill and the fact that exemption will be made on the basis of type of shop rather than on the basis of certain goods. That is a valuable step. In many cases, the definition of shops and places of business that should remain closed on Sunday is right.

There are anomalies in all legislation and especially in this area. I am sure that those who oppose the Bill will latch on to and exploit every flaw that they can find. We had examples of that today from the hon. Members for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), and for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), from the Minister and, in some ways, from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock).

There have been efforts to hatchet certain provisions in a way that is totally unacceptable to many hon. Members. The House should let the Bill have a fair wind. We should let it get into Committee and see what happens there. Who will lose by that? If the Minister is so eager to find out what Parliament thinks, he can help us to tell him today.

I close by quoting Lord Macaulay when he introduced the Ten Hours Bill. He said:

"We are not poorer, but richer, because we have, through many ages, rested from our labour one day in seven. That day is not lost. While industry is suspended, while the plough lies in the furrow, while the exchange is silent, while no smoke ascends from the factory, a process is going on, quite as important to the wealth of nations as any process which is performed on more busy days. Man—the machine of machines—the machine compared with which all the contrivances of the Watts and Arkwrights are worthless—is repairing and winding up, so that he returns to his labours on Monday with clearer intellect, with livelier spirits and with renewed corporeal vigour."

I suggest that we should have private Member's Bills on Mondays in future, instead of on Fridays.

1.15 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): As the debate has progressed, I have become increasingly impressed by the wide range of support for the Bill. That is not accidental and it does not mean that hon. Members are mellowing. I do not remember ever being on the same side on any issue as the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman)——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: And that is not likely to happen again either.

Mrs. Wise: Perhaps that is a relief to both of us.

On this occasion, the support arises, not by accident, but because the arguments are so powerful. That is something that we should welcome. I welcome the fact that I could admire the words of the hon. Member for Lancaster.

The arguments for keeping Sunday special are powerful. Some of us have particular aspects about which we are especially passionate.

In that respect, I must refer to the sad and remarkable circumstances in which my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) was able to quote a trade union leader advocating that members of this place, including Labour Members, should enter the Lobby and oppose a Bill whose two main principles are that as few people as possible should work on a Sunday and that those who do should receive double time and real protection. It is particularly remarkable that my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen could quote that trade union leader in the light of the unanimous decision of the TUC last September that Sundays should remain a rest day and that there should continue to be legal restrictions on Sunday trading.

I speak for shop workers, for the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, and for the vast majority of trade unionists in this country. The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), who called on the House to vote against the Bill because it called for double-time pay, wanted the House to listen to the words of John Edmonds. I look forward to a time when the hon. Member for Gillingham asks us to listen to a trade union leader again.

As president of USDAW, I can inform the House that we have about 350,000 members, the vast majority of whom work in retailing. I can therefore claim to know something about the subject. One particular aspect irritates me, and that is the problem with DIY.

It is no accident that the Bill does not include DIY stores. This is because of the nature of those stores. They sell a vast range of goods. If we include DIY stores in Sunday shopping legislation, how do we keep out the rest of the high street stores which sell articles such as curtains and lights? Once we allow DIY stores to trade, we enshrine unfair competition into law unless the provision is extended to department stores such as British Home Stores, to specialist shops and all the rest. I do not believe that a Bill should enshrine unfair competiton in law. That is why DIY stores are not included in the Bill. Garden centres are a different matter, and they are included in the Bill. We want garden centres to open. I want to be able to go to a garden centre; it is a day out.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mrs. Wise: No, I will not give way. I have not intervened at all because of time.

The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said that his life was enriched by taking his family shopping on a Sunday. I suggest that he gives up a couple of his other jobs and uses that time to take his family shopping. Clause 4(3) covers garden centres properly. If it does not, we will correct it. For goodness sake: garden centres are not the issue; the issue is the Keep Sunday Special campaign, the high street shops and the big stores.

We have been told that jobs are threatened by the Bill and that they will be created by Sunday trading; trade will happen on Sunday if it is legalised. It happens now, although it is illegal. Most people do not shop on Sundays. Trade is the key word. Trade will move; it will not increase. People spend what they can on the goods that they buy. I challenge any hon. Member to say that someone has come to his or her surgery and said, "I could not spend my weekly income because the shop was not open on Sunday." People come to my surgery and complain about their weekly income. They say that they cannot afford to buy the goods that they need. That is a different question altogether.

If we want to get rid of the recession, there are political actions which should be taken. The Bill is not about creating jobs. A large retailer tried to tell me—I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen was present at the time—that there is a Sunday pound which one can apparently spend only on a Sunday. I throw that in to show the level of briefing given to hon. Members by opponents of the Bill. I have never seen a Sunday pound; there is none in my pocket or purse.

Trade will move. Some jobs will be created by Sunday trading, and people will be compensated for that increase in trade by losing their jobs during the week or having their hours compulsorily reduced. The effect of that will be a greater casualisation in retailing.

What do customers want? They want well-paid staff who have a real stake in a job and an interest. They do not want one-day-only workers. They do not want temporary or casual workers who are pushed into jobs or driven to them. They want well-trained, regular staff who have confidence in the work that they do. The Bill will help to maintain that.

Unregulated Sunday trading or widespread commonplace trading will lead to more casualisation. More casualisation will be to the dreadful disadvantage of trade unions, and John Edmonds should know that. Unregulated Sunday trading will lead to a worse service for customers. I object to both results. I favour the Bill.

Mr. Graham: As a Scotsman, I have shopped in a do-it-yourself shop on a Sunday. On a Sunday a couple of weeks before Christmas I tried to buy some glue to stick a plastic strip in my bathroom. I stopped a young girl and asked her whether she could tell me the appropriate glue to stick plastic strip. She said, "I haven't got a clue". She worked only part time and did not have any qualifications.

Mrs. Wise: My hon. Friend has distinguished between casual, one-day only work and part-time work. My union organises part-time workers. They can be as regular and well trained as full-time workers. Casual workers cannot be regular and well trained by the nature of the matter. I shall explain to my hon. Friend later how he can ensure that he gets his DIY materials but not on a Sunday, even in Scotland.

My union organises shop workers in Scotland. Those workers are not happy about the situation in Scotland. They want protection. They want restriction. I would not have been surprised if our members in Scotland had gone to the rostrum at our annual delegate meeting and said, "We have to do it. Why should not people in England and Wales do it?" That has never happened. My union is united in its opposition to generalised Sunday trading in Scotland, England and Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, referred to a supermarket which trades on a Sunday and has a recognised trade union. Yes, it has. That union is my union. We represent our members when we say that the Opposition Front-Bench team should support the Bill today. I can tell my hon. Friend that some supermarkets and other traders who previously favoured keeping Sunday special have been driven into the opposite camp by unfair competition and the recession. That is no answer. My hon. Friend should listen to that recognised trade union and act on its advice. I am glad to say that a good many Front-Bench Opposition Members will vote in the Lobby for my hon. Friend's Bill. I am pleased about that.

I conclude by urging that everyone who is interested in trade unionism, worker protection and family life, and in keeping Sunday special, maintaining the quality of our lives and saying that there is more to life than buying and selling—let us have one day which is as free of it as possible—should support my hon. Friend's Bill.

1.25 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I take a particular interest in the Bill and the whole issue of Sunday trading because I have the honour of being the parliamentary adviser to the Horticultural Trades Association. That is, of course, declared in the Register of Members' Interests.

The Horticultural Trades Association has among its members many thousands of people who operate garden centres both large and small. Under current legislation, certain of the items that they stock may be sold on a Sunday, although obvious anomalies exist. For example, one can buy a shrub but not the compost in which to plant it. One can buy a tree but not the stake that needs to be inserted at the time of planting.

The garden centre industry has developed enormously during the past 20 years. Many centres are now leading local leisure attractions, selling items which do not necessarily fit into the narrow category of gardening goods. However, in practice most local authorities treat garden centres rather than merely the goods that they sell as exempt from current Sunday trading laws.

The importance of Sunday trading for garden centres cannot be underestimated. I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) express support for garden centres. The annual turnover of the industry was £800 million in 1991-92, of which 40 per cent. was earned on Sundays.

Gardening is a leisure pursuit in which people tend to indulge on their free weekends. People certainly want to visit garden centres on Sundays. Equally importantly, people want to work in garden centres on Sundays. There is never any shortage of applicants for part-time weekend jobs, or volunteers from the full-time staff.

When the Bill was first proposed by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), the garden centre industry had

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some difficulty with parts of it. We therefore met the hon. Gentleman to discuss our anxieties. I should like to put on record my gratitude for the way in which he was prepared to accommodate a great many of the matters that bothered us. I regret that he is not in his seat to receive that tribute.

I believe that when the hon. Gentleman drafted his Bill he had other sectors of retailing in mind and was anxious not to impinge on the widely acceptable activities of garden centres.

However, I have a number of worries about the Bill as it is drafted. First, on registration, I worry that the need to demonstrate that at least 80 per cent. of a retailer's annual turnover is in permitted goods will lead to greater form-filling and bureaucracy, especially for smaller centres which may not analyse sales in such detail. Small businesses need less form-filling, not more.

I am concerned about replacing existing anomalies with a new set. For example, it is proposed that establishments classed as farm shops will be allowed to stay open for longer than those classed as garden centres. Given that many goods, including plants, are common to both, that will give an unnatural competitive advantage to some outlets.

Further anomalies arise because of the mix of products included on the list for garden retailers. Garden centre operators will have to demonstrate that at least 80 per cent. of their sales come from goods on that list, yet there are some obvious omissions. The list does not include seeds, bulbs, garden furniture, barbecues, gardening books or conservatories and sheds, but those products form a substantial proportion of turnover for many garden centres and their exclusion will prevent firms from reaching the 80 per cent. threshold.

The employment protection aspects of the Bill are another concern. I am sure that the House will understand when I say that garden centres operate seven days a week, with the majority of trading taking place at the weekend. As I mentioned, in practice garden centres have no problems in recruiting people to work on Sundays, but allowing staff to opt out of working on the busiest day of the week would cause serious problems for the industry.

The fact that those genuine and important concerns exist, despite the generous concessions made by the hon. Member for Ogmore, demonstrates how difficult it is to legislate on Sunday trading. If one simply constructs a new list, one replaces one set of anomalies with another. The law would be set like a snapshot of a moment in time, unable to develop as markets develop, suffering from the problem that affects encylopaedias, which are out of date the moment that they are printed.

Having said that, there is no doubt that the Bill helps garden centres by preserving their position in the retail industry, which enables many of them to trade when other shops are prevented from doing so. For that reason, there is some merit in the Bill, especially given the sympathetic understanding demonstrated by the hon. Member for Ogmore towards representations from the industry. However, the Government have since published their proposals on Sunday trading, which must alter our view of the Bill. It is to the credit of the hon. Member for Ogmore that his persistence has contributed to the Government's move, but, paradoxically, the Bill has brought about its own prematurity.

It is only right that we should look to the Government to introduce legislation to deal with an issue that causes such strong feeling throughout the country. For that reason, I believe that we should not proceed with the Bill but should work on the Government's proposals. I hope that the Home Secretary will note some of the concerns that I have outlined and will be as accommodating as the hon. Member for Ogmore has been.

1.33 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Perhaps you share my amusement and amazement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the proceedings of the House this week. Perhaps it is because the Ulster Unionists have been asking for guidance, a lead and partnership that both the Government and Opposition Front Benches seem to be moving towards a Government of national unity. They seem to be working for their own ends and not necessarily for the well-being of the country. Therefore I speak in support of the Bill, so that the mind of the House, which represents the nation, may be made plain.

I understood the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) to say that she had seen the Government's proposal. However, I understood from the Minister that the Government were still working on it. Therefore, there is no reason for hon. Members to say that they will vote against today's Bill in light of the Government proposal, as they have not seen it. We have heard the suggestion that the Government may ask us to vote on three sets of proposals, but they have yet to introduce the Bill. We have a Bill before us which we can examine in Committee.

Some of the arguments deployed against the Bill of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) have been specious. One argument was that, in a short time, the Bill would be outdated. The same hon. Member who said that was a member of the Government who introduced the Bill establishing the community charge. That legislation has not lasted for even five years, so it is illogical to suggest that we should not accept the hon. Gentleman's Bill because the evolutionary processes will make it outdated.

The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) gave us an idyllic description of Sunday shopping as a family event. As he did so I was reminded of an article in one of the newspapers that described how a husband and wife in a supermarket had to chase their three boisterous children to try to get them under control. The husband said to his wife, "I told you that if we had more than two, we would be outnumbered and wouldn't be able to control them." Therefore, using illustrations of idyllic shopping on Sunday as an argument for not regulating Sunday trading does not stand up.

Arguments have been made for deregulation. Last Monday evening at a retail association reception, a spokesman said that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had introduced 105 new regulations to take effect in retail shops. We cannot have it both ways—we cannot demand deregulation when it suits us and regulations when that suits us.

In supporting the Bill, I remind those who have spoken lovingly of gardens of the opening comment of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). It all began in a garden and, because of disobedience, the people got out of the garden. We should consider whether the discontent and growing lawlessness in this country might have been aggravated by the fact that, for years, the House

and the Government have not ensured that the laws of the land are implemented. Our laws have been intact, but the Government have turned a blind eye, under the guise that they have to wait for European Court decisions. It was to the shame of the Government that they did not give an undertaking to local authorities that, had the European Court come to another decision, they would have bailed out the local authorities that were maintaining the law.

Therefore, we should bear in mind the quotation:

"A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content".

Perhaps discontent arises because we no longer observe the Sabbath. Some people will suggest that the hon. Member for Antrim, North and I work on Sundays, so do not know what we are talking about. We do not work on Sundays, we worship on Sundays and say liturgies, which is a delight. We work for the rest of the week which allows us to worship on Sunday.

I ask all hon. Members to think of the leadership that they are giving to the country. One cannot serve God and mammon. The big retailers and multiples ask us to serve mammon. Although there has been some decline in religion, it would be wise for us to call people back to God.

1.39 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I am one of the survivors of the 1986 debate on Sunday trading. Today's debate has been extremely lively, interesting and, at times, amusing and much good wit and humour have made it a delight. We have had some good speeches, not least that by the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) who, without a shadow of a doubt, delivered her best-ever speech. She was rumbustious and positive and I liked what she said. The speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) was also one of his best. It is always a pleasure to listen to the hon. Gentleman and he raised issues with which I and many other hon. Members were in agreement.

The House is divided on both sides and within parties and the only common ground is that the present law on Sunday trading must be changed. I am proud to be a Conservative Member, at times with a small c, because I believe that we should try to conserve the best of the customs, traditions of Britain and our heritage and I am loyal, I hope, to the traditional way of life.

The form of Sunday that we presently enjoy evolved over many years. During that time we have seen many social changes and Sunday has changed with them. The debate is about how to manage that change with least detriment to society as a whole. There are two stark choices—nothing in between. We believe either in total deregulation or in some form of regulation to protect the quality of life about which I have spoken.

I entirely agree with the many hon. Members who said that Sunday is the only commonly held day for family rest, recreation and worship which are essential in the busy, almost frantic lifestyle that so many of us live. There is a change of pace on Sunday which is conducive to refreshment of body and soul. If we throw that out, it will be detrimental to the people of our country.

Hon. Members have rightly mentioned the role of people who will be required to work on Sundays against their will. I accept that many women wish to work on Sunday and enjoy that opportunity. For example, many lonely widows would want that opportunity. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) read to us a letter from one of his constituents. The greatest and most valuable contribution that that lady can make to her family is her time so that children, father and mother can build up the relationship which in future will stand the children in good stead.

I know that those views are unpopular in this day and age, but I adhere to them. The deterioration in family life over the past two, three or four decades is currently exemplified by the lawlessness in society, the violence everywhere and the indiscipline of young people and adults. Without cohesion when children are being brought up, discipline or self-discipline cannot be imposed later in their lives.

As many hon. Members have said, Sunday, as the only commonly held day, is vital for such cohesion. The social changes consequent upon changing the trading patterns of Sunday may start slowly, but in due course we shall look back upon them and say, "Why did we allow this to happen in our name because it has changed once again the focus of family life to the detriment of community life and everything else?"

We have also observed the distortion in the retail sector over a considerable period of time. There have been many changes, including the change away from the high street towards out-of-town shopping centres. There has also been change within the food sector, with supermarkets becoming fewer in number and bigger and having a greater and greater market share, for all sorts of reasons. That is not, overall, in the best interests of consumers. Once again, may I express my conservative belief in a viable independent retail sector and in smaller family-run businesses that provide a good service.

We are all aware that the small corner shop has been hit by Sunday opening. We are also aware that families have a finite amount of money to spend. That finite amount is even more tightly drawn during a recession. Seven-day opening will result in costs and overheads rising. A further share of the market will be taken away from smaller retail outlets that may be unable to open or that may not wish to open on Sundays. That will eventually lead to consumers having less choice. There will be a reduction in retail outlets. There will certainly be fewer of the smaller and medium-sized outlets which need our interest and, to a certain extent, our protection.

The solution of those who favour total deregulation is that shops should be allowed to open for six hours. I am the first to admit that this appears to be a simple solution, but we must not be fooled by it. What they really mean is total deregulation. They believe that if the House were to pass such a measure, it would be the first acceptable step towards winning the bigger apple of total deregulation that is fully supported by many of the big multiples. They have generously funded a nationwide campaign to convert Members of Parliament, opinion-makers outside the House and others. By having been allowed to break the law, they are now able to turn round and say, "Look, so many people want to shop and so many people want to be employed on Sundays."

It is not good enough that the Government of the day, whom I support, have allowed that situation to develop. I deplore the way in which the big stores have flagrantly broken the letter of the law by opening on Sundays, to the detriment of their law-abiding competitors, which, in some cases, have been forced to join them in order to retain their share of the market and to prevent it from being further eroded. The simplicity of the six-hour solution must be seen through. It is a Trojan horse. No cast-iron guarantee

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can be given by anybody that the six-hour solution is precisely right. The Minister cannot give such a guarantee; nor can those who support the six-hour option. Frankly, it is worthless. What we are talking about is either total deregulation or some form of regulation.

There is much in our national life that is to be admired, the value of which is often not fully appreciated until too late. The traditional Sunday, which has evolved with social changes over the years, is one such example. Today we talk so often of the price of everything but rarely about its value. When the House makes its judgment later today, I hope that it will bear that point in mind and give a fair wind to the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) so that these important issues can be fully debated in Committee and changes introduced, if the Committee so wishes. We shall then be able to resolve the difficulties that now face people over our Sunday trading legislation.

1.49 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I commend the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) for making one point very clear, which is that what is on offer is an option to choose this Bill, on which we have a free vote, or a Government Bill on total deregulation and no employee protection. The House will have noticed that, in his Keep Sunday Special contribution, the Minister emphasised the retailing aspects of the Bill. He did not refer to the other aspects of the Keep Sunday Special campaign. We had to rely on the hon. Members for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) to tell us about the other aspects of keeping Sunday special, which are the religious aspects, the Christian ethic to which we subscribe, and the foundation of our society which has sustained us for so many years. The option is clear. We might wait for a year—it will certainly not happen this year or this parliamentary Session—for a Government Bill which will support total deregulation with no employee protection. That is what is on offer for the Opposition.

I sympathise with my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) for having to argue what she described as a principled abstention. Opposition Members do not believe in the concept of principled abstention. I sympathise with my hon. Friend because she had a difficult brief.

Mrs. Dunwoody: On a point of procedure, there is no such vote as a principled abstention in the House of Commons. The idea that one can register an abstention in the way that was suggested has grown up from the European Parliament, which of course, is not a Parliament in the normal sense of the word.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) for making that procedural point.

This is the "last chance saloon". Those words were not used by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) or by the hon. Member for Congleton, but they both said that this is our last opportunity to maintain and defend the traditional Sunday. That is what we shall vote on today.

The speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) was one of the most dramatic and exalting that we have heard. She referred to family values, employment protection and Sunday trading. Sparing the blushes of my own general secretary, Mr. John Edmonds, he has not understood that what is on offer for his 60,000 members is deregulation and minimum statutory provision. The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said that we should listen to Mr. John Edmonds, who has 60,000 members in the shops industry. Opposition Members wait to see how the hon. Gentleman votes on Third Reading of the Employment Bill, which abolishes wages councils. About 2 million women workers will be affected by that legislation.

Hon. Members heard the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) talk about women working. We have heard much about women working and about part-time working. However, we do not hear that it takes five years for a part-time worker to get to an industrial tribunal. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner), has tabled a motion and written a succinct letter to all hon. Members about that matter. A Minister has said that there will be a free vote on employment protection when, in Committee, he is abolishing the wages councils. Are we so naive after 13 years of opposition, that that is the route which we agree to go down? That is not the route which we should adopt.

I invite my colleagues to accept that the principles put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore are the only likely opportunity of bringing about the statutory change that we want.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore persistently said, this is a Second Reading debate. We are not in Committee, but the Minister fell for the trap set by his hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), because he talked about the detail of the Bill. The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West read from a letter sent out by Boots which contained a series of questions tabled by the company—it also answered them! The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West gave those answers to the House—I am sure that he had no intention of misleading the House, but that was the result.

This is a Second Reading on a Bill of principle. The Bill will be considered in detail in Committee when substantial amendments can be drafted—that is the purpose of Committees. The Bill represents our "last chance saloon" and we must support my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore.

1.54 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) said that he wanted hon. Members to declare their interests and I should like to declare mine. I do a seven-day-a-week job. I work in London for four days and for three days, except on odd Fridays like today, I am in my constituency also working. The only opportunity I get to do my shopping is on Sunday afternoons in Safeway in Lichfield.

The genie has been let out of the bottle and he cannot be put back. Sunday trading exists. Many people find it more convenient, as I do, to shop on Sunday than on other days, because that fits in with their lifestyle. If they did not shop, the stores would not be open.

Supporters of the Bill claim that it will settle the issue of Sunday trading. It will do no such thing, unless we define "settle" as meaning prohibit. It is generally agreed by hon. Members that four acid tests must be applied to all proposals for new legislation. They should be practicable, enforceable, acceptable and be able to command a majority in Parliament. The Bill fails each and every one of those tests.

When one applies the test of practicality, one looks for legislation that is necessary, fair and easy to understand. The Bill is unnecessary because its provisions will be included in one of the three options of the Bill that the Government intend to introduce. The Bill is unfair because, by imposing a set of arbitrary criteria on Sunday trading, it will force a large proportion of the 140,000 shops that normally open on Sundays, and which meet a real public need, to close. Many of those shops are small businesses that depend upon Sunday opening to keep afloat.

The Bill will have a severe effect on employment opportunities. It will deprive 120,000 workers of their Sunday jobs and cause many others to lose their premium payments for working on Sundays. Is that what the Labour party wants?

The Bill is complicated because it introduces a new set of anomalies and exclusions that are illogical and unrelated to the pattern of consumer demand. For example, the Bill would allow video hire shops and newsagents to open, but not those newsagents selling books or recorded music. It would therefore still be possible to buy a pornographic magazine or a pornographic video on Sundays, but not to buy a bible. So much for family values.

To enforce any Sunday trading legislation requires that the dividing line between legal and illegal trading should be clearly drawn, easily understood and straightforward to police. The perceived unfairness of the Bill would lead to widespread breaches of its main provisions. Local authorities would be faced with a task well beyond their resources and the Bill would achieve nothing.

What about acceptability? No doubt the Bill will commend itself to the vociferous minority who want to impose their views on the rest of us as to how we should spend our Sundays. The vast majority of ordinary people, however, are voting with their feet. Hon. Members will be aware of the MORI Poll which was conducted last September, before the Christmas rush, and which revealed that 67 per cent. of the public favoured liberalisation of the Sunday trading laws while only 12 per cent. said that they were against. A poll carried out last month in my constituency by the *Lichfield Post* showed that 84 per cent. of respondents said that they wanted shops to open on Sundays. The Bill would prevent that in the run-up to Christmas and all year round.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fabricant: No, I shall not give way because other hon. Members wish to speak. I shall try to limit my speech to five or six minutes.

The Bill would prevent shops from opening in the run-up to Christmas and all year round. Hon. Members should go to a shop, go to a garden centre, go to a DIY store or a supermarket on Sundays to see for themselves what demand there is.

There is no Sunday trading law in Scotland or Ireland and many shops choose to stay closed. That is a commercial decision, but it is interesting that more people there worship regularly in church on Sunday than in England and Wales where there is legislation. Sunday is still special there.

Times have changed. We should not forget that more than 20 per cent. of the population work on Sundays and do not work regular hours. However, I sympathise with firms such as the John Lewis Partnership which has resolutely kept its department stores and Waitrose supermarkets closed on Sundays. Its integrity—as it sees it—has cost it more than £1 million a week in lost business. The partnership has remained closed because it believes that opening on Sunday flouts the law. Whether or not that is the case, I urge the Minister to draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the necessity of passing legislation as quickly as possible. I do not want stores such as the John Lewis Partnership to be in the same position this Christmas as last Christmas.

Of course, existing shop workers must have their rights protected, but major trade unions such as the GMB support Sunday trading. I remind hon. Members that Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers is a minority trade union—fewer than 8 per cent. of shop workers are members. The days of old-time religion are, thankfully, not gone, but in 1993, the nanny state should not tell shops when or when not to open. Such edicts belong to the days of old-time socialism—may it rest in peace.

2.2 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The description of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) of his seven-day working and the burdens of shopping on Sunday would carry more weight if he were arguing that we should meet in the House on Sundays in order to free him to do his shopping during the week.

I declare with pride my interest as a Co-operative and Labour Member of Parliament and a member of the parliamentary committee of the Co-operative Union. The Co-operative movement's powerful and enthusiastic support for the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) reflects the interest of responsible employers for the community and employees as well as their own business interests.

I pay tribute to the many businesses and co-operatives which are included in the massive business support for the Bill. That must be put on the record. In the past few days we have had correspondence from the British Hardware Federation; Iceland has played its part; and we received an excellent letter from the John Lewis Partnership showing that the Shopping Hours Reform Council proposals will lead rapidly to complete deregulation. A long list of businesses support my hon. Friend's Bill.

Any flaws in the Bill can be dealt with in Committee—arguing about the flaws does not come well from any hon. Member, because there is a chance to amend it, but it especially does not come well from the Minister. By their failure to act, successive Ministers have placed inordinate pressures on law-abiding firms. Sunday law-breaking is theft, and Ministers have condoned it. That is not good enough.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Michael: What we have heard today is a further abrogation of responsibility. The Minister said that we shall have to wait another year or so before we have Government legislation. That is a cop-out. The Minister should offer the help of his Department and the facilities of Parliamentary draftsmen to my hon. Friend to give the Bill a fair wind and make it as effective as possible.

Most people want Sunday to be a special day. Flexible hours of work mean that there are plenty of opportunities for people to shop on other days. However, two questions remain. First, where is one to draw the line? Like the SHRC, the Minister gives a series of quibbles which draws the thinnest of veils over the real intention of a total free-for-all which, in fairness to him, the Home Secretary has declared to be his personal choice.

The other consideration is how we ensure fair play not only for the community but for employers and employees. I remind hon. Members again of the words of Winston Churchill in setting up the wages councils. Without regulation, he said,

"the good employer is undercut by the bad, and the bad employer is undercut by the worst."

Churchill went on to warn that without legislation things would get out of hand and said:

"there is no reason why it should not continue in a sort of squalid welter for a period which compared with our brief lives is indefinite." —[*Official Report*, 28 April 1909; Vol. 11, c. 388.]

We face the same sort of choice today.

I ask my hon. Friends to bear in mind the fact that in the near future the last vestiges of the wages councils will come to an end. I ask them to look at what deregulation in practice, which has come about because of Government inactivity, has brought us already. If the Shopping Hours Reform Council and others tempted by that siren voice are serious in saying that they recognise the importance of employee protection, they must say unequivocally that the issue must be resolved before any of the Government's options are put before the House.

I sympathise with women who now work one day only at premium rates, but they would totally lose that freedom even more quickly if a defeat for the Bill signalled the onset of a free-for-all. That would be not freedom or liberalisation, but a new form of slavery.

This week I received a letter from my constituent Eddie McCarthy, chairman of the Cardiff branch of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. He wrote:

"Some facts emerged from the first branch meeting since Christmas. Firms like James Howells and Woolworths did not pay double time for Sunday work, just single time and time off in lieu, at management's convenience, not the workers'. Howells recently forced all staff to sign an agreement stating they would be willing to work all bank holidays. Woollies are making all new starters sign agreeing to work for single time on Sundays and bank holidays. Anybody showing reluctance to sign is simply not offered a job. Another shop sacked three part-time ladies who refused to work until 11 pm—they were given two hours' notice of extended opening hours—and a pregnant girl was fired by one firm for refusing to work on Sunday. Of course, none of them had employment protection."

Those are the difficulties that we face already and that is why Eddie McCarthy wrote on behalf of his workers —he said that he could cite many more instances—to thank me for supporting the Bill and giving the same praise to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) for doing the same.

The right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) waxed eloquent about freedom. She should reflect on the need to protect the freedom of employers and employees which was referred to by Winston Churchill. I regret that, although the right hon. Lady claimed objectivity when she was a Home Office Minister, the freedom of the Back Benches has revealed her as a member of what should be described not as the "Aye" lobby but the "I" lobby.

I am surprised that one or two unions have failed to understand that a free-for-all means exploitation. My union, the GMB, which has a fine record of social responsibility, has expressed views which I hope will be reconsidered.

A consensus that can protect the special nature of Sunday and extend freedom and responsibility is attainable. The Government have had their chance. Successive Home Secretaries have failed to take it. Today we have our free vote and we, as Members of Parliament acting as individuals—as my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore has acted as an individual in introducing the Bill —need to take the law into our hands. Let us take courage on behalf of decent retailers and those who work in the industry and on behalf of families and communities throughout the country. Let us give every support to the Bill; let us give it a Second Reading.

2.8 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Those who, like myself, have sat through virtually the whole debate—I sadly missed 10 minutes of the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) —will agree on one point, which is that it has been in the high tradition of Friday debates in the House. It has been a spirited and at times a witty debate. Hon. Members have spoken with passion and eloquence, and differing views have been held by hon. Members of all parties. When hon. Members have sought to come to conclusions, they have done so on the merits of the case as they see them. I have always felt that some of the best debates take place on Fridays.

The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), whom I am delighted to call my hon. Friend on this occasion, has done the House and the country a signal service in introducing the Bill. I am glad to be one of the sponsors of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore and my fellow sponsors have done me the honour of asking me to reply to some of the criticisms of the Bill made during the debate.

I first make my own position plain. I am an unrepentant supporter of the Bill in its broad, general principles, because I do not believe in a high street Sunday. I do not want to see Saturday replicated on Sunday. There is something very special about Sunday. I do not speak from the point of view of one who goes to church from time to time. Whether Sunday is used to wash the car, to play with the children or to have an extended lunch—it is often the only day of the week when families sit down together to have a meal—or for any other purpose, it is a special day in most people's calendar. It is important that we should try to keep that special day.

In a good and eloquent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) referred to wanting to conserve the best of Britian, She made the point that she was using the word with a small "c". I believe that our British Sunday has a special character which is worth safeguarding. I also agree with my hon. Friend the

Member for Congleton that one of the root causes of the problems in our society today—goodness knows, there are plenty of them—has been the progressive disintegration of the family unit over the past 30 or 40 years. Wherever we sit in the House, we look at that disintegration of the family unit with real regret.

As I do not want to go in for hyperbole, I do not suggest that by rejecting the Bill the House will drive a final nail into the coffin of the family—of course it will not—but it will be assisting in the process of disintegration, for the reasons I have mentioned. Sunday is still a special day for most families and it is the one occasion on which many of our constituents get together as families and share their thoughts and expectations, and enjoy themselves together.

There is another reason why I strongly support the Bill. I believe that one of the best things in Britain is the small shop. Those of us who represent rural constituencies know how important the village shop is. It is very important in my own village to local community life. If we close the village shop, we take part of the heart out of the community. The same can be said of the corner shop in many urban areas.

Anything that militates against the continuance of small businesses—this is the one party political point that I shall allow myself in responding to the debate—is profoundly inimical to the beliefs of our party. It is wrong for us to do anything that damages the small business and the specialised business. It is a joy to go into a shop where people know what they are selling and care about it. We have often been called a nation of shopkeepers. Shopkeepers should care about what they are keeping. It is difficult to have that care and concern in the enormous, frenetic activity of a huge superstore, whatever it sells. From that personal standpoint, I am delighted to give my support to the Bill.

As I have said, the hon. Member for Ogmore and others have asked me to respond to some of the criticisms. Those criticisms fall into two categories. First, there are those from colleagues such as my near neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), who are unashamedly libertarian. They believe that there should be no restrictions. I believe that they are mistaken. That philosophy sits ill with our own. However, I respect them for that belief.

I particularly respect my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire because, if I may say so without sounding unkind, he was the most brazen about it. He did not try to pick holes in the Bill. He was not concerned about faults in the Bill. He simply thought that it was wrong to regulate and he was bold enough to say so.

Mr. Lord: Like my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), I am a sponsor of the Bill. Is it not important that the House must decide on whether we want to preserve our Sunday through regulation? It may be complicated and troublesome to put the legislation together, but the alternative is deregulation under one guise or another. At least my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) was honest about that.

Mr. Cormack: I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) has been able to make those entirely appropriate remarks because he has been in the Chamber throughout the debate.

Other of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and for Gillingham, also strongly opposed the Bill. I do not blame them for attacking the Bill, but none of their criticisms could not be met with constructive amendments. Their root-and-branch opposition is, of course, a different matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West, confessed—and here I quote his words—that he was frequently a screw loose on a Sunday. If he wishes, he can table an amendment on DIY stores, secure in the knowledge that at least some of the Bill's sponsors would respond positively to such an amendment.

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Stern *rose*——

Mr. Cormack: I cannot continue to give way because I must try to respond to the points that have been raised.

Mr. Stern: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I beg to move, That strangers do now withdraw.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I hear the hon. Gentleman. Is he clear that that will not prevent the House from reaching a decision today? Is he quite sure that he sees strangers?

Mr. Stern: I am.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is, That strangers do withdraw. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Therefore, I call Mr. Cormack.

Mr. Cormack: I should like now to move on to the criticisms that were levelled by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office. He sought to give us a detailed critique of the Bill. However, in response to an intervention, he honestly said that there was no chance of having a Government Bill before next Session. He acknowledged that there is virtually no chance of a Bill reaching the statute book before Christmas.

By the admission of my hon. Friend the Minister, the Bill is, broadly speaking, one of the three options that the Government will offer to the House at a later date. Therefore, why does not my hon. Friend accept the invitation offered from a number of quarters and provide the services of the Home Office draftsmen and experts and sit down with the Bill's promoter to consider the matter? Perhaps we could consider having a Special Standing Committee. If my hon. Friend the Minister were prepared to do that, it would be possible to iron out the anomalies, about which he quite understandably complained, and deal with them in good time and certainly well before Christmas.

A common thread of criticism in the debate has been a widespread sense of annoyance, and even anger, about the way in which the law has been flouted by some of the larger stores. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), who spoke from the Opposition Front-Bench, made an extraordinary speech because she placed her faith in the Government. From some points of view, that might be rather touching and appealing to hon. Members on this side of the House. In a debate on a Bill introduced by one of her colleagues, and a Whip to boot—I bet that she will have some very late nights in future—for an Opposition spokeswoman to say that she placed her faith in the Government without receiving any of the assurances that

[Mr. Cormack]

she sought is extraordinary. Why can she not, as my hon. Friend the Minister did, take part in discussions to iron out the anomalies and introduce some mutually agreed amendments?

The other common threads that have run through the debate fall into three broad categories. The first is those who are concerned that the restrictions on size are inhibiting. That may well be the case. The hon. Member for Ogmore made the reasonable point that the figure could be the subject of amendment, and so it can. My hon. Friend the Minister suggested that a Government Bill would get it right. As he has been reminded, it is not always the case that because legislation comes galloping out of the Government stable, it is pristine and perfect in all regards. I will not mention certain recent legislation which was perhaps less than perfect to emphaise the point. The issue of size can be dealt with.

It is clearly the intention of the hon. Member for Ogmore and his fellow sponsors of the Bill that garden centres should be allowed to continue to open on Sunday. It has been said that one is closer to God in a garden than anywhere else, so perhaps it is appropriate that garden centres should be open on Sundays. That is certainly our intention, and we wish to meet any valid objections by suitable amendment. In an eloquent persuasive speech, the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) said that DIY centres may present greater problems. I suggest to her that they are not insuperable problems. Once again, that matter can form the basis of an amendment to the Bill.

I simply remind all hon. Members in the Chamber, some of whom have not had the benefit of hearing the debate today, that, although only a relatively small number of Members will be on the Committee, all Members can take part in a debate on Report. My hon. Friends on the Front Bench can make another contribution by giving extra time for the Report stage if necessary so that the matter is got right in every aspect. In so doing, they will save Government time in the long run in legislation which will not be necessary next year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton obliquely referred to Oscar Wilde without directly quoting him. When she referred to people who knew the price of everything and the value of nothing, she struck an important note. There is great value in our British Sunday and in small shops in the United Kingdom. There is considerable merit and value in the Bill, and I urge all hon. Members to give it a Second Reading; it deserves it. I believe that it can be improved in Committee.

We have a unique opportunity to get the law in order before next Christmas. It can do no hon. Member whatever his or her views, any good to connive, however unwillingly, at large organisations breaking the law. We know now beyond any peradventure that we cannot hide behind European cloaks. We know that our law is the law. It must be either enforced or amended. Here is a special opportunity to amend it sensibly so that we can set in order the law on Sunday trading for the next generation.

In her excellent speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) said that she opposed the Bill. One of the reasons that she gave was that it would not put things right for ever. What legislation ever did? None. I have great respect for my right hon. Friend, but the Bill would certainly tidy things up effectively when suitably amended and take us well into the next century. Few of us will be in the House by the time the law needs looking at again. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend, even at this late stage, with her well-known reputation for generosity of spirit and breadth of mind, will come into the Lobby with us in a few minutes.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 228, Noes 27.

Division No. 120] **[2·25 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evennett, David
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Gale, Roger
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Heppell, John
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*

Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wise, Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Lord and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashby, David
Betts, Clive
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Gardiner, Sir George
Hayes, Jerry
Horam, John
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Knox, David
Legg, Barry
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Soley, Clive
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tyler, Paul
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Stern and
Mr. John Marshall.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 41.

Division No. 121] **[2.36 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evennett, David
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Gale, Roger
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Heppell, John
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian

Pawsey, James
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wise, Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dennis Turner and
Mr. Michael Lord.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Dowd, Jim
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Gardiner, Sir George
Harvey, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Hendry, Charles
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Knox, David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Soley, Clive
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Tyler, Paul
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Marshall and
Mr. Michael Stern.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Remaining Private Members' Bills

NOISE AND STATUTORY NUISANCE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills.

SHOPS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was impossible, through no fault of yours, to hear which Bill you were calling. I thought I heard you call the fourth Bill on the Order Paper. I never heard you call the third Bill. I should be grateful if we could at least hear what you say so that if there are objections we know what is going on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): We are now on the third Bill. I shall put it again. The Question is, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

HEDGEROWS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it acceptable that those who object do not identify themselves? The hon. Member who last objected to the Second Reading of the Hedgerows Bill was the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill). Can the name of the hon. Member who objects to a Bill be recorded?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been a Member for some while. He must be alert and see who says "Object." I certainly do not identify who it is.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

WATER CHARGES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 February.

TRANSACTIONS WITH TAX HAVENS (SANCTIONS) BILL

Ordered for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 14 May.

COAL MINES (CLOSURE REVIEW) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 February.

PLAIN LANGUAGE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

HOMICIDE (DEFENCE OF PROVOCATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

REFORM OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

COMMONWEALTH OF EUROPE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

NATIONAL SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 February.

UNADOPTED ROADS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

ADOPTION OF ROADS (COMPULSORY PROCEDURES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Government Whip, the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), is objecting, but his objections are so pathetic and feeble that I wonder whether they are serious.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

PRIVATE SECURITY (REGISTRATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

IMMUNITY CERTIFICATES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

EMPLOYMENT (AGE LIMITS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

FUEL COST CREDITS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

HOSPITAL SECURITY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

DECLARATION OF WAR (REQUIREMENT FOR PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 February

ENERGY (FAIR COMPETITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 January.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Government Whip, the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), objected to my Homicide (Defence of Provocation) Bill, but there is a very strong case for the Government to review all the cases of women in prison at the moment——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that there can be no debate at present.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker—it has nothing to do with Bills, you will be happy to hear.

A report in today's *Yorkshire Post* states that a National Audit Office report on the costs of the nuclear industry is being kept secret until a later date. The implication is that it will be a date after the Select Committee on Trade and Industry has been able to complete its report on the energy review. Indeed, the implication is that the National Audit Office report is being suppressed until after the House will have had a chance to debate the energy White Paper and the subject in general.

I seek your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Clearly that report is germane to both other reports. Clearly the report was compiled by a public authority on a subject that will

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be coming before the House. Will you rule, either now or later, on whether there is anything that hon. Members can do to get that report into the open in time for it to play a part in the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should write to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Standard Spending Assessment

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

2.52 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I do not have pleasure in drawing the attention of the House to the subject of calculations for SSAs, which are better known as standard spending assessments, because to most people in local government they are a curse, most Members of the House of Commons find them difficult to grasp and to members of the public they are an invisible weapon.

Under the Government, and indeed under Governments of all complexions, there has been a natural desire to limit the public expenditure of local authorities. Of course, we do not like to see wrong and inefficient expenditure. But, in the past 10 years, we have seen a progression of measures that have put local authorities into a more or less helpless position and even now are a danger to the citizens whom they represent. I honestly believe that we are reaching a stage in the next financial year when Her Majesty's Government, particularly those who inhabit the Treasury, are not aware of the effects of formulae for SSAs.

I know that when the era of block grants came to an end and we had clawbacks, grant-related expenditure—GRE—and all the rest of it, some enlightened members of the Government did what they could to ameliorate what were clearly anti-social and sometimes semi-workable or unworkable measures. I believe that, in the past 12 years, 13 measures on local government finance have passed through the House—the Minister may correct me if I am wrong—most of which have not worked.

The Treasury's objective, reinforced by macro-economic theory about the proportion of expenditure in the country that is public expenditure as distinct from private expenditure, is to push local government expenditure down. That has not worked. Time after time, various ways round various arrangements have been found. The public, of all political parties, have objected to the manacles placed on local government.

With the system of SSAs, coupled with the capping on expenditure, a new cage has been placed round local authorities or, rather, round the public that they represent. We are now in a new era of grave injustice, particularly for inner-city areas—I note that one of my hon. Friends who also represents London is present.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): No, my hon. Friend is thinking of my wife, the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice).

Mr. Spearing: I apologise.

The local authorities will be blamed for something for which they are not responsible and which appears incredible to the public.

Newham is the second most deprived borough in the country according to most statistics—Hackney beats it by a short head. I ask the Minister to refute my assertion that we are being defrauded—I use that word advisedly—of £20 million worth of services, many of them crucial. That is equivalent to about £120 per adult member of the borough. Any local authority officer knows that that extra amount, per head, would provide a tremendous amount of flexibility. We do not enjoy that now.

How has this come about? I challenge the Minister to deny the arithmetic, even if he gives me some philosophical explanation of the new arrangements. The Government say that the SSA is based on what they think is the standard level of service that the councils should provide. I do not know whether that standard is what we would accept. The Government then calculate roughly how much those services would cost, multiply that by various types of formulae and, Bob's your uncle, that is the SSA.

The assessment of services is carried out by dividing the key ones into five broad categories. The first is education, which accounts for half the given expenditure. In fact, education expenditure is divided into subgroups covering primary and secondary education. One also used to cover further education, but there is not much of that now. The other four categories relate to social services, highways, other services and capital charges.

Despite recent changes, educational costs can be broadly assessed on the number of teachers, pupils and buildings and so can all the rest. The figures are totted up. The only thing that the Government do not appear to tot up is the capital charge, which is known and reasonably predictable within a certain range, just as a mortgage payment is for a householder. It is the first charge upon a borough or a district council that must sustain borrowings. I must emphasise that those borrowings, for the most part, have been permitted by the Government.

The Minister is aware of a number of letters that I have received—I shall not quote them because time is short—in which Ministers say that not all capital borrowing has been permitted by the Government. Nevertheless, a great proportion of it has, at some time or other, been given the go-ahead by the Government. In other words, the Government have said that that capital expenditure is necessary—that is a very important moral point.

In Newham, next year's total SSA is supposed to be about £255 million—these figures are provisional and I know that the Minister will tell me that, but it gives me some hope for the future—of which education accounts for £120 million, social services £43 million and other services, such as administration and everything else that the borough must do, £66 million. Capital charges account for £18 million.

However, the real capital charge that Newham must pay, mostly for expenditure that the Government have agreed is necessary, is about £30 million, give or take £1 million as I am dealing in rounded figures. We have a shortfall in payment of capital charges of between £11 million and £12 million.

The only way in which that sum can be obtained is by withdrawing funds from other sections of expenditure for which an SSA has already been calculated. They may not be big enough for what is required—we may think that other SSAs are not sufficient—but they must be further reduced.

The Minister has agreed that education accounts for half the cost. If there is a shortfall of roughly £10 million in capital charge deficiency—I am being very conservative—education will have to be cut by £5 million beneath the SSA which even a not very beneficent Government have agreed is necessary. That means additional cuts in education above even what the Government think is necessary.

I believe that Birmingham is in a similar position to Newham. We are blamed for not doing very well and the Government say that we are not spending what they have given us. However, they omit to say that they have not given us what we require under the SSA for capital charge. That has a secondary effect which is even more drastic than people realise.

Much of public expenditure in local authorities is statutory. Various Acts of Parliament lay down what a council must do and if it does not do it, it can be taken to court. However, many of the services that are most prized, especially in areas such as that which I represent—Plaistow, Custom House, East Ham, West Ham, Stratford and the whole of the borough—involve discretionary money. I add that everything that I am saying has the backing of my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). The borough council may pay that discretionary money if it wishes to or if it has it.

I use the specific example of nursery schooling. Irrespective of party, politicians get into terrible trouble if nursery education does not expand and still more trouble if it has to be cut. What about discretionary grants for the over-16s for further education or extras for old people's centres, for a little more transport, for a little more time from home helps and respite care for relatives who do so much for the ill and the sick? The relatively small sums involved, when spread around the community, provide a good deal of social easement which would not otherwise exist. That goes first, because such services are the only ones that can be cut if one has already cut to the bone.

What is the basis of not providing a standard level of service of capital debt—here I use "service" in another way—that is comparable to the standard service provided for consumer services? The Minister will probably say that a borough should sell some assets and should not be so much in debt, but what happens if there are no assets to sell or if the assets that might be sold are those that provide social services for the area? That is an impossible position, but matters are even worse than I have outlined.

Having to find £10 million out of all the services in the borough to make up for the deficiency in capital payment leads to another problem—homelessness. It might be easier for the Government to do something about this problem because it affects fewer boroughs than the capital deficiency which, I suspect, affects many. In fact, I know that it does. That problem exists in London because of the many evictions or repossessions which occur for many different reasons.

Newham has had to budget for about £10 million for next year and the figure is rising. That is not the borough council's fault, yet notionally the money has to come from the SSA for other services, which is based on a formula calculated for the whole country. I have yet to hear that it contains any specific element for expenditure on homelessness. As the Minister knows, despite its name, that expenditure does not come under the housing account, which is separate from the financial matters that I am discussing and, quite properly, is ring-fenced.

To find that £10 million next year we shall have to make more reductions even from the mingy amounts that the Government provide. I am still being conservative—with a small "c"—when I say that there will be a deficiency of roughly £10 million on capital and £10 million for homelessness, so we reach a figure of about £20 million. I do not think that the Minister will be able to refute that figure.

If we are to find that money, terrible things will have to happen in the community: Long-serving public servants,

[Mr. Spearing]

who have given a lifetime of skill and have more skill still to give, will be made redundant compulsorily or voluntarily. They will no longer be working for the local authority and for the people, who greatly value their services. They will go on the dole, perhaps with some redundancy money, too, and twiddle their thumbs at home, when they could be providing services for needy people in the borough.

Nursery education will have to be cut, because it is not a statutory requirement. In Newham we have a well-based drugs unit, dealing with prevention among young people, which has had some great successes. As we all know, in the future we shall face much greater challenges on that front. But the expenditure is discretionary, so the borough is considering the unit's future. We should not have to do that.

What about education? The Minister may not know, as it does not involve his Department, but the Department for Education has cut section 11 grants for additional teachers for children for whom English is a second language. Newham, and Tower Hamlets next door, are full of such children—and we are having to cut the number of their teachers.

Other elements are involved, but I shall not deal with those today. I shall concentrate on two factors. The first is the capital element, which is £10 million short, and the second is the fact that the charges for homelessness are improperly put into a classification in which no provision has been made for them. It would be better to take that element out of the SSA altogether and provide a grant to cover the cost—given, of course, a reasonable degree of efficiency which could be monitored.

I shall not deal with too many other areas of the country, but what has been experienced in our borough provides a clue to what is happening elsewhere. I see from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities returns that Barnet is suffering £40 million in cuts this year and its education department says that it may be unable to provide schooling for all. Birmingham faces cuts of £35 million and 2,000 jobs are being lost. Incidentally, Birmingham's SSA for capital charges of roughly £100 million was about £50 million. So it is in a similar position.

Enfield has a £21 million gap and is cutting £10·5 million from education. I believe that Sutton has had an efficient Conservative administration—*[Interruption.]* Yes, we have expertise on both sides of the House this afternoon. Sutton has cuts of £8·5 million and is discussing the possible closure of day centres for the elderly. Think of that.

This is supposed to be a country at ease with itself, yet the Treasury and the Department of the Environment are scattering disease and social tension with their stupid formulae which take no account of reality. I may be asking for more money, but I suggest to the Minister that—bearing in mind the unemployment and the redundancies among skilled people who are only too anxious to help others—the amount of social damage and the stupidity in relation to the total amount of public expenditure are something which history will find it hard to understand.

I ask the Minister to consider two points. First, he should make some adjustment on the capital servicing to bring it more or less into line with the proportion of capital expenditure that has been permitted by the Government. I go no further than that. Secondly, there should be a separate system for the homeless. Without that, can there be justice? Without justice, can there be peace?

3.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): In congratulating the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Shearing) on obtaining this debate, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the calculation of standard spending assessments, or SSAs as we hereinafter agree to call them. The assessments, as the hon. Gentleman pointed out, play a key role in the system of local government and they are often misunderstood. I hope, therefore, that this debate will help to contribute to a wider understanding of SSAs within the House. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman joins me in regretting that some of the hon. Members who were present a few minutes ago are not with us now. They will no doubt read the debate in *Hansard* in due course.

The SSA for any authority represents the Government's assessment of the level of revenue spending by that authority that should enable it to provide services to a common standard. This common standard is that which is consistent with the Government's view of the appropriate level of revenue expenditure for all local authorities combined, bearing in mind the position of the economy.

The SSA has two main functions. First, it helps to determine the amount of revenue support grant received by each authority. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I go into a little detail on the background. I know that he is more than aware of it. In effect, the grant is distributed in such a way that, if all authorities were to spend at the level of their SSA, the level of local tax could be broadly the same in all areas of the country. This applies not only to the community charge, but to the council tax in 1993-94.

Secondly, SSAs are used as a benchmark for comparison within the capping framework when forming a view about whether the level of an authority's budget or the proposed increase in that budget is reasonable or excessive.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that SSAs are extremely important. As such, they must be calculated on a basis that is seen to be fair. I would not want anybody, for example, to imagine that SSAs are dreamed up by a few Ministers on the basis of arbitrary factors designed to favour certain authorities and to penalise others. Nothing could be further from the truth and I should like to spend a few minutes explaining the basis of the calculations.

Although, as the hon. Gentleman said, SSAs were actually introduced for the first time in 1990-91, they are the end result of a long period of evolution. They are an improvement on their predecessors, which were known as grant-related expenditure assessments, especially in respect of their reduced complexity. They do, however, build on the large body of detailed research evidence that underpinned the earlier assessments. They also share with them the characteristic of having been extensively discussed, over a number of years, with the local authority associations.

SSAs aim to take account of the main characteristics of an authority that will affect its spending requirement. This is a daunting task covering expenditure in 1993-94 of some £37 billion by more than 400 local authorities. There are,

of course, constraints on the extent to which this objective can be achieved at any one time. It is, for example, a fundamental principle of SSAs that they are based on sound data sources that are available on a consistent basis for all authorities. Many factors are taken into account in the SSA formula. These fall into three main categories.

First, there are demographic factors, such as what proportion of the population are children or elderly. Those are crucial determinants of the need to spend on education and on personal social services.

Secondly, there are the socio-economic characteristics of the population. Research has shown that, for some services, the need to spend can vary with the number of people falling into certain disadvantaged categories, such as the numbers in single-parent families or receiving income support. These indicators are reflected in SSA calculations. More than one fifth of the education SSA element, for example, is distributed by reference to an indicator of this kind, representing additional educational needs. Thirdly, there are adjustment factors to allow for higher employment costs in London and the south-east.

Such detailed adjustments—there are many more—can have very marked effects on the calculation and are evidence of the thoroughness of our approach. They show our determination that SSAs should be as fair as possible within the constraints imposed by data.

The authority represented by the hon. Member for Newham, South is certainly a major beneficiary of many of the factors used. It is undeniable that under the proposals announced on 26 November by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, Newham's SSA, expressed in terms of pounds per head of population, will be one of the highest in the country. I suspect that that will remain the case when the provisional figures are finalised. For example, in the case of personal social services, Newham's provisional SSA is nearly twice the national average and some 20 per cent. higher than the average figure for London authorities. In the case of education, Newham's SSA is over 60 per cent. above the national average, and over 70 per cent. above the average for shire counties.

Newham has also fared well from some of the specific changes that we have introduced for 1993-94, such as, for example, the incorporation of population estimates based on the 1991 census. The result is that, after adjustments for major changes of function, Newham's provisional SSA for 1993-94 represents an increase of nearly 5 per cent. in comparison with 1992-93. This compares with an average increase of less than 3 per cent. for England and for London authorities as a whole.

I draw attention to those figures not to argue that Newham's SSA is too high, although I am sure that there are some hon. Members representing shire areas who might take that view. I think that they show the extent to which the SSA formula reflects genuine differences in authorities' spending needs by means of the factors that it includes.

Many criticisms are made of SSAs, but I think that those who make the criticisms should consider what the alternatives are before they shout too loudly. The most simple and obvious alternative to the current system might be one that simply apportioned all SSAs in proportion to the total population. Such a system would work very much against the interests of Newham and would, I am sure, not be welcomed by the hon. Gentleman. It is up to those who criticise to propose alternative schemes rather than simply to attack the current system, which represents a very fair attempt to distribute money in line with need. To clarify that point, I absolve the hon. Gentleman from taking that line in his speech this afternoon.

In general terms, the proposed SSAs for 1993-94 are the result of a careful examination of a number of difficult issues. We have had to take into account the various pressures on local authorities, as well as a number of changes in local authority functions, most important of which is the loss of most of their responsibilities for further education. We have also had regard to the potential for value-for-money savings. In our view, the settlement that we have proposed should allow authorities to maintain services, provided that they exercise good stewardship and adhere to the pay policy announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his autumn statement.

Having said all that, I am not so complacent as to believe that SSAs are perfect or, indeed, that perfection is achievable in such a complex field under which the ground is ever-shifting. That is why we engage in continuous discussions with the local authority associations. It is also one of the reasons why the announcements made by my right hon. and learned Friend consisted of proposals for 1993-94—the accompanying figures were provisional SSAs.

We have just completed a period of extensive formal consultation, during which we met delegations from many authorities. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities met a delegation led by the hon. Members for Newham, South and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) just before Christmas, giving them the opportunity to raise with him personally several of the points that have been concerning them.

We have also received written representations from many other authorities on all aspects of the settlement. We have been giving very careful consideration to all the points that have been made to us and will be announcing shortly our proposals for the final settlement.

The hon. Member for Newham, South raised several specific issues and, in the time available, I shall endeavour to deal with them. If I fail to do that, I shall of course write to him in respect of any residual points.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the general question of capital finance. In fairness to him, he returned to a subject in respect of which he has previously communicated with the Department. Assumed debt, based on capital allocations in the 1980s, is used in the calculation of capital financing SSAs, rather than actual debt, for several reasons. A big problem with using actual debt is that the level of actual debt is affected by past decisions taken by different authorities about the use of capital resources. For example, it would not be right if those authorities that have used capital receipts to keep down the level of their debts were to lose the benefits of that prudence through a reduction in their SSAs.

Another point is that debt charges incurred in respect of trading services are not taken into account because the cost of such borrowing should be covered by trading revenue. The hon. Member for Newham, South repeatedly said why he believed that Newham would benefit from reverting to a system of actuality. I will undertake to reconsider the points that he made. There is a sound underlying reason why using notional rather than actual debt is preferred in this case.

The hon. Member referred to homelessness. He suggested that SSAs take no account of growing levels of

[Mr. Robin Squire]

homelessness. The Government are well aware of the problem of homelessness. They have taken that into account, together with many other factors, in setting the total standard spending for 1993-94.

As far as the SSA for individual authorities is concerned, we have considered the possibility of a separate indicator for homelessness. Unfortunately, there is no consistent and reliable statistic count of homelessness that covers all local authorities. The statutory count of homeless people who are provided accommodation by housing authorities can vary according to local policy and is volatile from year to year. That is one matter which we shall be examining in the light of the 1991 census. However, the district level of the services SSA already includes an indicator of social conditions that reflects factors that are likely to be associated with above average levels of homelessness. In particular, Newham has a per capita SSA for that element which is more than twice the national average.

The hon. Gentleman referred to projected cuts and effects on jobs. Perhaps the safest thing for me to say at this stage is that it is too early to know what the effects of the settlement will be on jobs because authorities have not yet set their budgets. Experience of previous settlements suggests that initial estimates of job reductions proved to be much too high, and some of the figures being bandied about at present are absurd.

As I said earlier, the process of trying to improve and update SSAs is never ending. The coming year will be particularly busy in terms of SSA development because we expect to take on board the full range of indicators from the 1991 census. That will represent a challenge as well as an opportunity. It will require a full review of many of our key indicators, such as the additional education needs indicator to which I have already referred.

All the factors that go to make up the SSA for each authority are publicly available. It is open to any hon. Member to make alternative proposals, and I undertake to consider them all carefully. Ultimately, the Government's prime concern is in ensuring that those authorities that face inevitably higher demands from their resources are properly compensated through the revenue support grant. We will continue to strive towards that aim.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 25 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Recreational Facilities (Urban Areas)

1. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what forms of assistance his Department gives to urban areas to develop new recreational facilities; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): My Department assists in the provision of recreational facilities through credit approval cover to local authorities and by the grants that are available from the Sports Council. Substantial additional funding of new facilities is provided through the Foundation for Sport and Arts, the Football Trust, Government support for the Manchester Olympic bid and the Department of the Environment's urban programmes. Non-sporting recreation is also widely assisted.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Minister advise me how communities such as Ossett and Normanton in my constituency can obtain leisure facilities given the capping of local authorities, which means that authorities are helpless when it comes to providing such facilities? The Minister's main answer will not help communities such as Ossett and Normanton. Has he any advice to give?

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman and I have sparred over these issues for several years. We did so when we were in different jobs. Responsibility for local government spending must rest with local authorities and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Local authorities are being inventive and innovative in their funding. Many of them are establishing charitable trusts to set up facilities of the sort to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Mr. Robert Banks: May I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government's outstanding commitment to create a brand new museum to house the royal armouries collection in Leeds? Is this not a remarkable example? We trust that there will be a sizeable commitment from the private sector to create a great focus for bringing tourists both to Leeds and Yorkshire generally, and at the same time renew the urban environment of Leeds.

Mr. Key: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know that he has taken a substantial interest in this and several other tourist developments, as well as accompanying infrastructure developments. The Leeds project is extremely important for the future of our armouries and those of the world. The partnership that is exhibited between central Government, local government, the Urban Development Corporation and the private sector is crucial to the success of the enterprise.

Press Regulation

2. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has regarding new regulations regarding the press.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): The report of Sir David Calcutt's review of press self-regulation was published on 14 January. I refer the hon. Member to the statement that I made on that day.

Mr. Winnick: While recognising the right of the press to investigate the rich and the powerful—I wish only that it would do so more frequently—when was the last occasion when press barons were criticised in the newspapers that they own or in other newspapers? Does the Secretary of State agree with the views that Lord Gilmour expressed last week outside the Palace when he said that for 10 years Tory newspapers toadied at every opportunity to the Government, especially to Lady Thatcher, and acted as her poodles? Is there not a great deal of hypocrisy coming from the press, especially the tabloid press?

Mr. Brooke: My knowledge of the press over the past 10 years is not so encyclopaedic that I could give a categorical assurance to the hon. Gentleman. Lord Gilmour has been in separate correspondence with me to rebuke me for having misquoted the example of John Wilkes when I first took office.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the historic meeting of the 21 editors is an important sign of what newspapers intend to do? Does he agree also that the people who should be even keener than newspaper editors on protecting press freedom are members of this place?

Mr. Brooke: I am in broad agreement with my hon. Friend. I thought that the reaction of editors in terms of the manner in which they wish to see the Press Complaints Commission further changed was extremely encouraging.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Secretary of State will recall that on Friday hon. Members voted to give the Shops (Amendment) Bill a Second Reading. The Government have, in effect, allowed the Bill to move to its Committee stage as a form of consultative process before they introduce their own Bill in the autumn. Will the right hon. Gentleman follow that precedent and agree to give the private Member's Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) the same opportunity when it is debated on Friday? Will he allow it to go to Committee so that we can examine in detail the need for legislation on the right of reply?

Mr. Brooke: When I made my statement on 14 January, I explained the Government's attitude to the Bill being promoted by the hon. Member for Hammersmith. It would be wrong of me in any way to anticipate the views of my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip. However, a consultative process would be welcome—not least to the

hon. Lady, who will recall that on 11 January she described the statutory body as a necessary move, but by 14 January she was saying that it was clearly not the answer.

Broadcasting Act 1991

3. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the working of the Broadcasting Act 1991.

Mr. Brooke: The aim was to increase diversity and choice in broadcasting and that is being achieved.

Mr. Mullin: Is not it true that the Broadcasting Act has been a catastrophe? Has not it unleashed a tidal wave of junk television? Have not many of the new franchise holders already reneged on the commitments to quality that they gave when they obtained the franchises? Are not some of them already in serious financial trouble because they overbid? Will not they shortly be going cap in hand to the Secretary of State's Department asking for new financial arrangements? What steps is the right hon. Gentleman taking to enforce the commitments to quality that were given when the franchises were awarded?

Mr. Brooke: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman on all three of his assertions at the beginning of his question. He offered me the role of censor; he implied that various institutions had already reneged on their commitments —of which I have seen no evidence; and he made further references to their financial state, which does not fall directly within my responsibility. The need to enforce quality is an obligation under the Act which has been discharged to the Independent Television Commission.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate new franchises such as Carlton, Meridian and Westcountry on their arrival in the field only this month? Can he tell the House whether it is his intention to review the progress being made in the cable industry in bringing new franchises into operation across the country?

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to join my hon. Friend in welcoming the new stations that began broadcasting this year. I shall certainly be in touch with him on his point about the cable industry.

Mr. Maclennan: What representations has the Secretary of State received about the future of Independent Television News? Is he prepared to reconsider the arrangements in the Act that require the franchise holders to become minority shareholders in ITN?

Mr. Brooke: As with everything else in the Act, those matters were widely debated at the time that it passed through the House. In the light of that widespread debate, it would be inappropriate to go back over the conclusions of the Act and I have no plans to do so.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend share with us his thoughts on the decision of the Office of Fair Trading about the networking arrangement? I understand that the matter is currently before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but does he share my concern that if the independent television companies are denied the opportunity to sign secondary rights when signing up new programme contracts, that should apply to all other television broadcasters? If that were to be the case, what future would there be for the BBC, Channel 4 and BSkyB, not to mention the independent television companies?

Mr. Brooke: As my hon. Friend made clear, the networking proposals are now being examined by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It would be wrong of me to anticipate its conclusions.

Mr. Corbett: When will the Secretary of State respond to public concern and quickly use his powers under that Act or other legislation to prevent hard-core pornography from other European countries being beamed into British homes via satellite? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that neither domestic nor foreign hard porn and depravity have any place on our screens? Does he accept that those paid-for programmes, which are especially demeaning to women, are contrary to the standards set out in the Act and should be prohibited?

Mr. Brooke: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government are consulting urgently on the legal position in the context of such broadcasts. It might be unduly premature to pass judgments on censorship upon them until there is wider knowledge of their content.

Tourism

4. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will consider the reintroduction in England of grants under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The section 4 scheme was withdrawn in England in 1989 because of doubts about its effect on overall levels of tourism investment in England, and there is no evidence that the situation has changed. Last November, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced proposals to target the resources that are made available through the English tourist board to the regional tourist boards on those areas where the industry is most in need of support to exploit tourism potential.

Mr. Waterson: In the light of my hon. Friend's answer, I ask him to explain the other measures that he and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have in mind to assist the tourism industry in England, and in particular hoteliers and resort towns such as my constituency of Eastbourne.

Mr. Key: Eastbourne is one of this country's premier tourist resorts. Sussex resorts took part in the English tourist board's highly successful resorts initiative in 1992 and Brighton has joined for 1993. The Eastbourne resort prosperity initiative is a prime example of the partnership that we seek to establish throughout the country. Much more than that, it is crucial that this country's tourism industry is acknowledged as one of the most important and prosperous of all our industries, offering massive employment and huge potential for growth over the next decade.

Windsor Castle (Fire)

5. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his latest estimate of the Windsor castle fire costs.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of clearing, making safe, and protecting the site will be about £1·5 million. It is too early to estimate the costs of restoration and rebuilding.

Mr. Tony Banks: When will that figure be available, because the Secretary of State was very quick to move in and to write an open cheque on behalf of British taxpayers? Does he recall my question to him on 1 December 1992, as to what attempt had been made to attract private money to help meet the cost of refurbishing and running royal palaces, which now cost about £18 million per year? Why does not the Secretary of State approach companies such as McDonalds or Euro Disney, to see whether they would put some money into refurbishment? That raises the whole question of sponsorship for the monarchy. I am sure that Crown Paints would be interested, as would Virgin Atlantic. The virgin queen is not particularly original, but at least it has a certain historical cachet. Why does not the right hon. Gentleman use his imagination, get some private money, and save the taxpayer a great big bill?

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the breadth, scale and verve of his imagination. As to the cost of restoration, the figure of £60 million widely quoted in the press is one which the Government have never endorsed. There is no reason to suppose that the cost will rise that high. We shall make a more accurate statement as soon as we can.

Mr. Stephen: While acknowledging Her Majesty's offer to pay part of the cost of restoring Windsor castle, which is one of the most important parts of our national heritage, does my right hon. Friend agree that Her Majesty should no more be expected to pay than should my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in respect of the restoration costs of No. 10 Downing street?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to add to my answer of a moment ago. It is clear from offers of assistance of which I am aware that an independent fund is a possibility, though I cannot add to that at this time.

Ms. Abbott: Will the Secretary of State answer the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) about private money being invested in royal palaces and royalty? As the Government apparently believe that private capital and know-how can energise British Rail and improve our health service, why do they stop short of putting private capital and know-how into royalty?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Lady was concentrating so much on the eloquence of the question that she was about to ask that she apparently did not hear the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen). I said then that I was aware of the possibility of a private fund being set up.

Royal Parks (London)

6. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to maintain and improve the character of royal parks in outer London.

Mr. Key: The Department is committed to maintaining and restoring the royal parks to the highest standards of excellence. A new next steps agency responsible for all the royal parks will be created on 1 April.

Mr. Jessel: Does my hon. Friend accept that, while the royal parks are national, Bushey park and Hampton Court park are cherished as local parks by my constituents in Teddington and all the Hamptons? They, and I, insist that the trees, the grass, the deer, the birds, the gardens and the open space are all protected. They do not want any large events, car parks or other so-called improvements.

Mr. Key: I acknowledge the enthusiasm with which my hon. Friend always embraces his constituents' concerns. Of course, the finest parks in the world are to be found in Greater London, in the form of the royal parks. I am delighted to say that relations with the Friends of Bushey Park are very good, and I know that people care deeply about such details as whether the park gates are open on time in the mornings: we have sought to put such things right.

In Bushey park, we have a programme completely to restore the chestnut avenue over two years. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently planted the first new tree. The management of Bushey park will stay with the park's agency.

Mr. Raynsford: Does not the Minister recognise that, when the Government proposed the privatisation of the management of the royal parks, they did so in the face of the almost united opposition of all who knew about, were concerned about and cared for those parks? It is not a question of improvement; the parks are well maintained, and have been in the past. Does the Minister recognise the anger and concern that are now felt about a possible fall in standards as a result of cost-cutting, and the introduction of management practices that have already led to many staff members' losing their jobs in Greenwich and other royal parks?

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman wants it all ways. The fact is that the controversy—which was perfectly genuine—has been resolved very happily. Most of the societies and community groups in the park areas are now working closely with us and with the new agency, and standards have undoubtedly improved.

In my opinion, the parks have not been looked after that well for half a century. That is precisely why we have increased the amount to be spent on them over the next few years, and why Greenwich park, for instance—a park which I personally have known for a number of years—is already being improved, and will continue to be improved.

National Lottery

7. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has had from representatives of charities and voluntary organisations about the likely impact of a national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I have received a number of representations from representatives of charities and voluntary organisations about the likely impact of a national lottery. They include organisations such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Charities Aid Foundation and the Association of Charitable Foundations.

Mr. O'Hara: Does the Minister accept that the vast majority of the proceeds of the lottery—if it is introduced—will be collected at local level? Does he accept that that money would otherwise have been spent on local charities, and that a disproportionate amount will be contributed by people on low incomes? Does he agree that if such a lottery is introduced, the mechanism for distributing the proceeds should ensure that local charities and voluntary organisations are not penalised, and can continue to serve the people who need them most?

Mr. Key: I do not accept that most of the money that may be spent on a national lottery will come from what would otherwise have gone to local charities. It is precisely because we wish to protect and, indeed, enhance local charities—whether they are private or local authority charities—that we are changing the law in the National Lottery etc. Bill, so that better prizes and bigger turnovers will be allowed for small charities.

The evidence suggests—and I firmly believe—that we shall attract a completely new market and that the whole community, right across the kingdom, will receive the overall benefit. That is an important point. It will not be a question of a few grand projects in London; that is why we are setting up the distribution mechanism that we propose.

Mr. Burns: When my hon. Friend considers the representations that he has received from charities and voluntary organisations, may I ask him not to allow himself to be seduced by the special pleading of the football pools? Does he accept that prior to the introduction of a national lottery, the nearest thing that this country has ever had to a national lottery is the football pools? Apart from the money that they give to football, they are profitable organisations. They are organising a self-motivated, self-interested special pleading to defend their special interests and privileged position.

Mr. Key: Yes, of course my hon. Friend is absolutely right. I respect entirely the very strong representaions that have been made by Members of Parliament who represent constituencies where the football pools are based, but there should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the football pools, which are extremely profitable, should continue to be profitable under the new arrangements. However, that is profit for the private sector, and what the national lottery will address is the wider public good.

English Heritage

8. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the representations he has received to the English Heritage strategy document, "Strategy for the 90s"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have received some 250 representations about English Heritage's new forward strategy since its proposals were announced last October.

Mr. Hughes: I thank the Secretary of State for his answer. I do not know whether that figure includes responses to the proposals for London. I should be grateful if, either now or later, the Secretary of State could let me know. Does he accept that the proposals have elicited a huge amount of distrust and a considerable amount of opposition? Does he agree with the proposal by the committee for the future of London's architectural heritage in its response that, in order that it should not be seen to be a carve up between English Heritage and the Government, there should be, to use the committee's words, a "full-scale and independent inquiry" into the future of England's heritage and that that is the best way to manage it rather than to leave everything to be decided by a quango?

Mr. Brooke: It is my present firm understanding that the letters received in connection with the London region have been included in the answer that I have given. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the consultation process has come to a conclusion in terms of its timetable, though I am sure that other comments would still be received. In collaboration with English Heritage, I shall look closely at the outcome of the consultation.

Mr. Adley: Can my right hon. Friend say whether the strategy for the 1990s will include any proposals to ensure that national artefacts no longer required by their owners, if those owners are in the public sector, remain available to British museums? Is my hon. Friend aware that one of his predecessors kindly invited me some years ago to sit on the committee of the National Railway museum. The assurances that the museum was given in the Railways Bill appear not about to be honoured. Will my right hon. Friend please ensure that his Department keeps an eye on that aspect of the national heritage?

Mr. Brooke: I am not sure that I can do a precise read-across to the question that my hon. Friend raised, but I shall look closely at it to see whether there is an immediate application in our own case.

Mr. Skinner: Why should areas in the provinces—for example places in Derbyshire, which includes the Bolsover constituency, such as Hardwick hall, Bolsover castle and a few more, including Creswell crags—suffer from the lack of Government money when the Government could save up to £60 million by telling the Queen to pay for the Windsor castle fire out of her own money? They would then have a bit more to spend on other areas in the provinces. Why does the Secretary of State not do that?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point of the strategy. Its purpose, in the context of a number of the monuments for which English Heritage is responsible, is that management might more sensibly be at local level. I am glad to be able to report to the House that more than 50 bodies have been in touch with English Heritage to discuss the possibility of taking over responsibility for its management.

Calcutt Report

9. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he has had an opportunity to consider the report of the committee on the conduct of the press chaired by Sir David Calcutt; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to the question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Mr. Fabricant: Although I accept that the Secretary of State has to consider the Calcutt report, which has only just been published, I believe that many of my hon. Friends share my view that the Press Complaints

Commission, if it has teeth at all, has milk teeth. Will my right hon. Friend consider either giving canine teeth to the PCC or setting up a more powerful body that could deal with delinquent newspapers?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's question. He takes a keen interest in these subjects. One of the benefits of the consultation period is that it offers the opportunity for such suggestions to be ventilated.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Does the Secretary of State accept that he would be on far firmer ground in seeking to resist and restrict gross intrusions into the privacy of ordinary individuals if this Administration were committed to introducing a freedom of information Bill?

Mr. Brooke: It will be to the benefit of the hon. Gentleman that, coincidentally, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has responsibility for these matters, is in the Chamber and will have heard his question.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a free press is as important to a free society as a free Parliament, but that so is the freedom of any two law-abiding individuals to have a private conversation, in any circumstances and anywhere, without fearing that someone will reproduce it?

Mr. Brooke: Many hon. Members will share my hon. Friend's view and Sir David Calcutt's report dealt with intrusions into the privacy of everyone in the land.

Mrs. Clwyd: May I exercise my own right of reply to correct an inaccuracy? A few moments ago, the Minister said that I am in favour of statutory controls. Does he accept that, until we have a freedom of information Act, the only statutory control on the press of which I am in favour is a statutory right of reply? Will he make that clear and not repeat his mistake of trying to perpetuate an inaccuracy?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Lady must be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) for having tabled the question, which enabled her to reply. I am delighted to have that gloss on what she said earlier and I shall go back to see what she said in the first instance.

National Lottery

10. **Mr. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the effect of the introduction of a national lottery on the pools industry in Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: It is not possible to say what effect the national lottery might have on the pools industry in Merseyside. This will depend on the success of the lottery, on the sources of its revenue and on the management of the pools companies in responding to any changes in their market.

Ms. Eagle: I am surprised by the Minister's response. He did not acknowledge the report that his Department received, which estimates that the national lottery will lead to 1,000 job losses on Merseyside. Does he accept that many in Merseyside fear that up to 6,000 jobs will be lost? What is his comment on that?

Mr. Key: It is pure speculation. I cannot comment on a confidential report, which we shall not publish for the reasons that my right hon. Friend gave to the Select Committee on National Heritage. The community on Merseyside has responded remarkably to changes in the past and I see no reason to suppose that the pools industry will not continue to innovate in the way that it has in the past few weeks, after some 40 years of playing the sleeping beauty, and that there will be increasing success in other employment on Merseyside.

11. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many staff will be employed at the administration centre for the national lottery; and what consideration he has given to basing this centre in south Dorset.

Mr. Key: The national lottery will create a good many more jobs than just in its core operation. People will be able to run games under sub-licences by agreement with the main operator and all the games will generate new printing, marketing and retailing business. The location of the administrative centre will be a matter for potential operators to consider, but it is likely that the other operations will be scattered throughout the kingdom. It is not possible to say how many staff will be employed at the administrative centre of the main licence holder, as this will depend on the decisions of the operator.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply—and very informative it was. Will he say when he envisages a company being set up to run the lottery so that I can take my constituents to see it and explain what a wonderful place south Dorset would be to base such a company, both for the wonderful work force that we have and for the wonderful working and living conditions that we can provide?

Mr. Key: I compliment my hon. Friend on the way in which he has already made representations to my Department, as have a number of other areas in the United Kingdom as far apart as Cornwall and Scotland. The timetable will depend entirely on whether the Labour party can heal its divisions, support the national lottery and get it on to the statute book quickly.

Calcutt Report

12. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the findings of the Calcutt report.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Walsall, North.

Mr. Marshall: It is good to renew my acquaintance with the Secretary of State across the Chamber. Does he accept that although many of us are appalled from time to time by the arrogance and lack of sensitivity of some sections of the tabloid press, that should not be used as an excuse or reason to curb the legitimate activities of the press in exposing hypocrisy and wrong-doing in society, especially if it is perceived as protecting the highest in society?

Will the right hon. Gentleman urge the Chancellor of the Exchequer not to introduce value added tax on newsprint in the forthcoming Budget?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he began his question. Sir David

Calcutt's report, which we published on 14 January, made it clear that the investigation of crime and of individuals in the context of the nature of the job that they do would be perfectly proper defences against the additional offences that he suggested. However, he also made it clear in the report that his concern was the privacy of everyone in the land and that there were a considerable number of cases in which the privacy of private individuals not engaged in the type of jobs to which the hon. Gentleman referred was also being intruded on.

Libraries

13. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met representatives of metropolitan district councils to discuss public library services.

Mr. Key: I spoke in Wakefield on 21 January at the annual meeting of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities art, recreation and tourism committee, whose remit covers public library services. The then Secretary of State for National Heritage discussed library services among other issues with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities when he met its representatives on 27 July 1992.

Ms. Quin: Although my authority of Gateshead has managed against the odds to retain excellent library services, is not it a fact that during the lifetime of this Government shops are opening ever-longer hours while public libraries seem to be open less and less? What will the Minister do to assure metropolitan districts and others that their library services can expand in the future?

Mr. Key: The number of libraries has expanded by about 1 per cent. in the past 10 years, but library services are changing—they are not static. I wish that people would grasp the nettle in that respect. I have had to learn from professional librarians and the best councils that library services are changing rapidly. It is no longer merely a question of ensuring that their doors are open from nine to five, six days a week; libraries have to meet the demands of the people who want to use them, not only for book services but as resource centres. That often means that libraries will open flexible and different hours—open for some and shut for others. What matters is that there is a flexible response to meet the overall need and maintain overall standards.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great strengths of the library service nationwide in the past few years has been to increase the provision of specialist services, especially in music and children's libraries? Will he join me in welcoming the constructive steps taken by librarians throughout the country, and certainly in my constituency?

Mr. Key: I gladly do so and I also acknowledge that professionals in the library service have met the challenge, often in the face of criticism from their own authorities.

National Lottery

14. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent discussions he has had with the pools promoters concerning the introduction of the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: I met representatives of the pools companies on 9 December last year.

Mr. Hughes: Whatever the merits or otherwise of a national lottery, does the Secretary of State appreciate that Britain has 3 million people out of work? It now appears that several thousand more jobs in the pools industry are at risk, including 1,000 in Cardiff. What plans do the Government have to alleviate the position?

Mr. Brooke: I totally understand the spirit in which the hon. Gentleman asks his question. Although it is difficult to calibrate the precise consequences, I believe that one of the consequences of the national lottery will be a considerable expansion in the construction industry because it is envisaged that the majority of the projects on which the money will be spent through the distributors will be capital projects.

Tourism

15. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the latest estimate of the number of tourists visiting Britain.

Mr. Key: In the first 10 months of 1992, there were an estimated 15·4 million visits to the United Kingdom by overseas residents—8 per cent. more than in the equivalent period of 1991.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that those are encouraging figures and that they have probably been accelerated by currency movements since 16 September? Does he also agree that if we are to attract more tourists to London, it is essential that we improve public transport within London, especially the Northern line?

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend is right. Some 70 per cent. of all tourists coming to this country start their visits in London and then move outwards. Transport is one of the items discussed by the Cabinet committee on London, a member of which is my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London, who, I am delighted to say, is in the House today.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

27. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the effect of the introduction of the citizens charter on people of pensionable age; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): The citizens charter calls on public services to take account of the needs of all their users, including pensioners. Where appropriate, charters include specific standards for pensioners. The Benefits Agency charter, for example, contains a standard for dealing with claims for retirement pension.

Mr. O'Brien: How does the Minister explain Government policies on the financing of local government which result in further cuts in warden services, meals on wheels and home help services? How does he equate the cuts in those services with the promise made by the Prime

Minister, when he presented the citizens charter, that there would be an improvement in services to everyone? Will the Minister explain?

Mr. Jackson: Whatever the resources provided—the amount of resources provided to support pensioners has increased substantially under this Government—they can be best applied if they are properly managed. The citizens charter is all about improving the management of public services. The people who most depend on public services are those who have most at stake in the citizens charter.

Mr. Fisher: What would the Minister say to a pensioner who looks through the citizens charter first annual report and who finds scarcely a single mention of the words "pensioner" or "pension"? Is not that yet another example of how the Government ignore the needs of 10·5 million pensioners? In addition, pensioners in this country have lower incomes than pensioners in any other European Community country. What exactly will the Minister do, through the citizens charter, for pensioners or for other groups, such as the 1·5 million people with disabilities? They are totally ignored by the citizens charter.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman, speaking for the Labour party, is in no position to lecture us about pensioners. Pensioners' total net incomes under this Government have increased 10 times more than they did under the previous Labour Government. The citizens charter is for citizens, and pensioners are citizens. Pensioners resent being put into a special box by the hon. Gentleman and by people who think as he does. Pensioners want to be treated alongside others. They are users of public services as others are. They may use a given public service more extensively, so to that extent they will benefit from improvements in the delivery of that service. We have to think of the charter as a citizens charter, not as a charter for special interest groups.

28. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what new citizens charters he intends to introduce.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): We plan to publish a new charter for further and higher education, for Scottish and Welsh heritage and for the Northern Ireland buses and courts services. Existing charters will be revised to raise standards on a continuous cycle.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Chancellor know that more people are robbed and cheated by their own banks and insurance companies than are burgled and mugged by the criminal fraternity? May we have a charter that will protect people against exorbitant bank charges, against fraudulent home income bonds and against poor-value endowment policies and personal pensions? When does the Chancellor intend to act to protect people against the greed, incompetence and dishonesty of banks and insurance companies?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman goes much wider than my brief. The citizens charter is about the management of public services and that is a big enough task for now.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that other Governments are now following our lead? Will he consider introducing a new charter—an adopters charter—for couples wishing to adopt, as many couples currently face far too many bureaucratic obstacles?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can certainly accept the first part of my hon. Friend's comments. At the conference just before Christmas, representatives from a number of countries were interested in our approach and we had much that was positive to discuss. On his second point, I know, from my experience as Secretary of State for Health, that my hon. Friend is a considerable expert and has been a campaigner in respect of adoption. I do not believe that a specific charter would necessarily be the right way forward, but I should be happy to discuss it with him.

Charter Programme

29. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total cost of the charter programme; and what proposals there are for more charters.

Mr. Waldegrave: The charter applies to all public services and is reflected in their individual expenditure programmes. Centrally, the charter unit spent £1·6 million in 1991-92.

Mr. Banks: When is the Minister going to accept that this is a complete waste of public money? The charters are just a public relations exercise: it is rather like putting make-up on a corpse. The best way to make public services work is to invest in them and not to issue glossy pamphlets which are nothing more than a PR puff for the Downing street train spotter.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is perhaps the definitive member of the chattering classes. The citizens charter is of more interest and of more use to those who rely primarily on those services. That is why we are putting such political force behind achieving those improvements. The hon. Gentleman might direct his London weight to improvements closer to home—perhaps in some of the services provided by Labour Lambeth council.

Mr. Tracey: May I take my right hon. Friend further on that point? Will he send in advisers to suggest an appropriate charter for the unfortunate people in Lambeth who have, it seems, been so ill-treated recently by their local authority?

Mr. Waldegrave: A number of Opposition Members, including most honourably the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey), would support what my hon. Friend said. Members of the Tribune group are also much committed to that. *Tribune* recently wrote:

> "Labour local government is lacklustre and incompetent. In a few cases it is simply corrupt and nepotistic. This is nothing new."

That is the view of the Tribune group, members of which are present on the Opposition Benches at this very moment.

Ms. Mowlam: I think that we will leave the question of lacklustre when it comes to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Would not it be more appropriate to consider whether there may have been any conflict of interest or morally dubious practices in respect of the market testing part of the citizens charter and consider also the London conference, to which the Chancellor has just referred,

where KPMG Peat Marwick, which hosted the reception, also received at least 36 contracts last year from Government Departments in respect of market testing? Will the right hon. Gentleman give a commitment today that, in the interests of open government, in his forthcoming paper he will publish the names of those companies which applied for contracts and at what price they were awarded? Surely the British public have a right to know.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not know whether the hon. Lady is making a serious allegation of fraud. The contracts were all properly placed according to all the rules of contracting. Those matters are entirely open. If the hon. Lady wishes to pursue the matter, perhaps she had better consider what she says a little more carefully.

Science (White Paper)

30. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what meetings he has recently held with representatives of the engineering industry to disucss the scope of his forthcoming White Paper on science.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have had a wide range of meetings with engineering interests and have also received a large number of excellent submissions from representatives of the engineering industry, copies of which have been placed in the Library. I shall be publishing a White Paper in the spring which will address not only science but technology and engineering, too.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in view of the importance of engineering to the national economy, his White Paper on science should emphasise the role of engineering research?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend and the White Paper will cover that ground in, I hope, a thorough way.

Mr. Simon Hughes: In the year of the 150th anniversary of the Brunel tunnel under the Thames—the first tunnel under the Thames—from Rotherhithe to Wapping, will the Secretary of State make sure that the Engineering Employers Federation gets maximum support in its objective of maximising the number of young people who go into engineering and are excited by engineering as good training and a good career thereafter? The federation is to run a course and a programme of events in London in the autumn. Will the right hon. Gentleman give it full Government support?

Mr. Waldegrave: I certainly honour the centenary and a half to which the hon. Gentleman refers, although I hope that some of our modern engineering projects are slightly better financed than some of those of that great engineer. There is good news that the number of engineers is increasing—by about 2 per cent. for those on engineering first degree courses over the past five years. That is a recovery from the previous dip. I will certainly study the action in the autumn to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Citizens Charter

31. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans his Department has to publish more public service performance indicators as part of the citizens charter campaign.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Extending performance indicators across the public sector into matters such as local government and the NHS is at the heart of the citizens charter commitment to give people more information about the way in which their public services are working.

As a result of the citizens charter, people now have access to information on the performance of schools, local authorities, the NHS and British Rail.

Mrs. Knight: Does my hon. Friend agree that publication of those performance indicators has resulted in a sea change in the amount of information that local people receive about their council services? Does he agree further that the reason why Labour has been so critical about the proposals is that they have shown up the fact that Labour local authorities, not just Lambeth, but my council, Derbyshire county council, too, provide poor services at high cost?

Mr. Jackson: The league tables of performance of local authorities will, of course, be critical in enabling people to make good choices and sensible decisions about not only what kind of services they want but what they will do when they go to the ballot box.

Mr. Pike: Would not the many millions of people, particularly women and elderly people, who feel trapped in their homes in the evening feel better about the Government's performance indicators and charters if there were more police on the streets, more street lighting and more manning at railway stations so that they could go out at night and be able to enjoy their lives to the full? Is not that the type of indicator that we should have for the people of this country?

Mr. Jackson: The issue is not just the level of resources provided, but the way in which they are managed. If we look at the way in which Labour local authorities have spent money, we will see that of the top 20 community charge-levying councils, 17 are Labour controlled and the other three are under no overall control, yet they all show up badly on performance. That is what we need to focus on.

Scientific Research

32. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the value of the private sector contribution to scientific research within the universities.

Mr. Robert Jackson: In 1990 British education institutions received around £300 million from non-Government sources in support of research and development, about half of which came from business.

Mr. Coombs: Has my hon. Friend had an opportunity to study the Economic and Social Research Council's report entitled "Turning New Ideas into Business Success"? What role does my hon. Friend envisage for the private sector, in conjunction with universities and other places of higher and further education, in ensuring that the new ideas for which this country is so famous are turned more successfully into prosperity for our people than was the case in the past?

Mr. Jackson: I like to think of my hon. Friend as the Member for the research council because its headquarters is in his constituency. We have looked at the ESRC report

on the innovation agenda—it is an interesting paper—and we shall draw conclusions in the White Paper, but it has been one of our themes in the 1980s and through the history of this Government to promote stronger mechanisms of interaction, which is one of the themes of the innovation agenda, between people who use technologies and the people who are developing them. It is not a one-way process of inventing ideas and then transferring them into the marketplace. We need to have a marketplace sending signals back into the communities that produce ideas. That is very much the theme of that paper, the theme of our policy and the theme of our thinking on the White Paper.

Public Servants (Secret Society Membership)

33. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will require public servants to disclose publicly membership of secret societies.

Mr. Robert Jackson: No, Madam.

Mr. Mullin: May I put it to the Minister that there is absolutely no point in standing at the Dispatch Box mouthing platitudes about the need for open government if he is not prepared to lift a finger against the greatest secret society, which has an iron grip on many of our most respected public institutions?

May I put it to him further that nothing undermines public confidence in public institutions so much as the knowledge that many public servants are members of a secret society, one of whose aims is mutual advancement?

Mr. Jackson: I am sorry to disturb the even tenor of the hon. Gentleman's prepared supplementary question. I do not regard it as a platitude to say that we are against unjustified invasions of privacy. I think that that is the point here. I point out to the hon. Gentleman, perhaps in a more constructive way, that we already have rules that require individuals in the civil service to avoid any conflicts of interest. There are rules already in place in the civil service code. When civil servants become aware of a conflict of interest, they must remove it and, if appropriate, report it to the senior officer. We are looking again at the civil service code to see whether those provisions need to be sharpened.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend have any information about whether the Labour party has any secret societies, especially in local government?

Mr. Jackson: One of the interesting things about secret societies is that one never knows who the members of them are.

Edinburgh Summit (Science and Technology)

34. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he has taken on measures on science and technology agreed at the Edinburgh summit.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following the agreement on future financing that the Community reached at Edinburgh, member states were able to agree, under my chairmanship of the Research Council, to a top-up of the third research and development framework programme of 900 mecu. That will give stability to European Community research in the period before the fourth framework comes into effect.

Mr. Jones: Will the Chancellor confirm that, in those negotiations, he insisted on a budget for European science and technology of £500 million less than the original proposal? Does he believe that that is a great achievement for someone who is supposed to be advancing science and technology across Europe?

Mr. Waldegrave: The finally agreed figure was 700 mecu lower than the highest figure proposed by the Commission. Spain, Germany and a number of other countries did not believe that the figure was realistic at all and nor did we. A reasonable compromise was reached which will protect European science. We value European science and the United Kingdom does well out of it. It was a sensible compromise.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Minister aware that the Government's unilateral decision to cancel the fast reactor programme and pull out of the European collaborator programme was a slap in the face for the development of the European initiative and simply passed a long-established British technology to the Japanese? Is he proud of that?

Mr. Waldegrave: I know of the hon. Gentleman's commitment to the project. I believe that the right decision was taken.

Citizens Charter

35. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent contacts he has had with academics and research groups, in the United Kingdom and abroad, to discuss the principles of the citizens charter initiative.

Mr. Robert Jackson: My right hon. Friend and I, and the citizens charter unit, regularly meet a wide range of academics and research groups. The dialogue helps to ensure that the charter stays at the forefront of public service reform.

Mr. Ottaway: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Has he noticed that, despite the banter from Labour Members, many on the left have warmly welcomed the principles of the citizens charter? *The Guardian*, referring to the publication of exam results, said the other day:

"Parents have more information than they had before. No democrat should regard this as a reverse."

Does the Minister agree with that?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is right. In general, the Government strongly welcome new thinking from the academic community which can help to foster new ways of providing public services. For example, the influence of Messrs. Gaebler and Osborne on the theme of reinventing Government is a positive force in the United States and is having a big impact on the new administration there. We were delighted to welcome Mr. Gaebler to our European Community citizens charter conference last month and Dr. Osborne will be coming here shortly.

My hon. Friend made particular reference to people on the left. There are home-grown think-tanks of academics, some of them leaning to the left, who have been useful and

have made interesting comments. For example, Anna Coote from the Institute for Public Policy Research said of the citizens charter:

"There is much to applaud in the charter. It is genuinely trying to shake the public sector out of a complacency induced by decades of monopoly supply."

Mr. Winnick: Without wishing to put forward too bold a proposal, when the Minister is discussing charter initiatives and the rest, would it be possible to have another charter for the 3 million or more unemployed people in the United Kingdom to be able to work? What about their rights? A genuine charter, not simply cosmetic nonsense, for the unemployed would be useful.

Mr. Jackson: People who are unemployed benefit from the operation of the charter because they make extensive use of Government-provided public services. All those services are operating according to charter standards. The mechanisms of the charter exist to help people to obtain better public services. That is what it is all about.

Mr. Duncan: Is my hon. Friend aware that, increasingly across the European Community, administrations are examining their decisions by comparing them with government across Europe? Does he agree that many countries in the Community, such as Germany and France, want to visit London to see how the citizens charter operates? Will he do all that he can to ensure that our experience is shared with them? *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Jackson: Despite the jeering from Opposition Members, my hon. Friend is right. The experience of the 1980s was that we led the world in privatisation. The experience of the 1990s will be that we shall lead the world in public service reform. The conference in London to which I referred was attended by people from throughout the Community and the world, who were extremely interested in what we were doing to improve the management of public services.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

Veterinary Surgeons (Qualifications)

That the draft Veterinary Surgeons Qualifications (EEC Recognition) (Amendment) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Scottish Hospital Trust Scheme

That the draft Scottish Hospital Trust Scheme 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Railways Tariffs

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (International Railways Tariffs Agreements) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Point of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you yet received from the Government the terms of reference for their inquiry on the Ouseley report, which showed that Labour councillors in Lambeth had been found guilty of fraud, corruption, negligence and intimidation? As those councillors have managed to turn that area into a political cesspit, should not we have the terms of reference of that report at once?

Madam Speaker: Order. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is, no, I have not.

Orders of the Day

National Lottery etc. Bill

[The Third Report from the National Heritage Committee on the National Lottery etc. Bill, HC 389 of Session 1992-93 is relevant.]

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I must tell the House that there is a great deal of interest in this matter and that, therefore, I have had to limit speeches between the hours of 6 pm and 8 pm to 10 minutes. I hope that those hon. Members who are fortunate enough to be called outside those hours will exercise voluntary restraint on the length of their speeches.

I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am delighted to be here today to assist the House in its consideration of the National Lottery etc Bill, which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary presented on 16 December. My father spoke on the occasion of the introduction of premium bonds more than 35 years ago —an occasion of some controversy when there was some criticism of the Government for introducing a form of state gambling which would rot the moral foundations of our society. Whether or not this has been the outcome is for others to decide. Those loving grandparents who buy premium bonds for their grandchildren may be a little disconcerted to be reminded of the controversy which the bonds created when they were first proposed.

Premium bonds went on to become a runaway success and something of an institution. The Bill before the House today proposes the establishment of a further institution, the first national lottery in the United Kingdom since 1826. That lottery fell into disrepute, chiefly because the main focus had turned from the lottery itself to bets placed on its outcome. We hope that our lottery will be well-regulated. We have sought to make specific provision to prevent the kind of abuse which beset its predecessor.

The Bill's provisions have attracted widespread, popular support in the country, both in the response to the White Paper presented by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)—out of more than 200 responses there were only 17 objections —and in the reaction since the Bill was published. In fact, one of the most common reactions was, "At last—but why have we alone of all the western countries had to wait this long before being allowed the opportunity to have a lottery which will benefit the people of this country?"

In establishing the national lottery we are, of course, establishing a major new industry. That is clearly a benefit in itself. But this new industry will be operating firmly within the framework of what I might call the vision of the national lottery—an enterprise the primary aim of which is to raise money for activities which will improve the quality of life of the citizens of this country.

In much of the business that we undertake in this House, we must be mindful of wider perspectives. In the case of the national lottery there is a clear European perspective. If we did not introduce such a Bill with such

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obvious public support as the one before us today, we believe that the general public's desire to play the lottery would still be satisfied—eventually by playing foreign lotteries, whose sole purpose is to improve the quality of life of the citizens of other countries. Those lotteries would continue to be unlawful, but with modern telecommunications it will not be possible to stop people participating. The choice therefore is not between one lottery and none, but between benefit from the lottery in the United Kingdom and benefit abroad. Hon. Members are being asked, therefore, to approve a measure which will ensure that the public thirst to participate in lotteries is harnessed to good effect through enhancing the national life of the United Kingdom.

The national lottery will benefit five broad categories —charities, arts, sport, the heritage, and a new fund established to celebrate the year 2000 and the beginning of the third millennium. These are clearly all areas that involve the achievement of excellence, the opportunity to participate and the extension of choice in leisure and voluntary activity. They add to people's lives and thus the well-being of the nation as a whole.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What assurances can the Secretary of State give the House that the money from a national lottery, if one is instituted, will not be used to replace central Government funding for a number of the areas that he has designated? If the Government no longer publish their forward plans for funding the arts, how can we ever know whether they have taken the national lottery money into consideration when making a settlement for the arts and other areas?

Mr. Brooke: The subject of additionality will obviously interest the House and I shall come to it if the hon. Member will bide with me.

Using the lottery money in that way, we can reinforce a sense of national pride in the citizens of the United Kingdom. We can create new public facilities—in inner cities or in rural areas—which will encourage citizens' involvement in activities that will broaden their outlook and experience.

Hon. Members may be aware of the example being set by Chris Eubank who, by making Moss Side his training base, hopes to lead by example and persuade the young people there that the opportunity to participate in sport offers an alternative to the world of drugs and crime. That is precisely the sort of benefit that the lottery is intended to bring to the nation. Sports facilities in inner cities, better arts facilities, preserving the nation's heritage, allowing wider access to facilities and generating additional wealth through the encouragement of tourism—the lottery will fund all those.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My right hon. Friend is no doubt aware that the lottery would not only help with other activities in rural areas, but could fling a lifeline to village shops if they were allowed to sell tickets.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I shall come to the method of selling tickets.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way; I realise that he has been generous in giving way. He has mentioned the inner cities. He will be aware that in cities such as Glasgow, Liverpool and Cardiff people are concerned about the implications of a lottery for jobs. We are gambling with people's jobs in those areas without any evidence that they will not go out of existence as a result of the introduction of a national lottery. At the minimum, can he assure the House that organisers of the national lottery will not be able to do anything that the pools industry is not allowed to do and that it will have the same opportunities to advertise and to offer the same types of promotion and prizes?

Mr. Brooke: I give the hon. Gentleman the same assurance that I gave to the pools promoters when they visited me on 9 December. The Government will listen carefully to the arguments put forward on each of the concessions that they are requesting rather than respond to a blanket request.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North) *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: Knowing the hon. Gentleman's constituency, I think that he wants to address me on the subject of the pools. I shall come to that case in a little while and guarantee that I shall give way then.

The charitable and voluntary sectors are an important part of our national life. They encourage the participation of large numbers of citizens and carry out vital work in all areas of life—whether it be in villages or in inner cities. Those activities are important both in terms of their final outcome and the way in which they involve large numbers of people in a creative and fulfilling way. Those activities will also be funded by the lottery.

Any new proposal naturally raises worries about its impact. In particular, the pools companies have been lobbying all who would listen. Their concerns are reflected in the reasoned amendment tabled by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). It would be wrong to view the lottery from the perspective of the pools companies and a pity in that, as I hope to demonstrate, it shows a remarkably narrow viewpoint and fails to address what the national lottery is all about. It is also a pity as it shows a woeful lack of appreciation of the public support for the Bill.

Mr. George Howarth: If the case that I think that the Secretary of State is about to try to establish—that the lottery will not affect the pools companies—is to stand up to a credibility test, why does he not publish the GAH group report, commissioned by his Department, so that we may have an objective, independent assessment of the likely impact?

Mr. Brooke: The arrival of any new institution in our national life is bound to affect people, and I recognise that the pools industry will be affected by the national lottery. I do not share the pools promoters' view about the scale of that effect. I think that the House is fairly familiar with the GAH report. We commissioned consultants to draw it up and they talked to those around the world who run lotteries. The consultants were given confidential information on condition that it would remain confidential.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I shall give way in a moment, but I think that the spirit in which I am making the speech is clear to the House. I should like to spend a little time dealing with pools matters as I believe that it will assist the House.

Introducing a new industry has always aroused fears in those who imagine that their livelihoods might be under threat. Change will always engender fear among those who have operated in a stable, unchanging environment for a number of years. It might also encourage those who have been looking for a chance to change the regulatory framework under which they work to achieve long-cherished ambitions. It provides a perfect occasion for the skills of the lobbyist to come to the fore and to divert the attention of the House away from the central objective.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Will the Secretary of State comment on the inquiry that Littlewoods commissioned Coopers and Lybrand to carry out? The inquiry found that several thousand jobs would be lost and employees would be retrenched outside Cardiff and Liverpool. In my constituency, 600 jobs are certain to go as a result of the National Lottery etc. Bill.

Mr. Brooke: All such assumptions and hypotheses assume that we live in a wholly unchanging world. Since I met the pools promoters on 9 December, they have already made significant changes to their arrangements which postdate the Coopers and Lybrand report.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Is the Secretary of State aware that pools industries in a number of countries have gone to the wall and many jobs have been lost? Pools companies and others who know the industry in detail have estimated that thousands of jobs will go to the wall. Is the Secretary of State also aware that this nation has one of the highest levels of gambling, and there is talk of £2 per head being spent on gambling? Will the Secretary of State include that statistic in his thoughts on poor families?

Mr. Brooke: I have seen the observations made about the experiences of other countries. When I have read those accounts—which are all particular to specific countries and situations—it has seemed to me that the pools promoters pay insufficient tribute to their own skill, longevity and the impressive role that they currently play in our national life.

Therefore, it would be a pity were the House to lose sight of the real purpose of today's debate. We are here to debate an opportunity. We are here to debate a measure that will create a new multi-billion pound business that will benefit our national life. We are talking of an enterprise that might create about 1,000 core jobs in its central operation, with many others in associated service industries, which will help to underpin the incomes of thousands of retail businesses throughout the country—as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) said—and provide many exciting projects for the construction industry.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Secretary of State came under strong pressure, as did the Under-Secretary of State, during Question Time when dealing with employment, or the lack of it. In Cardiff, more than 20,000 are out of work. How many are jobless in the Liverpool area?

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): About 70,000.

Mr. Brooke: I am familiar with the figure which was helpfully provided by the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). As I said during Question Time, the nature of the opportunity for the construction industry that will be afforded by the capital projects—the erection of buildings—is not taken into account in the calculations.

Sir Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): Before we leave the important subject of the impact on employment in a particular area, it is only right to say that reference has already been made to the GAH report. I ask my right hon. Friend to confirm—leaving aside any confidential information which may have appeared in this report—that the conclusions of the report were that, in spite of the advantages which possibly the United Kingdom pools have over their European counterparts, the impact is assessed—this is without any changes—as a reduction in revenues of 17·5 per cent. overall. It is estimated that job losses will amount to 1,100. I am aware of what my right hon. Friend said about the improvement in job prospects arising from the national lottery, but I do not think that the two things are mutually exclusive. Will he confirm that these are the conclusions that came from the report?

Mr. Brooke: The quotations from the GAH report, which appeared in *The Guardian* on 27 November, referred to numbers such as my hon. Friend has quoted. They were obviously a particular quotation from the report. They were, to a degree, quoted out of context in that the figures in the GAH report—in this respect I do not think that I am offending confidentiality since it was the view of the consultants—applied if the organisers of the pools themselves did nothing to respond, which we know they have already done. The focus of the debate should be on the real opportunity which we now have, and which we must now seize, irrespective of party affiliation, to provide maximum benefit to the quality of life. We owe it to our constituents to get this measure right and to give them what they clearly want.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The Minister has referred to quality of life. Does he realise that there will be injury to the quality of life of many who rely on local charities if no provision is made within the Bill to defend local charities? The scratch card was introduced by local charities, and it seems that it is now to be taken over by the national lottery. There is nothing in the Bill that provides a real safeguard for local charities, which suggests that they will be damaged. Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the interests of such charities will be safeguarded and that there will be no reduction in the quality of life of those who depend on local charities?

Mr. Brooke: I am aware that the hon. Gentleman had an exchange with my hon. Friend during——

Mr. George Howarth: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A few moments ago the Secretary of State was kind enough to give way to me. I took the opportunity to press him on the report which his Department commissioned from the GAH group. Some moments later the hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton) quoted directly from the report. The Secretary of State declined to publish the report when I pressed him earlier. The hon. Member for Crosby, as I understand it, quoted directly from the report, and the Secretary of State then referred to *The Guardian* but confirmed the points that the hon. Gentleman had made. In the light of your earlier rulings

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on this point, Madam Speaker, should not the report now be put on the Table? Should not it be made available to right hon. and hon. Members during the debate?

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that the Secretary of State wants to make a point of order.

Mr. Brooke: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I want the House to be clear about what we are discussing. I have said that we will not publish the GAH report. In particular, I said that in the aftermath of the report in *The Guardian* on 27 November, which quoted isolated parts. My hon. Friend quoted from *The Guardian* quotations, and I was responding to that.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I ask you to read the *Hansard* report of the debate because I believe that I heard the Secretary of State confirm that the contents of the report were as published in *The Guardian?* Furthermore, I believe that I heard him then qualify that document. Would you please check *Hansard,* Madam Speaker? It would be most unreasonable if the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) were to go amiss and if it were not to be studied by the Clerks of the House with a view to the document being placed on the Table of the House.

Mr. Wareing: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I heard—and I hope that you did, too—the Secretary of State say that he did not think that he was breaching confidentiality and then quoted a view expressed in the report, not in *The Guardian* version of the report. Is not there either a convention or a reference in "Erskine May" that provides that when a report is referred to in a debate in the House it must be published or at least placed in the Library?

Madam Speaker: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, it must be a direct quote by the Secretary of State. I shall certainly look carefully at *Hansard* to see precisely what has been said on the matter.

Mr. Brooke: I have undertaken to listen to the legitimate concerns of the pools companies and to consider amendments to the Bill as they are tabled. The Bill is designed to take such amendments and I am prepared to be persuaded by arguments of high quality. I have to say that I am yet to be convinced—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) knows me to be a generous and fair-minded man. I am not minded to give way on concessions that hang on the Bill as a flag of convenience.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): An interesting point is whether the money that is taken in taxation on the pools investment automatically and by definition goes to good causes, because the Government decide how to spend it. Is not there some rough equivalence between the money that goes to good causes through the taxation of pools and the money that might otherwise go directly to good causes through the national lottery?

Mr. Brooke: It is true that the pools promoters have argued that taxation is money that goes to good causes. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend is endorsing that. The comparison is not absolutely precise.

The pools companies refer most often to employment and have managed to worry their employees, even to the extent of asking——

Mr. William O'Brien: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Secretary of State was about to answer points that I raised in an intervention when he was interrupted by points of order. Is the right hon. Gentleman now able to answer my points?

Madam Speaker: It is not very often that I get so many genuine points of order. I can well understand that sometimes we get a little confused in the debate across the Floor. I am sure that the Secretary of State has it in mind to answer the hon. Gentleman's points.

Mr. Brooke: I apologise to you, Madam Speaker, and to the hon. Gentleman for the fact that, as a consequence of the points of order, I did not immediately respond to the hon. Gentleman's points.

Mr. Tony Banks: Genuine points.

Mr. Brooke: Yes, genuine points. As the hon. Gentleman knows from his exchange with my hon. Friend earlier today, there are provisions in the Bill to protect the position of small lotteries. If he chooses to enlarge his remarks in his speech later in the debate, I am sure that my hon. Friend will respond further.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Many right hon. and hon. Members who have misgivings about the Bill will be greatly encouraged by my right hon. Friend's remark that the Government will listen carefully to reasoned amendments. Will my right hon. Friend share with us his thoughts about clause 12 and the proposed regulations, which deal with lottery marketing and advertising? While some of us have already suggested that there should be even competition in the marketing of pools, bingo, and the lottery, we are equally gravely concerned that the Government should not go too far down the road——

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot allow interventions that constitute a speech.

Mr. Brooke: I regret, Madam Speaker, that when a right hon. or hon. Member intervenes I am not readily able to anticipate the length of his intervention.

Madam Speaker: Order. I will take care of that.

Mr. Brooke: I know that you, Madam Speaker, agree with me that it is most uncharacteristic of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) to misbehave in the way that you, Madam Speaker, thought that he might have done. I will address specifically my hon. Friend's question about clause 12 when I deal with the clauses in general.

The pools companies suggested to their 70,000 part-time collectors that they should write to their Members of Parliament asking for a change in the regulations to allow sales in retail outlets. Employees might reasonably fear, despite the companies' assertion to the contrary, that such a change could itself pose a threat to their jobs in the long run.

The pools appear to be a well-managed operation. They have already started to change their rules—which they would not have done if it were not for the prospect of a national lottery. To suggest that they cannot adapt their management or marketing strategy within the existing framework of regulation is to underestimate their considerable resourcefulness, to which I can personally pay tribute.

As the House may know, my Department commissioned a report, to which I have already referred, based on confidential information supplied by lotteries world wide. It examined the key determinants for a successful lottery and also touched on the likely effects on the pools industry. I will not, for the reasons that I gave, publish that report, simply because the information supplied for it was given on the understanding that it would not be published. However, I will refer to certain assertions made by the pools companies on the basis of particular leaks of that research.

The report considered—and here I am going back over ground that I covered in answers to my hon. Friends—that, only on the hypothesis that the pools did nothing to change the management of their operation, their turnover might be affected in such a way that the pools might lose 1,100 jobs in their central operations nationwide. However, we have all seen that the pools are well able to adapt to change, to preserve their own interests.

The report did not take into account either the existing intentions of the pools, with or without the advent of the lottery. Given the pools' tendency to cut their work force in recent years and a drive to increase mechanisation that was in place long before the lottery was suggested, I wonder whether the pools companies themselves would be able to guarantee existing levels of employment if there were no lottery. I am not aware of such an undertaking. In fact, it seems that the pools themselves have been seeking for some time, through voluntary redundancies, to reduce their work force. It might have assisted the House if the pools, in their lobbying, had made clear their own strategies in relation to employment.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend mentioned the impending mechanisation of parts of the pools' operation, which I understand will lead to the loss of some jobs. Is it not true that, in the 20 years to 1971, pools companies lost 12,000 jobs and that in the 20 years since 1971 they have lost a further 6,000 jobs? With technology, logically they will lose more.

Mr. Brooke: I have seen figures similar to those quoted by my hon. Friend, though they were not necessarily precisely the same. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend's point is well taken.

Some right hon. and hon. Members may find the argument that the pools do not have a level playing field quite seductive. I counter that by reminding the House that we are talking about adjacent playing fields for different games rather than the same field. If the pools were, as it were, playing the same game on the same field, perhaps the odds would be tipped in their favour. They have loyal players and established distribution networks; their position is strong against any newcomer—especially one that, like the lottery, will have to start from scratch and appeal to everyone.

In countries with lotteries, the profile of those who play almost directly matches the profile of the population overall. It goes far wider than the profile of those who spend on other gambling, including the pools. Spending on lotteries is drawn from marginal disposable income. The more successful the lottery, the broader the range of expenditure from which it will attract funds.

Lotteries do not attract the serious gambler; the odds are too long. They attract those who want the chance to win, and to know that the money that they pay will go to good causes. Lotteries are not compulsive or addictive in the way that other games of skill and chance can be: they do not encourage excessive participation. There is no current product in the United Kingdom market place quite like that of the national lottery. That is why I warn hon. Members against looking too closely at what may seem to be existing analogues. Instead, I urge them to look beyond, to what the lottery can achieve for everyone.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): In what way would the operation of the pools have to change, to place them on the same level playing field rather than an adjacent one?

Mr. Brooke: I was talking about the concessions that the pools operators were seeking, because they wanted exactly the same rules as would apply to the national lottery. During my discussions with the Select Committee, there was considerable debate about whether there was a difference between the pools, as a game of skill——

Mr. Tony Banks: It is not a game of skill.

Mr. Brooke: Let me finish my answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead.

It was suggested to me in the Select Committee that the pools were not an exercise in skill but an exercise in chance. If that is so, why have they not been liable to the provisions of the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976, which is very tightly drawn and would have greatly reduced the sphere of activity in which the pools could have featured? If the pools were a game of chance, as is being implied, they should have been subject to the Act ever since 1976.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), who made a specific point during Question Time.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Does he share my amazement at the lobbying efforts of the football pools operators? As I said earlier, they have enjoyed a monopoly in this country for many years, running what is basically the equivalent of a national lottery. Now they are seeking simply to protect their own interests and to maintain the status quo. They do not like the idea of anyone else running a similar operation that will raise money for good causes—unlike their own game, which raises money for football and profits for themselves.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Burns: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I strongly resent the implication that I have been paid to intervene on my right hon. Friend. I have no financial interest in any company. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]

Madam Speaker: Order. Let us make some progress. *[Interruption.]* Order. I accept what the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) has said, but I did not hear the remark to which he referred. Let us make some progress,

[Madam Speaker]

and let us have some order. *[Interruption.]* Order. I have just told the hon. Member for Chelmsford that I did not hear what was said, although I accept what he himself said. If I did not hear what was said, I cannot ask an hon. Member to withdraw it.

Mr. Brooke: I was about to deal with the specific content of the Bill—

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Of course you are quite right, but the hon. Gentleman over there knows that he made the remark. He should do the decent thing and withdraw it.

Madam Speaker: The hon. and learned Gentleman refers to "the hon. Gentleman over there". As I did not hear the remark, and as I do not know to which hon. Member the hon. and learned Gentleman is now pointing, I cannot deal with the matter.

Mr. Brooke: I have sought to give way generously. As I shall deal next with the provisions of the Bill, perhaps you, Madam Speaker, will allow me to give way to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle), who has been trying to intervene.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): The Secretary of State compared the pools with the national lottery and other forms of gambling. Does he not recognise that the lottery will not be harmless entertainment but another form of gambling?

Mr. Brooke: I have not sought at any stage to deny that the lottery will be at the softer end of the gambling spectrum. The Bill before the House is——

Mr. George Howarth: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I apologise for detaining the House, but the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) is under the impression that I accused him of being paid to lobby in favour of the Bill. If the hon. Gentleman says that that is not so, I unreservedly withdraw what I said. The reason for my confusion, however, is that I understand that the hon. Gentleman works for several lobbying organisations.

Several hon. Members: Oh!

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Burns: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that the hon. Gentleman has in front of him the Register of Members' Interests. If he looks at my entry there, and at previous editions, he will see that I have never been a parliamentary consultant or a lobbyist for any organisation.

Madam Speaker: I think that that clears up the matter nicely. Perhaps we can now make progress.

Mr. Brooke: The Bill before the House is an enabling Bill. It establishes the legality of the national lottery, sets up a regime of licensing and regulation, and establishes the mechanism for distributing money to good causes. It is an innovative and forward-thinking Bill in many respects. The framework it establishes is intended to give maximum flexibility so that the regulator can respond quickly and effectively to changing developments. The lottery will be run by a single private sector operator. The successful company will be licensed by the Director General of the National Lottery—Oflot—who will issue a licence to run the lottery under clause 5 of the Bill. But games will change over time, so there is a separate system for licensing them —the clause 6 licence. This will ensure maximum operational flexibility and will enable Oflot to regulate the rules of proposed games and ensure that they will be more practically able to ensure the maximisation of proceeds.

The rest of part I variously provides for the conditions which may be satisfied before a licence is granted and powers of revocation and enforcement. Key powers for the Secretary of State are contained in clauses 11 and 12. Clause 11 deals with matters on which I can direct the director general with regard to the licence, both in what the licence should contain and what should be taken into account when deciding whether or not a licence should be granted. I am minded to outlaw certain types of game which might be said to lead to potential exploitation of the consumer or might not be subject to sufficient controls —such as telephone games, or games using national insurance numbers, or games which encourage excessive play. I am also minded to outlaw the discounting of tickets and limiting rollover, which will help to avoid abuse.

Clause 12 sets out the areas on which I can regulate the lottery. These will affect people who play the lottery or who sell tickets—those who are not covered by the licence. Under this category, I intend to set a minimum age of 16 for those who can buy or sell tickets, to outlaw the selling of tickets in pubs and betting offices, to specify the information which must appear in any advertisement for the lottery, and to prescribe how the lottery logo should be displayed. Part I also makes provision for a report to be made to me by the director general each year and I am required to lay this report before Parliament. Clause 16 makes the taking of bets on the outcome of the national lottery a ground for the revocation or non-renewal of a bookmaker's permit.

Part II deals with the distribution of proceeds. We must be quite clear that, although this is not Government money, it is money provided by the public, so it must be used in the best possible way. So far as possible, we plan to use existing bodies in order not to duplicate expertise or run counter to existing well-laid strategies.

Clause 20 sets out the proportions to go to each sector —20 per cent. each. These proportions can be amended subject to affirmative resolution, as set out in clause 25, and I intend that the allocation should be considered once a Parliament. With the exception of the millennium fund, no category can disappear completely; it must receive at least 5 per cent. of proceeds. On 31 December 2000, money will stop going into part of the distribution fund that is intended to fund millennium projects—unless I substitute a later date, which again would be subject to affirmative resolution. This is in case it is necessary to accommodate any projects that overrun and might require more time or money for completion.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth) *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I give way to the hon. Member for West Ham.

Mr. Banks: I have not been called West Ham for a long time. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman; it takes me back. What is the Government's objection to bets against the outcome of the lottery? I do not understand

that. If we are going to get into gambling, why not extend the whole area of gambling? Has the right hon. Gentleman ever filled in a football coupon, and does he intend to buy a lottery ticket?

Mr. Brooke: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question was contained in the opening stages of my speech, in which I said that the last lottery disappeared in 1826 simply because interest had shifted. I am sufficiently cautious that I shall not write into the Bill a freedom to do what killed the Bill 167 years ago.

The Bill establishes five equal accounts as a distribution fund into which money is paid. Money for arts and sport is automatically divided further between different distribution bodies. In the case of the arts, this will go to the Arts Council of Great Britain, which covers England, Scotland and Wales, and the Arts Council for Northern Ireland. The Bill proposes that the money should be divided according to a standard formula based on population. For sport, the money is divided between the sports councils for the four nations. It will eventually be divided even further to reflect the creation of the United Kingdom sports commission to deal with strategic UK-wide projects. Its share might be about 15 per cent. The percentages will be changed once the commission is established.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Will the Secretary of State consider ensuring that the money goes directly to the Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Sports Council and Scottish Heritage rather than it having to go through United Kingdom organisations?

Mr. Brooke: As the hon. Gentleman knows from our previous exchanges, money goes directly to the Sports Council. In the case of the arts, it is intended that money will go to the appropriate body in Scotland on a basis which, I hope, will be at least in line with population. We have not specifically written in percentages because it is quite possible that Scottish demand will exceed the population element.

Mr. Enright: Under the canons that the Secretary of State has just set forth, will it be possible out of the lottery for the disused hippodrome in Hemsworth to be converted into a swimming pool?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, with whom I have had previous local exchanges. It might be in the interests of the whole House if I dealt with the rest of the Bill before considering individual projects.

Clause 29 provides for the investment of moneys by the national debt commissioners. The interest from these investments will go into the accounts for the bodies themselves. The bodies will draw down the money at need and may parcel up withdrawals as it suits them.

Clause 24 is intended primarily to give me powers to direct the distributing bodies in the broadest terms on how the money can be used—for example, mainly capital or partnership funding—and how it should be accounted for. The distributive bodies will be responsible for choosing projects for national lottery funding. We expect them to concentrate on projects that would not have been funded from public expenditure.

In planning future expenditure the Government will need to bear in mind the overlaps between the areas benefiting from the lottery and those receiving support from existing expenditure programmes. The Government do not intend, however, that the money provided for the lottery should substitute for that provided in other ways. The proceeds will not be brought within the control total and the Government will not make any case-by-case reduction in conventional expenditure programmes to take account of awards from lottery proceeds.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Will the Secretary of State explain why the sale of tickers is to be prohibited in betting shops? I do not understand the reasoning behind that.

Mr. Brooke: In answer to a question from her colleague a little further down her row, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton, I explained that the lottery was at the softer end of the gambling spectrum. We are not in the business of increasing in other respects the amount of gambling which occurs as a result of its introduction.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brooke: Yes, but my hon. Friend must understand that I have given way many times.

Mr. Carlisle: On the basis of existing public expenditure on sport—perhaps my right hon. Friend will be able to give the House some figures, if not now, later—he will appreciate that there will be a lesser tax take on the pools where, as has already been explained, about 37·5 per cent. is going into football anyway. Has he taken that into account, and is it absolutely certain that the ring fencing of the fund which he described will not be broken by the Treasury, which will possibly take less money because of the national lottery and therefore reduce tax revenue on other forms of gambling?

Mr. Brooke: It may be helpful if I tell my hon. Friend what I was about to say because that would have certain virtues of economy in terms of the House's time.

There has been some suggestion of enshrining additionality within the legislation. I would be most intrigued to see how those putting forward that view would propose it might be achieved, other than by making sure the use of lottery money is transparent at all stages and by ensuring that distributors develop procedures that distinguish between projects funded by the lottery and others. I have already made it clear that that is our intention.

Part of the financial direction that I will give will ensure that lottery money is accounted for and handled in a way that is entirely and transparently different from ordinary programme expenditure. It will be issued in addition to existing financial memoranda which relate to programme expenditure. I realise that clause 24 has caused anxiety in some quarters as appearing to be too sweeping: it is not my intention to exercise the powers in this way. Clause 24 is merely designed to ensure that money which is public money, in so far as it is held and is spent on behalf of the public, should be properly used and should be seen to be properly used. There is no intention that I should use the clause to direct the use of lottery money towards individual projects. I will consider how the intention behind the clause could be clarified and look forward to hearing others' views on this.

[Mr. Brooke]

I think it should be fairly clear why we have chosen the bodies we have in the arts and sports world. In other sectors, the decisions may seem less self-evident. It might assist the House if I were to elaborate on our thinking.

On heritage, we have decided to use the National Heritage Memorial Fund—the fund has proved itself a great success over the past 12 years and many hon. Members from both sides of the House can take a personal pride in that success. They may recall how it was conceived in a Select Committee of this House, and how it was delivered in the National Heritage Act 1980 with the support of all parties. It is a superb example of a truly parliamentary initiative, and it is a success on which we now intend to build.

The fund has the advantage of already having powers to acquire land, buildings and objects of outstanding historical, cultural or scientific interest, and the Bill seeks to extend its powers to build new buildings to house heritage items, and to allow facilities to be paid for which will enhance the public's understanding or enjoyment of the heritage. They also encompass the natural as well as the built heritage. This will better reflect the needs of the heritage sector across the board. The Bill also expands the numbers of trustees from 10 to 14 to reflect its expanded role. We are quite clear that the existing work of the fund should continue, and that its role with regard to the lottery should be additional and distinct.

We considered using the NHMF rather than bodies such as English Heritage very carefully indeed, but English Heritage covers only England and deals only with the built heritage. In Scotland and Wales the equivalent bodies—Historic Scotland and CADW—are executive agencies of Government, while the equivalent in Northern Ireland is a Government Department. None of these bodies covers the countryside, so we would have needed to use the Countryside Commission and other bodies. Using the NHMF simplifies matters considerably. We also needed to be clear that the distributor could not itself be a beneficiary of the lottery.

The NHMF will, of course, need to work closely with bodies such as English Heritage and the Countryside Commission, as well as with the Museums and Galleries Commission, among others. Constructive working relationships are already being established and the Department will do everything it can to support those relationships.

The structure of the proposed charities board has been established in the light of work by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Association of Charitable Foundations. I pay tribute to both bodies for their efforts. Their advice has been extremely helpful and I hope that, directly or indirectly, our proposals will largely address their concerns. Many of their proposals are concerned with detailed practice and procedures, and I am sure that when constituted the new board will also find their views helpful.

The underlying principle behind the proposed board is that it should be as efficient and autonomous as possible, with the ability to ensure an even geographical and sectoral spread of lottery money to beneficiaries. The board will consist of 16 members and a chairman, appointed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. Of the 16, three will be appointed in respect of England, of Northern Ireland and of Scotland and Wales. The Secretaries of State for those last three countries will advise the Home Secretary on their particular representatives. The committees will have devolved decision-making powers, and the board will be able to form other committees as it sees fit. It will be able to co-opt expert but non-executive advisers and to appoint its own staff.

We considered whether we should set up separate boards for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as suggested by the NCVO, but concluded that that would lead to increased bureaucracy and inflexibility. We believe that our approach gives maximum power to the board itself to make its own decisions on allocation. That is surely the right approach.

We intend that proceeds allocated to charities should benefit those which do not qualify under the categories of arts, sport and the heritage. The Home Secretary will have a general power to direct the board on the purposes for which the money may be distributed, the conditions to be satisfied before money may be distributed and the accounting procedures that must be adopted. He will not, however, intervene in the day-to-day operations of the board or in individual decisions. The board wil lay an annual report before Parliament, and it will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Charities have expressed a number of concerns about the likely effect of the national lottery on their overall incomes. While I understand their anxiety, which is perhaps natural in a climate in which fund raising is not always easy, I think that there is no evidence to suggest that charities will inevitably suffer as a result of the lottery. The lottery will be marketed as a lottery, not as a charitable enterprise. The principal attraction of playing will be the prospect of prizes. The feeling that the lottery will also be helping good causes is secondary and non-specific. International experience suggests that the national lottery will not succeed if its marketing is based on this week's good cause, so the charities' own territory will not be encroached upon directly. I am also confident that those who regularly support charities of their choice will continue to do so with the advent of the national lottery.

Mr. Alton: The Secretary of State has referred to the international experience. Does he accept that, after Lotto was introduced in Ireland, all the major charities suffered? Some 16 of them wrote to the Taoiseach saying that the position had reached crisis point and that the third world charity Tocaire had suffered considerably as a result of the introduction of the lottery.

Mr. Brooke: It is fortunate that my next paragraph relates to Ireland.

Evidence from Ireland is often cited, but I have to say that the evidence is contradictory and I would not advance it as conclusive evidence in one direction or the other. I hear from the charities themselves that some charities' incomes fell. Yet I read a report by DKM Consultants which showed that the biggest 20 charities' real incomes rose by around 30 per cent. in real terms and that overall charities' incomes rose by 19 per cent. in real terms. That was in a time of recession when in the United Kingdom the charitable household survey published by the Charities Aid Foundation showed that individual charitable giving had decreased by about one third. Significantly, much of the sense of a decrease in donations was based on a belief

amongst the charities surveyed that their incomes would have increased by 40 per cent. if there had been no lottery. Therefore, we must be careful about concluding too much from the Irish experience.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Is not it a fact that charitable giving has declined in Northern Ireland over the same period, although there is no national lottery there?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. If that is so, it is a matter of distress to me because the people of Northern Ireland have a notable reputation for charitable giving.

What we can do is make it quite clear that charities will benefit to the same extent as other beneficiaries from the lottery and that it is in their interests that the lottery is as successful as possible. Part III also amends the law governing small lotteries so that the charities themselves can operate lotteries which are larger and are regulated in a more streamlined way than at present, with an appropriate tightening up of regulations to reflect new turnover levels.

Clause 36 establishes the account in the distribution fund for millennium projects, which I shall call the millennium fund. It will also receive 20 per cent. of lottery proceeds. This clause discharges our manifesto commitment to establish a fund

"specificially dedicated to projects which will commemorate the start of the twenty-first century and will be enjoyed by future generations."

Clauses 36 to 39 and schedule 6 make provision for the establishment of a Millennium Commission to administer the fund. The commission's members will be appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. I shall say more about the commission in a few moments.

Let me emphasise that we do not intend to restrict the initiative of others who may already be planning their own millennial celebrations. I see the millennium fund as largely promoting projects which lie beyond the scope of individual organisations. There are some notable precedents: the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was a remarkable celebration of the greatness of the arts, manufacture, industry and commerce in this country; and 100 years later the Festival of Britain planned as a commemoration of the Great Exhibition, and described by its secretary general as

"A tonic to the nation".

Both left their architectural legacies—the splendidly innovative Crystal palace by Joseph Paxton, sadly now destroyed; and the Royal Festival hall, designed by Sir Leslie Martin and Sir Robert Matthew.

Mr. Tony Banks: And thanks to the London county council.

Mr. Brooke: I acknowledge that Sir Leslie and Sir Robert had LCC associations.

The great museums in south Kensington were funded from the profits made from the Great Exhibition.

These cultural landmarks should help us define what the millennium fund should achieve. We must look ahead, and consider what our legacy should be to future generations. At this stage, no ideas are ruled out. As our manifesto stated, examples of possible millennium projects include trade fairs and improvements in the natural environment as well as new buildings. Already I have received many suggestions for how the fund should be spent. We shall make sure that the whole nation has the benefit of them. We shall promote schemes in each country of the Union.

I am excited by the potential of the millennium fund. It offers scope for making real improvements to the face of the United Kingdom. Because it will be funded out of a new income stream, which will not count as public expenditure, the projects that we will be able to take forward will be additional to those already planned or in prospect. This will apply to the private sector as well as the public sector, for I envisage that the main large-scale projects will involve funding partnerships with the private sector. The regenerative impact on the construction industry, and therefore on the country's economy as a whole, will be considerable in the period leading up to the year 2000.

I believe that it is important that people feel that they too have a say in the use of the fund. Therefore, I envisage that a significant sum should be set aside each year for smaller-scale initiatives suggested by the public. There will also be a bursary scheme, specifically for young people and those recently retired but also available to others.

It will be for the Millennium Commission to decide which projects, whether large or small scale, and which bursaries should be supported out of the millennium fund. The commission will also decide how to elicit ideas and test their viability, as well as the basis on which it will make its decisions.

The commission will have nine members, of whom two will be Government members. I expect to be one, and hope to chair the commission. I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition for agreeing to nominate a member. We shall consult widely before putting forward to Her Majesty nominations for the remaining membership of the commission.

In considering the appointment of the other six, the Government will want to ensure that the members selected are truly independent and are not appointed as, or seen as, representatives of particular organisations or interests or advocates of individual causes which might benefit from millennium projects. The Government will want to ensure that, as well as being appointments on merit, the representation covers the countries of the United Kingdom and is reasonably balanced as to age, gender and ethnic origin. They will want to ensure that the commission has available among its membership skills and experience in the worlds of business and finance, in heritage and architecture, and possibly of education and the environment. Members will initially be appointed for the planned lifetime of the commission, but the Government would be prepared to consider recommending an appointment on a shorter fixed term if the preferred individual was available only on that basis. It is never easy to reconcile all the desirable aims that I have outlined in the appointment to such a body, but I hope that the approach I have suggested will commend itself to the House.

Clauses 38 and 39 provide for the commission to submit an annual report to Parliament and to keep proper accounts. Schedule 6 sets out detailed provisions in relation to the commission.

I hope that I have been able to assist the House by giving way and by setting out the intention behind the Bill and the main provisions contained therein. The Bill represents an opportunity to provide substantial additional funds for areas which are of vital importance

[Mr. Brooke]

for the quality of life of the citizens of the United Kingdom. It also presents a unique opportunity to establish a major new industry within the United Kingdom. It is in the interests of the enterprise, and of our eager constituents, that the lottery should be up and running as quickly as possible.

I commend the Bill to the House.

4.29 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House insists that the National Lottery etc. Bill, in the form proposed, is unacceptable on the grounds detailed in the Third Report from the National Heritage Committee; notes in particular that no safeguards have been offered in respect of protecting employment in the pools industry in areas of high unemployment on Merseyside and in Cardiff, Glasgow and London; and is concerned that essential information on which to base judgments on the likely effects of the lottery, contained in the report by the GAH Group of Management Consultants, commissioned by the Government, has not been published."

The Bill has divided what could have been a united House. Early-day motion 986, with 125 signatures, shows the scale and the nature of the division. The House is divided not on the principle of a national lottery but chiefly on the Government's failure to protect the large number of jobs in the private sector that will be lost when the public sector takes over. That must be seen as the unacceptable face of nationalisation.

The Bill carries the imprint of a public sector borrowing requirement and preoccupied Treasury mandarins desperately trying to convince the Secretary of State of his capacity for original thought. Indeed, they have even managed to convince him that doing the pools is a matter of skill. That statement has made the Secretary of State the laughing stock of the British betting industry and of hon. Members. Furthermore, he seems to believe that unemployment in Liverpool, Glasgow, Cardiff and London is only an aberration. A House almost united has been turned into a House gravely divided. Why? It is because, yet again, Ministers have botched it up. A perfectly reasonable proposition has been wrecked by Government insensitivity.

We want adequate funding for the arts, sport, national heritage and charities and a proper level of resources guaranteed over time so that the future can be planned, access can be increased, excellence safeguarded and innovation encouraged, but not at any price. The contribution which the arts and sport make to our national culture and to the enrichment of our lives is fully appreciated by the Opposition, but it is grudgingly recognised by the Government who have steadily reduced their support in real terms, in particular for the arts. Every day in our post my hon. Friends and I receive evidence of councils trying to wrestle with their appalling budget problems for 1993-94 and the resulting massive cuts in arts and sports spending.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): If the Opposition were to be elected to government, would they amend the Bill, or would they accept it in whatever form it is passed today?

Mrs. Clwyd: That will depend entirely on what amendments are agreed in Committee. I cannot possibly commit the Opposition to any intention until we see what happens in Committee. That is obvious to everyone.

In the voluntary sector, thousands of charities, large and small, bring people together to support the causes that they believe in. That is a solid base for a decent society which is better developed here than elsewhere and is the envy of many others. The House, I am sure, will join me in paying tribute to those who run arts, sports and voluntary groups and the efforts of organisers and fund raisers, both unpaid and professional.

We are greatly concerned about the proposed form of the national lottery. I shall spell out those concerns in detail.

In the White Paper on the national lottery, the Government acknowledged that the pools were the form of gambling most likely to be affected by the introduction of the national lottery and promised to study the impact, undertaking also to consult widely with charitable interests and to pay careful attention to what they said. We question how adequately that promise has been fulfilled.

There is widespread anxiety throughout the House about the effects of a national lottery on employment in the pools industry. That anxiety has already been widely reflected in interventions. The football pools are one of Merseyside's largest and most stable employers. No fewer than 4,630 people work for Littlewoods and Vernons in Liverpool and Birkenhead. There are also 730 jobs in Glasgow, 640 in Cardiff and 500 in London. In addition, some 80,000 people work part time as self-employed pools coupon collectors. The commission that they earn, which is small but important—about £20 a week on average—is an important source of income to them. Does the Minister recognise that the only wage for thousands of families in the Merseyside area comes from a member of the family who works in the pools?

When I met workers at Littlewoods in Liverpool a week ago and talked to people who had worked there for some 29 years—grandmothers, mothers and daughters—it reminded me very much of the mining industry where generations have worked in coal. I sincerely hope that the Minister does not have the same fate in store for workers in the pools industry as the Government have for the workers whom I represent who previously worked in the coal industry.

Mr. John Carlisle: Like the hon. Lady, I have visited Littlewoods pools and was impressed by the number of people who were employed. Many of the workers came in only on Saturday mornings to deal with the volume of mail and to sort things out. Can the hon. Lady confirm that the figures that she gave originally, not the 80,000 part-time workers whom she said were collectors, are for full-time jobs, or are some of them part-time jobs as well?

Mrs. Clwyd: Yes, I am glad to confirm that they are full-time jobs.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Does my hon. Friend accept that, while there may be a difference between full time and part time, part-time work is equally valuable, especially when the wage that it brings in is of value to the family?

Mrs. Clwyd: My hon. Friend makes a good point. In the United Kingdom, we know that part-time work is the

only work available for many women. Indeed, many women do not register as unemployed and therefore the unemployment figures for areas such as Merseyside are misleading. I pay tribute to the importance of part-time work for many families in Liverpool and elsewhere.

At a time of high and rising unemployment, no one would wish to make decisions that might adversely affect large numbers of established jobs without the fullest possible information. It is that information which has been denied to the House by the Minister.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Does my hon. Friend accept that the policy of the pools industry has been to maintain employment as much as possible and that it has under-mechanised, compared with what it could have done? That situation will not prevail if the pools industry is subjected to cut-throat, wide competition, and it will be a factor in reducing employment.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am glad to confirm my hon. Friend's point. As I walked around the Littlewoods factory I saw evidence of mechanisation and I had a discussion with the managers about it. They confirmed that mechanisation has taken place in the past 20 years and that further mechanisation will take place, but at the same time they have been careful to protect as far as possible jobs in the pools industry in Liverpool and elsewhere. It is an important point that the managers at Littlewoods are looked on by the workers in the factories as considerate employers.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I put it to the hon. Lady that that is an unfortunately negative attitude towards the future of the pools. I compare the United Kingdom and our attitude towards the game of football with the attitude in Italy where there is similar high interest, even fanaticism, about football. Both the pools and the lottery exist in Italy. In the United Kingdom, market research has shown that 92 per cent. of the people who currently play the pools would be interested in doing both the lottery and the pools and that only a few people would consider stopping doing the pools in favour of the lottery. Surely that points to a good future for the pools.

Mrs. Clwyd: Unless we see the Government's evidence to the contrary, there is no evidence to support what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

The Government's own investigations have been kept secret. How can the Secretary of State possibly describe the report as confidential when hon. Members on both sides of the House have quoted from it, as has the Secretary of State? If he is not afraid of showing what the report has found, there can be no possible reason for not allowing Members of Parliament a view of it. If the Minister gives the explanation that the report is commercially confidential, I do not understand why he cannot go back to the people who gave evidence and ask to be released from the promise of confidentiality, which I believe should never have been given in the first place.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) compared the position in Italy with the proposal for Britain. Is my hon. Friend aware that, although in Italy there is a national lottery and football pools, there are only four or five lottery sweepstake draws each year? The Bill proposes weekly draws, so the amount of competition is not comparable.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point, but I wish to return to the independent report. It is the only report commissioned by the Government. Therefore, we should be able to see its findings. According to leaks in *The Guardian* and elsewhere, the fears expressed by the pools industry have been wholly justified by the findings of the report.

For example, the report questions the Government's claims that billions of pounds will be made available to help arts and sport without serious consequences elsewhere. It concludes—this answers the point of the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), as it does that of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing)—that, even though the British pools industry is looked on as an institution and playing is a habit passed down from generation to generation, there will be a reduction in revenues of 17·5 per cent. over three years and 1,100 job losses. The Secretary of State must answer that point this afternoon.

I am not surprised that the Secretary of State refuses to publish the report, especially as it apparently offers five changes which could be introduced to safeguard the pools industry. I ask the Minister again to publish the report. I am sure that he could recant on his previous assurances that we would not have sight of it. Will he let the House properly assess the impact of the national lottery on jobs in areas that are already badly hit by the Government's policies?

Mr. Alton: I thank the hon. Lady for the way in which she has put her points and I agree with her entirely. Does she agree that it is significant that we have not heard this afternoon from any Ministers at the Department of Employment? The Government clearly have not weighed the employment argument in their dead-set determination to press on with the national lottery at all expense.

Mrs. Clwyd: Yes, indeed. It is interesting that the Government only speculate on the number of jobs that the national lottery could provide in place of the pools jobs. But the pools jobs are established jobs. We prefer to put our faith in established jobs rather than in the Government's promises of what jobs might be provided at some time in the future.

I noticed that the Secretary of State did not make much of the report of the Select Committee on National Heritage, which makes some interesting points. It suggests that the majority of job losses will occur in Merseyside, an area which already has 15·3 per cent. unemployment overall and male unemployment of 21·2 per cent. In parts of Liverpool, Glasgow, Cardiff and London, one person in four is unemployed. So it is hardly likely that people in those areas will give up their jobs without cast-iron guarantees from the Government that they will be either protected or replaced by other jobs. What further plans does the Minister have to maintain existing jobs and to create new ones in those areas? What thought has he given to establishing the headquarters of the office of national lottery in an area such as Merseyside? Perhaps he will give us an answer this afternoon.

The Minister has expressed his anxiety about the unemployment consequences for the pools industry, but that is not enough. Opposition Members and some Conservative Members understand too well the tragedy of having no job and the effect on the whole family of trying and failing time after time to get a job. I assure the

[Mrs. Clwyd]

Secretary of State that we shall want much firmer commitments from the Government on jobs than he gave us today.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Does the hon. Lady accept that I and my colleagues would be much more persuaded by her arguments if she were talking about something other than a purely commercial operation? She talks about job losses. All of us—especially those of us from areas such as Birmingham—appreciate her point. But we are weighing the public good of extra opportunities. The hon. Lady should take the positive step of saying, "Here is extra money and extra opportunity for the public well-being, not private or commercial well-being."

Mrs. Clwyd: I find the hon. Gentleman's intervention extraordinary. If he really cared about providing jobs, he would agree that a job in the hand is worth more than a job in the bush. He talks about the possibility that the national lottery will provide jobs elsewhere to compensate for the loss of jobs in the areas that I have specified. I cannot take seriously his intervention.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House expressed the view in previous debates that there should be a level playing field for the national lottery and the pools industry. It is a view that I share. However, reacting to the Select Committee report last week, the Secretary of State said:

"I do not believe that the pools and the National Lottery should operate on a so-called level playing field."

He has confirmed that today.

Let me remind the House what the Select Committee said. It recommended

"that the Lottery and the pools should be treated equally with regard to advertising on all media; in the marketing of their products; in the ability to roll over jack pots; and in the way the pools are promoted to clients who do not wish to exercise the use of skill and judgement."

I am not in favour of advertising gambling on television, but there must be freedom to advertise for all or a ban on all. It is absurd to maintain the fiction that the lottery is not gambling or a game of chance and that it is fundamentally different from the pools, even though 90 per cent. of pools players use lucky numbers.

We should not ignore the fact that a minority of our fellow citizens conscientiously oppose a national lottery, as they do all forms of gambling. It is true that gambling to excess adds to the difficulties already faced by some households. Those difficulties include mortgage repossessions, personal debt and high and rising unemployment —all brought about by the Government's policies. The Government must ensure that the national lottery is not promoted in a way that leads to excessive gambling.

We accept that the problems facing arts funding are so large as to require joint responses from the public and private sectors. We have stressed repeatedly, since the publication of the Bill, that money raised from the national lottery should not be a substitute for Government funding for the arts, sports and heritage.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham) *rose*——

Mrs. Clwyd: I shall give way when I have completed this point.

The Minister has been pressed by the Opposition and the Select Committee on National Heritage to give a clear guarantee that Government funding will not be cut in those areas as a result of the lottery. Indeed, we have tabled an amendment to help him to do exactly that. We have gone further, by arguing that the establishment of a national lottery should not be a substitute for necessary increases in Government spending on the arts, sports and heritage. The money must not be seen as a substitute for public spending. It is crucial that that principle is strengthened in the Bill. Is the Minister prepared to do that?

Mr. Jessel: A quarter of an hour ago, the hon. Lady said that Government arts funding had steadily reduced. She must be aware that during each of the past three years there has been a substantial increase—last year it was 14 per cent. and in the previous three years it was 9, 10 or 11 per cent.—and was well ahead of inflation, although there has been a hestitation this year because of world recession. She must agree that it was somewhat misleading to the House to talk of a steady reduction. Will she withdraw that remark as I am sure that she would not want to mislead the House?

Mrs. Clwyd: I thought that I had given way to the Minister, but clearly I was misled. Before the hon. Gentleman asks me to withdraw that comment, perhaps he would like to consider the Treasury Select Committee report published on 16 December, which points out that, in real terms, using the Treasury's gross domestic product deflator, the spending of the Department of National Heritage will fall by 5·4 per cent. in 1993-94, compared with expenditure this year. The Committee went on to tell the House that Government spending on the performing arts will fall in real terms by more than 10 per cent. in total during the survey period, compared with 1992-93.

As I said, local authorities are being forced to cut their spending on the arts and sports because of the squeeze that the Government have put on their budgets. We believe that without that commitment to additionality, the national lottery becomes a sort of voluntary taxation scheme—buy a ticket and cut the budget. In the present chaotic state of Government finance—where the Conservative party is lost without a map in a financial maze of its own making—the temptation to cut money for the arts, sport and heritage and to transfer the burden to the lottery will be great. The Treasury should not be permitted to raid the coffers of the lottery to cover up its complete failure to manage the economy.

I see that the former Secretary of State for National Heritage, the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), is giving his right hon. Friend some advice —presumably on how to answer my questions when he sums up the debate.

A useful document fell into my hands—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. There is too much conversation behind the hon. Lady, which seems particularly discourteous to her.

Mrs. Clwyd: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure that it was not meant as such. I think that the hilarity was caused by the previous intervention.

A useful document has fallen into my hands—the Conservative party research department's brief for Members. It states:

"Wherever possible, lottery money will be given on a partnership basis, with donations from the private sector or local authorities augmenting input from lottery funds. In this way the Lottery will help even more good causes. However, those groups who are unable to provide matching funds from their own resources will not be at a disadvantage when bidding for funds".

I shall be interested to hear what the Minister has to say about that. Can he explain precisely what it means? Will cash-strapped local authorities be expected to put up large amounts of money to match lottery finance for arts and sports projects?

One remembers how the Government behaved over the argument with the European Community on additionality. We have every reason to suspect that they will be less than honest in protecting core funding from central Government to the arts, sport and heritage.

Under the Bill, the Secretary of State assumes large powers over lottery regulation and the allocation of lottery revenue. We have asked for an assurance that once the lottery is operating he will not use those powers to make sudden or sweeping changes—for example, in the share-out of funds—without returning to the House.

The Minister has given no undertaking to rethink the extent of the powers that he has assumed under the Bill. We argue that Parliament should be able to influence the use of those powers and we believe that the directions that the Secretary of State can give to the distributing bodies, under clause 24, should be used to increase access and involvement in arts, culture and recreation, with a special commitment to equal opportunities in participation and employment.

Mr. Brooke: I do not think that either of us would wish to mislead the House. In my speech I said that the allocations of 20 per cent. for each of the five categories are on the face of the Bill and would be subject to affirmative resolution. I expected Parliament to express its opinion on whether the proportion going to each cause was right.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that explanation. We are firmly of the view that the national lottery charities board, set out in clauses 32 to 35, should be broadly representative, socially and geographically. The Government have a well-known passion for quangos—usually containing a clutch of their relatives and supporters. Will the Minister assure us that membership of the national lottery charities board will consist of people widely respected among charity workers and not contributors to Tory election funds? Will he ensure that membership of the board includes the people whom voluntary organisations seek to serve, such as disabled or mentally handicapped people?

The Opposition have serious anxieties about the effect of the national lottery on the level of funds donated to charities. What further action will the Minister take to ensure that the status and role of charities is not marginalised in our society? Research by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimates that in 1990-91 local authorities reduced funding to voluntary organisations by £29 million. Unfortunately, that is likely to continue while pressures on local authority spending are maintained. Will national lottery proceeds for charity be taken into account by central and local government when deciding on discretionary grants to voluntary organisations? Perhaps the Minister would care to enlighten us about that.

We want the millenium fund to be broadly based. Its projects should not be narrowly metropolitan and I am grateful to the Secretary of State for his assurance about that. It should aim to widen access to the arts and culture in the nations and regions of Britain. Any attempt to use the Millenium Commission as a slush fund for the Tory party and its friends to pour funds into marginal constituencies for political advantage will be carefully monitored.

We also want to know what guidelines the Secretary of State will lay down for the director general when selecting the franchise holder. What sort of guarantees of probity will be demanded? Will the director general clarify in advance what he expects from the franchise holders, particularly in terms of an acceptable level of turnover for administration, promotion and control of the circumstances in which lottery tickets can be sold? The Secretary of State has given us the benefit of some of his thinking on those issues this afternoon.

We believe that taxation on the national lottery should not be set at a level that stifles the lottery's principal purpose—to raise money for new projects in the arts, sports and heritage. We believe that the maximum proportion of national lottery revenue to be devoted to tax and administration should be no higher than 15 per cent.

In the past, the Opposition have supported the general principle of a national lottery as a means to raise new money for the arts, sports and heritage projects. Clearly, new theatres, sports centres and swimming pools can raise the quality of life for everyone. Historic buildings and monuments could be restored and many charities could receive a welcome boost of cash—that is the theory. However, we have grave doubts, which have not yet been satisfactorily answered by the Government. We have genuine concerns and deserve a full and honest reply from the Conservative party.

5.1 pm

Mr. Kenneth Baker (Mole Valley): It will not come as a surprise to the House to learn that I warmly welcome the Bill. It implements, in almost precise terms, the proposals that I laid before the House in a White Paper last March to introduce a national lottery. I warmly welcome the speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in proposing the Bill. I also welcome part of the speech by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Not much.

Mr. Baker: No. When the hon. Lady dealt with the details of the lottery, she was positive and helpful, but she was searching for a principle on which to oppose it.

Having listened to the debate, I have been struck by the amount of discussion on employment considerations in Merseyside, Glasgow and Cardiff. However, the national lottery raises much broader and more national considerations. I shall later deal with the pools and what I believe should be done to help pools companies to deal with the competition of the national lottery.

I am proud to have been the Home Secretary who committed the Government to introducing a national lottery. I was somewhat surprised that it took so long to come about. In 1987, the Rothschild report clearly set out the case for a national lottery—to raise money for good causes. The Bill will substantially increase the sum of human happiness. We rarely have the chance to vote for

[Mr. Baker]

such a Bill. It will improve the quality of life for many hundreds of thousands of people across our country. It draws its inspiration from Denry Machin who, in the final pages of Arnold Bennett's novel "The Card", when asked in which cause he believed, said he believed in the cause of cheering people up. The Bill will create a great deal of cheer around the country—*[Interruption.]* The Government need a Bill to cheer people up. I believe that the Bill will enhance the Government's reputation.

The Bill will provide money for the arts, sports, charities and those causes on which hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to spend more money. Successive Governments have always found it difficult to provide the amount of money that we should all like to see spent on such causes. I pay tribute to the Labour party which, in the 1960s, pulled together expenditure on the arts and formed the first Ministry for the Arts under the first Minister, Jennie Lee, whom I remember. I believe that she made a significant contribution to the cause of cheering us all up. That was only a beginning, which successive Governments have built on and extended to cover sport as well.

Successive Governments have found it difficult to provide the sort of money required. During my ministerial career I was responsible for the heritage budget and the sports budget. Both budgets were increased while I was responsible for them—as the House would expect—but not to the extent that I would have liked. I had a reputation in the Treasury of not knowingly being underbid.

Mr. David Mellor (Putney): Hear, hear.

Mr. Baker: I have the confirmation of a former Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

I believe that the money available from the lottery will benefit the country. I agreed with those parts of the speech by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley in which she recognised that. I suspect that, had Labour won the last election, we would not today be debating a national lottery Bill. I suspect that we would have had to rely on the courage of a private Member such as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) to introduce a private Member's Bill. I hope that the House will proceed with the National Lottery etc. Bill.

How much money will be made available? There have been various estimates. I noticed that there were discussions about the reports of accountants and consultants. My advice to the House is not to give them too much credence, as they are all projections. I suspect that, during the two or three weeks in which we shall debate the future of many of our coal pits, many Opposition Members will say that the reports that have already been published are not worth the paper that they are written on. We shall have to make an assessment of how the pools will be affected based on the best available evidence.

The amount of money that will be made available has been estimated at £1 billion, £2 billion, £3 billion and, in some cases, as high as £4 billion in gross take—a substantial amount of money. How much of that money will be available to the good causes? I agree with the hon. Member for Cynon Valley in her hope that the Treasury and the Government will err on the side of generosity. The standard practice in existing lotteries around the world seems to be that between 48 and 50 per cent. of the overall take is used in prize money. Of the remaining 50 per cent., the amount spent on administration and commission for the people who sell the tickets can be as much as 15 per cent., which leaves 35 per cent.

I notice that, during some of the lobbying that we have heard, people have said that all the take should go to the good causes. I should like to see that in an ideal world, but we do not live in an ideal world. The Treasury exists and will want a take. I hope that it will take as little as possible. I dare say that it is asking for 20 per cent.—I have no idea whether I am right as such facts are not leaked. It may be asking for 20 per cent. and it may settle for 15 per cent. —I hope that it will settle for 10 per cent., which will leave 25 per cent. available for distribution.

If the Treasury wants to try to take more money out of the available pool, it might consider placing a levy on some of the bigger prizes—for example, 5 per cent. on prizes of more than £5,000.

Mr. Graham: Why should the Government take anything if they are going to gain major benefits to help with sports and other activities? Why do they not leave all the money?

Mr. Baker: There is a case for such a policy, and I have heard it argued, but we live in the real world and the Treasury will want to take some tax. That seems to be the pattern with other lotteries, and I base my recommendation on that realistic assessment.

Whatever effect the Bill may have on the pools, it is undoubtedly a job-positive measure. Not only will jobs be created in the administration of the national lottery, but the national lottery funds will generate a spend of possibly as much as £1 billion in the arts and sports. That money could be used for building new sports stadia, supporting creative sports and artistic activities and improving our national heritage. The new jobs will be spread throughout the country. Some estimates put the number of new jobs as high as 80,000 a year. On the whole, the measure will be job-positive.

Mr. Alton: What is the right hon. Gentleman's best estimate of the loss in revenue to the Exchequer caused by the inevitable reduction in the £300 million received by the Treasury last year from the pools industry?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman is assuming that there will be a rapid and dramatic reduction in pool betting. I shall take up that assumption in a moment.

Some of the charities seem to be concerned that they will lose money if the Bill is enacted. I do not believe that that will happen. Indeed, the outcome of the Bill could be an additional source of revenue for them. Those who choose to have a flutter on the national lottery—£1·50, £2 or £1 a week—are not likely to divert such moneys from charitable causes. The Government have made some sensible changes to the law that relates to smaller lotteries, from which many small charities derive.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, the Government will be able to review the position. The proportion of moneys that will go to each of the five beneficiaries is set out in the Bill, but it could be varied from Parliament to Parliament according to order. If it could be shown that charities were suffering—I do not

think that that would be possible—the House would have the opportunity to vary the moneys going to charities by means of dispensations.

The position of the pools does not constitute a case for not having a national lottery. Some of the pools argued that a few years ago but that has now stopped. The effect on the pools tends to be exaggerated. I accept that it is a matter of conjecture, but I spoke to the pools and to various individuals within the companies.

The pools have enjoyed a privileged position for many years. In effect, three companies have had a monopoly in pool soft gambling. I am not surprised that they are not welcoming competition with open arms. There is talk of a level playing field, but is it reasonable to have a level playing field between pools that are operated for profit and a national lottery that is operated for good causes? I am not so sure that it is. With hard and soft gambling there is virtually no level playing field when it comes to the various things that make up gambling enterprises.

My right hon. Friend used rather a good phrase when he referred to adjacent playing fields. That is true, for example, of the laws relating to dog racing and horse racing. There is different legislation. On and off-course betting is treated differently. With soft gambling, there is different legislation for bingos and small lotteries. In other words, there is no consistency.

Part of the case that has been advanced by the pools is reasonable. The organisations have asked, however, for a series of changes which would, in effect, make them a separate national lottery. I do not believe that that status should be granted to them. On the other hand, it is reasonable to make some concessions. One such concession that would be reasonable is the sale of coupons in retail outlets. That seems sensible. For the reasons that I have given, I do not believe that there is a case for the same tax treatment. One system is operated for profit and the other for good causes. Should there be some relaxation on advertising? I think that that would depend upon the terms of advertising that are agreed by the Secretary of State.

I understand the concerns of hon. Members about employment considerations, but there is a positive aspect. The positive job creation possibility of a national lottery is much greater than the possibility of job losses. I think that the possible losses are exaggerated.

Mr. Wareing: Where?

Mr. Baker: That will be a matter for the Secretary of State and the director general of the national lottery. As it is a national matter, the impact could be spread across the country.

For all of the reasons that I have outlined, I warmly welcome the Bill. It will considerably improve our capacity as a country to improve the quality of life of not only a few people but of people throughout the country.

Mrs. Wise: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I am just about to conclude my remarks.

The Bill will improve the quality of life of those who participate in sport. When it comes to the distribution of moneys in sport, I hope that the bias will be towards support for young people who participate in sport. That is one of the great advantages of a national lottery. The same applies to those who participate in the arts and in the appreciation of our national heritage. As I have said, the Bill will increase the sum of human happiness. I hope that we shall all support it.

5.14 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): It is obvious from the questions that have been asked and the various points made that a major missing piece in the jigsaw is the report that was commissioned by the Government—it cost £55,000 of public money—to try to ascertain what would happen if the Bill were enacted. The report of the GAH group was leaked.

I was a member of the Select Committee on the National Heritage that considered a national lottery. The members of that Committee strenuously questioned the Minister, who refused to give us any details on the ground of commercial secrecy. Why did he take that view? The franchise has not been granted. Those who are applying for it should have copies of the report. If they can have the report, why cannot hon. Members? Why cannot the public read it? After all, it was they who paid for it. There is a conspiracy of silence.

The Government propose to set up something that would have a turnover of about £1,500 million a year. That is getting on for the turnover of British Coal. There is all the fuss about British Coal, but in this context its turnover is only about £1·8 billion. If the Bill is enacted, the Government will set up a new industry with a turnover of £1,500 million a year, yet there is nothing before the House except the Bill. That is because some of those who are seeking the franchise are likely to lose their shirts.

I met one of the leading contenders for the franchise. I shall not name him—we did not meet in confidence—because it would not be fair to do so. I asked him how his company would go about launching the national lottery if it secured the franchise. He said that it would have 10,000 outlets. He told me that that was all it could have in the first year. That means that each outlet would have to take £2,800 a week in £1 bets. If we take the local grocer—Mr. Patel—a newsagent or whatever, those businesses do not take £2,800 a week, never mind £2,800 in £1 bets, but that is the sort of turnover that the Government are expecting. I suspect that the Government took the turnover of the national lottery in Ireland, multiplied that by the population of the United Kingdom and decided that that would be the turnover of the proposed national lottery. In taking that approach they forgot, it seems, that Ireland does not provide anything like the scope for the pools that is available in the United Kingdom.

Let us consider how £2,800 a week might be gathered. First, it must be recognised that the system will have to be computerised. There can be no slippage in a national lottery. Anyone who runs a raffle or something of that sort will know that one collector in 1,000 will be tempted not to put in the money that he has collected. That collector will put the money in his back pocket or say, "I will have this bet myself." We cannot have that in a national lottery. It seems that it will cost £7,000 to instal in a shop a computerised system that will enable a member of the public to get a bet on the big jackpot half an hour before it takes place. A receipt will be given and the bet will have to go down to London or wherever to the headquarters of the national lottery. It will have to be recorded because the system will be taking bets right up to the time of the draw —let us say 8 pm on a Saturday night when Princess Di

[Mr. Joseph Ashton]

draws the big jackpot, or when Jeremy Beadle is on. It will be necessary to have people like that to hype it up and promote the system. That is what the Government are talking about introducing.

Let us say that there are 10,000 outlets with a computerised system that costs £7,000 apiece. That means that those who launch the franchise will have to spend about £70 million to £80 million, if my arithmetic is right. It will be a massive injection of cash. Unless they have seen the report, they have no real prospect of getting that money back.

When it comes to collection, there is talk of paying commission of 6 per cent. to the guy who runs the newsagency, for example. As I said, I do not think that he will take £2,800 a week. It will be more like £100 a week. That means that for six quid a week he will look after the machinery, take the money and hand over the tickets. The commission of pools collectors is 15 per cent., not 6 per cent. These facts decide the structure of lotteries, whether we are talking about pools or a national lottery.

The pools business depends on 75,000 door-knockers. Every Friday night the collectors knock on doors and they will ask, "Mrs. Brown, are you having your two quids worth?" Mrs. Brown will then have her flutter, which often will be based on dole numbers, birthdays or whatever. The collector will then move on to the next house. That is how the money is collected. The pools organisations fear that if the collectors start to do something else, such as issuing national lottery tickets, their business will collapse in a couple of months, along with the jobs of the collectors.

These matters have been examined by the secret report. The public's money was used to enable investigations to be carried out to ascertain the long-term effect on jobs. Those engaged in producing the report have considered the number of outlets that will be required, mechanisation and the way in which cash will be collected, but these matters have never been explained publicly. None of the findings of the report have been put before the House. We are about to set up a mammoth industry without any of the details and the facts being provided. It is not good enough.

The pools companies are right to demand a level playing field. They should be allowed to have roll-up prizes. Under the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963, if the pools companies take in £2 million this week, they must pay out £2 million this week. The same applies to bingo. If Granada takes a certain amount of bingo money tonight, it must pay out that money tonight. The money cannot be rolled over.

The pools companies cannot hold back 10 per cent. for a big jackpot every three months. That would be an absolute bonanza. Why are they prohibited from doing that when the national lottery will be allowed to do it? The Government are supposed to believe in free enterprise and the free market, yet they are virtually setting up a nationalised industry, to which they will grant enormous advantages at the expense of private industries.

What is wrong with the pools companies advertising on television? There is no logical reason for stopping them doing that. Why are they not allowed to have the same sales outlets? There is no logical reason for that. The Government and the potential franchisees are scared stiff that if the pools companies obtain a level playing field and freedom to operate they will take the national lottery to the cleaners. Those are the secrets in the report. For political reasons the Government dare not take a chance on the national lottery being a flop. If it is, they will again have egg on their face and they do not want that.

Perhaps I should declare an interest as I am a director —unpaid—of Sheffield Wednesday football club. Indeed, it costs money to be a director of a football club. I should explain how the Football Trust came about. When I first came to the House, Denis Howell was the Minister responsible for sport. The very first Committee of which I was a member considered the Horserace Betting Levy Bill. The then Labour Government decided to take 8 per cent. tax on every bet and give the money to the tracks. No one was going to the tracks, so they could not afford prize money. That meant that people could not afford to run race horses or breed them. Horse racing was going down the pan because of the introduction of betting offices and television. The betting offices were set up so that the Government could tax them.

When I was a lad a bookie used to stand on every street corner in every working-class area. He would wear a big mack with a pocket that went all the way around. He stuffed the bets in that pocket and then paid out that evening in the billiard hall, the pub or whatever. The bookie's runner would watch for the punters and they would go off down the street and hide in somebody's toilet.

Selwyn Lloyd was very smart and said, "There is a lot of money to be made. If we legalise that sort of betting we can bring in at least £500 million." That was a mammoth amount of money at that time, so that was what the Labour Government did. It worked marvellously. Then, the Labour Government said that if they could do that with horse racing, they could do it with football.

In the Ibrox disaster 65 people were killed. In later years, 95 people were killed at Hillsborough. There was a fire at Bradford and 57 people died. The Heysel stadium is not in Britain, but 37 more people were killed there. In just over 10 years of football disasters more than 200 people were killed. After the Ibrox disaster, the pools companies were scared stiff that a levy would be imposed on them just as it had been imposed on horse racing, so they volunteered to hand over some cash. They went to Denis Howell in 1974—I was his parliamentary private secretary at the time—and volunteered to pay for improvements to football grounds. Since that day, they have provided the money for 70 per cent. of all football ground improvements. That is part of the reason for the current row. It is not just about jobs at the pools companies, but the mammoth number of jobs created through building work on football grounds.

Following the Hillsborough disaster, Lord Justice Taylor said that every football stadium had to be all-seater. That involves a mammoth amount of work. The former Secretary of State for National Heritage, the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), exempted the two lower divisions. We were grateful for that because there was no way in which the costs of that work could be met. The Government said that the work to make the stadiums all-seater had to be completed by 1994, so there are just two more summers in which that work can be done. It cannot be done in the playing season because the cranes cannot go on to the pitch.

That necessary safety work is being paid for indirectly by the pools companies. If the pools are knocked sideways, the money spent on the necessary safety work at football grounds will disappear. That work creates hundreds of

thousands of jobs. For example, Arsenal is building a new stand costing £2·5 million, as is Manchester United. Leeds is spending £2 million and Sheffield Wednesday £1·5 million. The list is endless. An enormous amount of building work is under way because 200 people have been killed in a decade. That is one reason why many of us are saying strongly that the pools companies should not be hampered. We are concerned not just about the Liverpool jobs, but about many other jobs and a great deal of development. The Government's policy is inconsistent. They have ordered the football clubs to build all-seater stadiums while saying that the funding for that will be cut off at source.

There are many questions that the Secretary of State has not answered. We asked them in the Select Committee and he hid behind the cloak of confidentiality. How can the report be kept confidential? Any potential franchisee making a bid will need to lay out about £80 million to install computerised paying-in equipment in shops and so on. They are not allowed to operate the lottery from pubs, which will cost them a lot of money. How could any franchisee take on the job without seeing the report? If potential franchisees can see the report, the House is entitled to see it. We should see it before we make up our minds about the Bill. It is not too late to show it to the Committee. It is imperative that before the House makes a major decision it is allowed to see the report.

5.27 pm

Mr. David Mellor (Putney): I am pleased to join my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on introducing the Bill. It is not a trivial matter to introduce a national lottery. It requires an enormous amount of work not only to get the legal framework right, but to implement it and to ensure that proper arrangements exist to administer and regulate it. That has required an enormous amount of effort in a very short time from a new Department. I congratulate my right hon. Friend, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, and all those who have worked for them on the Bill.

Although I am starting my speech before 6 pm, I intend to honour the 10-minute rule because so many other hon. Members wish to speak. I also bear in mind that Sir Patrick Hastings, a leading defence counsel, once said, "If you have to address the jury for more than 10 minutes, you have too much to explain away." I shall try to be brief.

I commend what my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley said because he mentioned a number of points that concern me. I was one of those who were sceptical for a long time about a national lottery. I was certainly not the first to be converted to the idea. My eventual reason for supporting it was not just that Albania had shuffled off into the ranks of national lottery countries and we were therefore the only country in Europe without one. I had a rather more substantive reason based on my experience as Minister for the Arts, Secretary of State for National Heritage and Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The Government had honoured their commitments to a host of potential beneficiaries of the lottery—for example, the Government are spending three times as much in real terms on the arts than was spent in the days of Jennie Lee, commendable though that start was. There will always be huge areas of our sporting infrastructure, arts and heritage that cannot be developed by conventional Government funding. I am an unashamed advocate of state funding and I am proud of the fact that in the two years that I was either Minister for the Arts or Chief Secretary to the Treasury the grant to the Arts Council increased by nearly 30 per cent. I always felt that there was a need for an even greater quantum leap.

I suspect that those previous two years were not of great assistance to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I dare say that the Treasury argued, "The arts did so well in the last two years, now that the going is getting a bit tough they should suffer a little now." Whatever we say about the detail of the Bill, most of us are here to debate it because we care about certain aspects of our national life and want them enhanced and advanced.

I have reached the settled conclusion that only a national lottery can achieve that, but, before we embark on that course, we must look at the small print and need to be rigorous in our thinking about one or two aspects.

I make no apology for repeating two points—one of which was rightly raised by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and followed up by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley, because here is where the bodies are potentially buried. I want my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to know that he has considerable support from the Conservative Benches in his efforts to beat off some of the host of unenlightenment within the Government's ranks.

In a speech as Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for the Valley of the Moles—that always sounds more interesting than Mole Valley—delivered those ringing and entirely appropriate sentences:

> "I must emphasise that this will be additional funding. The Government do not intend that the money provided from the lottery should substitute for existing expenditure programmes."—[*Official Report*, 6 March 1992; Vol. 205, col. 563.]

The only basis on which I—as someone who cares about the arts and sport—could possibly commend to the many bodies that want the national lottery that it will be a good thing for this country is if that undertaking is honoured to the letter. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State repeated the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley, but there was an interruption at that point.

I hope that it will be made clear that both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister have beaten off any attempt by the Treasury to behave like barrack-room lawyers and put an entirely false gloss on the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley. Having been a Treasury Minister, I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends have a jolly difficult job to do.

Those who care about the arts and heritage will be buying a pig in a poke unless it is made clear that national lottery income will not be subtracted from existing state commitments. I appreciate that if a body is looking for a large increase in arts funding from the Government, it is plainly material—when weighing up other priorities—whether or not that interest is already receiving money from the national lottery, which may be a reason for any increase in state funding not being so great. It is important that the Government do not attempt to slough off responsibility by having a national lottery.

The lottery will only be worth something if it provides a quantum leap forward for the interests in question. Otherwise, I do not think that we need it.

Mr. Burns: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Mellor: I will be in trouble with my 10 minutes. It is not that I will not give way, but many right hon. and hon. Members want to make a contribution—and I want to try to keep at least one promise as a politician.

As to taxation, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set it out very well. Of the proceeds from the lottery, 50 per cent. will go in prize money. That is the international average and there is no reason to go below that figure. A further 15 per cent. will go on administration. That is pretty good—if the figure can be kept down to that, we shall have done pretty well. My rudimentary O level in mathematics produces a total of 65 per cent. leaving 35 per cent.

If the Treasury honours the undertakings on public expenditure made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley when Home Secretary, I would not disagree with the Treasury having a revenue base. However, there is no point to our putting before the public a national lottery that is intended to raise money for good causes and then expect the public to swallow the fact that the principal good cause is the Treasury. For all that the Treasury believes itself to be a socially beneficial organisation, the truth is that many people would take some persuading of that.

I hope that the issue is not being shrouded in Budget secrecy—a concept that I believe is long overdue for change, now that Treasury omniscience is perhaps no longer as credible as it once was. I hope also that the question of the tax base will be open to collective discussion. If the tax is 20 per cent. and, after all the fuss and bother of helping good causes, the contribution falls to 15 per cent.—3 per cent. of the total take for the five categories—many will begin to wonder whether it is worth pushing this boulder uphill just to achieve that—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] I say that in clear terms and I am glad that I am not alone in marking those cards. I hope that my view will be shared not only by my right hon. and hon. Friends but across the House.

I endorse the remarks of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton)—for whom, as he knows, I have a high regard—about the work of the Football Trust. As someone who cares about football, I know how much good it has done. I mention also the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, which has proved valuable. Provided that the pools companies' proposals take the form of an à la carte and not a table d'hôte menu—in other words, one can pick a dish or two without having to sample the whole lot—I am sure that, in the sensible accommodations that we make in the House, it should be possible to reach some form of agreement.

I enjoy the warmest friendships with a number of people in the pools industry and I believe that it will flourish as part of the warp and weft of the British way of doing things. However, I do not believe that the pools can be put on the same level or platform as the national lottery. The whole idea of having such a lottery is that it is something special. It is not meant to be a way of assassinating the gatekeeper or the controls of gambling so that other forms of gambling can come through and be subject to the same concessions.

Those of us who appreciate irony, as I have had to do in my career, now know that the champions of private enterprise are to be found on the Labour Benches, while my right hon. and hon. Friends are arguing for some public good. It is a funny old world. I am not original in saying that, but it is a funny old world.

Let us not take matters too far. By all means let us stick up for the pools, but they cannot be equated with the national lottery. It would be an awful shame if the great vision of a national lottery were borne down by a tidal wave of special pleading for the pools, however firmly based, by certain regional interests.

When I was originally rather resistant to the idea of a national lottery, it seemed to me that so many people would want to benefit from one, and that so many vested interests would not want it to be an all-singing, all-dancing show, that we would end up with some half-hearted effort. It would be like the prototype steam vehicle. To keep it safe and to ensure no other interests were damaged, a man had to walk along in front, carrying a red flag.

If there emerges from this parliamentary process a half-hearted, apologetic scheme that has been so amended and subject to so many restrictions that it cannot do the business and raise money, let us not bother with it. After all, we have all those exciting nights ahead on the Maastricht Bill, so why trouble ourselves with another exercise in futility? We have already spent hours debating, on Maastricht, something that the public have forgotten about—but that is another story. Since I do not intend to participate in that debate, why should I not say so?

If we will a national lottery, let us will an effective mechanism that will raise hundreds of millions of pounds—perhaps even billions. It will then be something of which we can be proud and which will make better provision for the cultural and sporting fabric of our society. We all know that that is long overdue—and if the Bill will achieve that, I am all for it.

5.38 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I am particularly glad to follow the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who is the third right hon. Member to speak from the Conservative Benches apparently intent on lifting the spirits of the nation with a Bill to enhance our funds.

I remind the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) that a similar idea crossed the mind of Nero, who was the last Roman emperor to introduce a lottery. One can exaggerate the excitement that is felt outside, throughout the country, at the prospect of another source of that which the Secretary of State described as another deposit for marginal disposable income, at a time when marginal disposable income sometimes means the difference between being hungry and not. That is particularly harshly felt by those out of work. I cannot improve on what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) about the complete lack of amusement on Merseyside that greeted the Bill's publication and its presentation to Parliament; but I doubt that there is any joy either on the streets of Cardiff, Glasgow or London, where many thousands of workers may be at risk of losing their jobs.

The Secretary of State described the Bill as forward looking. That claim is pretty rich. The right hon. Gentleman himself pointed out that the House last considered this matter seriously in 1826, and I suppose that the heyday of the national lottery was the 18th

century: the possibilities of abuse were considerable then—possibilities that no doubt led the Secretary of State to go about the process in such a bureaucratic way. The Bill provides for the establishment of at least three new quangos for the purpose of distributing the unaquantified funds, as well as a regulatory agency.

The Bill is a powerful source of patronage for the Secretary of State, who will have not only the power to appoint people to all those bodies but the power to intervene and decide how the funds are to be spent. Let us not hear much more about the Government's protecting the arms-length principle. In clause 24—which has already been mentioned—the Secretary of State takes explicit power to direct funding bodies' spending, and to wind up those bodies if they do not do what he tells them to do.

When the Department of National Heritage was set up, many people expressed the fear that it would become involved in precisely this kind of intervention in spending. I strongly supported the notion of a Cabinet Minister's having responsibility for the arts, and speaking up for them against other Departments that might be supported more powerfully in the House. This, however, may be the thin end of the wedge. Is the Secretary of State going to meddle with the priorities of arts spending? The powers conferred by the Bill are very sweeping.

Mr. Brooke: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: I shall follow the example of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney, and not give way. Although I may prove to be the only Liberal Democrat who is called to speak, I want to be as brief as possible.

The Bill is unfortunate evidence of a willingness to meddle. The Secretary of State said that it would set up a major new industry; I question that. Certainly, it will create a number of jobs associated with the distribution of lottery tickets, and it may supplement the income of some small shopkeepers to a valuable extent. I am bound to add, however, that, when a Government are driven to describe the establishment of a lottery as a major new industry, we realise how far this great trading nation has fallen from its peak.

The most striking feature of the Secretary of State's speech, however, was not what he said but what he did not say. We heard not a word about the amount that the lottery is likely to raise. Surely we are entitled to know how much the good causes referred to can reasonably expect from this new social departure. We should bear in mind the involvement of people such as Lord Palumbo. I am reminded of the dogs in the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, whose eyes grew as large as saucers at the very thought of the gold that was about to drop into their laps. Those good causes have a right to know the Government's best estimate, at least. That, of course, may be one of the matters touched on by the inquiry whose activities have been kept from the House's attention so sedulously—an inquiry initiated by the Government.

This does matter. I had the advantage of talking to at least one of the companies that will no doubt bid for the franchise, perhaps in partnership with a number of others. The estimate given to me was £500 million in the first year: a not inconsiderable sum, certainly, but a great deal less than the amounts mentioned by Ministers earlier—for instance, the sums mentioned before the election by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley.

Mr. Jessel: What about in later years?

Mr. Maclennan: That is a matter of speculation. The amounts are likely to increase; but the question is put into perspective by the arithmetic outlined by the right hon. and learned Member for Putney, which suggest that only about 15 per cent. of £500 million would be left to distribute. He is right to focus on the uncertainties surrounding the value of the lottery—matters on which only the Government are adequately informed.

National lotteries cannot be said to have been great money spinners the world over. In some countries they have provided a useful top-up for taxation—they are, in any case, a form of voluntary tax—but they have not been able to bear a very large burden. The Secretary of State, indeed, failed to refer to the issue of taxation—not only the amount, but the mechanism. It is crucial to an evaluation of the virtues, or otherwise, of the proposal to know the Government's attitude. They would not be giving away a Budget secret: we have no idea how much the lottery will raise, in terms of quantity, but there need be no Budget secrecy about percentages. If the Secretary of State told us that the amount raised would be only 5 per cent.—which is at the lower end of what the arts and sport worlds would like—we might view the matter very differently. It seems more likely that the amount will be about 20 per cent., which would reduce the value of the sum distributed to a questionable level.

The right hon. and learned Member for Putney referred to additionality. That crucial issue has not been laid to rest by paragraph 41 of the White Paper, which the Secretary of State mentioned earlier. The Secretary of State knows that the Treasury will never give a lasting undertaking of that kind; it will be a reason to reduce the core funding of sport, the arts and other good causes. Indeed, it may explain why the right hon. Gentleman did relatively badly in the autumn spending round, compared with the right hon. and learned Member for Putney. Perhaps the national lottery is already overhanging his Department, accounting for the reduction in spending—not just in real terms, but in cash terms—made available to the arts since he became Secretary of State.

Like the right hon. and learned Member for Putney, I was originally deeply sceptical about the proposal; I remain deeply sceptical. I believe that people's desire for the large sums that are expected to be generated has clouded their sense about the prospects. Hope has defeated their judgment. I am afraid that this enabling Bill, widely drawn, does little to set at rest the scepticism and doubts that my colleagues and I have about it.

We are concerned about the social impact of lotteries. The evidence is not conclusive but there is certainly good evidence in the United States that expenditure on lotteries is broadly flat across the different income groups. Therefore, it is felt more keenly by those on low incomes. I suspect that that is one of the reasons why the churches have spoken with such strong voices against the very concept of a lottery as a means of raising money.

One does not have to accept, however, that view of lotteries in general to doubt the wisdom of the Bill. The right hon. Member for Mole Valley said that this measure is job-positive. It will certainly not be job positive on Merseyside, where the football pools are bound to be affected by it. The Government have admitted that. It is not job positive, either, in the sense that money that is put into the national lottery would otherwise have been spent or saved. At best, the effect will be neutral across the economy as a whole. Spare marginal disposable income is

[Mr. Maclennan]

normally spent on goods and services, which provide jobs. The argument that this measure could be job-positive is threadbare. It should not detain the House for a moment.

The virtue, if any, of this measure is that it would enable great projects of state to be undertaken which would not otherwise be undertaken. It is interesting to note that the two examples in support of the Bill to which the Secretary of State referred did not depend upon lotteries. Both the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Festival of Britain of 1951 did not depend upon lotteries. They were a reflection of popular will. The Festival of Britain reflected the Labour Government's determination that this country should put its best foot forward, with the support of the taxpayer, in a progressive, not regressive, way. The benefits of that expenditure are to be seen to this day.

I regret the fact that the Government have introduced the Bill. Whatever merits there may be in a lottery, the Bill is too open and leaves too many questions unanswered. It will have a devastating effect on employment in areas of high unemployment. It offers too little to those who are intended to be its beneficiaries. Charities have rightly expressed deep concern about the Bill. The national lottery will compete with their activities in exactly those areas where they cannot be protected. I do not know how the charitable organisation that is to distribute the funds will operate, but the people who go round with their tins collecting money on behalf of small charities will not benefit from those funds. The Bill does not deserve a Second Reading.

5.53 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): After the dour speech by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), it is probably just as well that the suggestion has been made that a national lottery will cheer people up. I believe, together with 75 per cent. of the British people, that the time has come for a national lottery. This country has already had a national lottery. The British museum was built with the funds from a national lottery. I hope that those on the Opposition Benches who have sympathy for museums will remember that point. However, that lottery came to an end. It is our duty to bring back a national lottery as we approach 2000.

Research shows that there are about 170 lotteries in 130 countries. We must not lag behind all those other nations, including the United States. We must have a national lottery. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) referred to the fact that even Albania now runs a national lottery. *[Interruption.]* Those hon. Members with Merseyside constituencies jeer at what I say, but why should we lag behind Albania?

Mr. George Howarth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tracey: No. I want to have my full 10 minutes. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to say more later.

The 1978 Royal Commission on Gambling said that it believed that it was an extremely good idea to raise funds for good causes by means of a lottery. I have already referred to the fact that, according to market research, 75 per cent. of the population want to participate in a national lottery. Some Labour party Members appear to be going against the grain of public opinion. However, the hon. Members for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) were, with me, sponsors of the private Member's Bill that was introduced a few months ago by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). Unfortunately, they are not here today to express their views. It surprised many of my hon. Friends and I that after what the Labour party said earlier last year it did not include a national lottery in its general election manifesto. Perhaps there are lessons to be drawn from that.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Perhaps that is why the Labour party did not win the election.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. and learned Friend may be right about that. The British public will have drawn their own conclusions.

Several speakers have already pointed out that it is unlikely that any Government would be able to provide, from public resources, all the money that hon. Members want to be provided for sport, the arts, the national heritage and charities. Conflicting claims are put to the Treasury for money for health, education and so on. They push further down the queue the claims for money for the arts, sport and the national heritage. I have experience of that problem. When I was Under-Secretary of State with special responsibility for sport I visited countries where lotteries and pools existed side by side. Magnificent stadia were constructed with those resources. I saw swimming pools, running tracks, velodromes and gymnasia that had been built with money that had not been provided by the state.

Let us not forget that Manchester is bidding to host the Olympic games. The fact that some hon. Members have said today that a national lottery is not needed will be taken by some people to mean that this country will be unable to provide the facilities that will be required if Manchester is to host the Olympic games. A national lottery is essential to fund the facilities that will be necessary.

Other hon. Members will no doubt speak more eloquently than I can about the need for expenditure from the lottery on our heritage. In other countries, a lottery has funded arts facilities, of which the Sydney opera house is a classic example. Such facilities can never be funded only by the Government from the national Exchequer or by worthy organisations such as the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. The size of expenditure is such that it can be met only by a national lottery.

As a former sports Minister, I have much affection for the pools and for the work that they have done with the football grounds improvement trust and the Football Trust. I should not wish to see the pools jeopardised by a national lottery. I do not believe that the pools will be jeopardised, because market research shows that 92 per cent. of people who contribute to the pools wish to contribute to a national lottery. Only 8 per cent. said that they would withdraw their contribution to the pools and spend it on the national lottery.

For the benefit of Labour Members who have taken rather a negative view of the national lottery, I shall conclude with the comments of somebody who was respected by Opposition Members as a spokesman on sport, the noble Lord Howell. He said:

"I appeal to my hon. Friends to stop saying . . . that it is either pools or the lottery but not both. That is a mistaken

approach. It is political advice and I hope that the House will see the common sense in accepting the Rothschild royal commission's recommendation of 14 years ago and proceed to a national lottery which the sports, arts and heritage of this country desperately need if we are to expand and promote their interests."—[*Official Report*, 17 January 1992; Vol. 201, c. 1246.]

It is a pity that the noble Lord is not with his colleagues this afternoon to say those words once again.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before we continue, I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches will start now and last until 8 o'clock.

6.3 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Not long ago I spoke in opposition to the National Lottery Bill, a private Member's Bill, and my opposition has increased since. Since that time, hundreds of thousands of people have been made unemployed, yet today the Minister said that the Bill will create jobs.

I am sponsored by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, which represents most of the workers in the pools industry. It estimates that the industry directly employs 6,500 people and more than 70,000 people part time in places such as Merseyside, Strathclyde, Cardiff and London. Given the level of unemployment in those areas —I can speak passionately about the problems that unemployment has inflicted on Strathclyde and the poverty that our people are suffering from because of the Government's policies—every job is worth fighting for.

I would hold up the attitude of the pools companies to many employers as a good model. The Littlewoods factory in Scotland recently burnt down, but within a short time its 650 workers were relocated to a factory in my constituency and were able to continue to earn their living. They have now returned to a new building in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams), and I am delighted to say that they are fully employed in that area of deep depression. Those jobs are more than welcome. The industry employs 6,500 women, who receive a reasonable wage: the minimum is just under £5 an hour. That money is most welcome to families in Strathclyde.

Britain is one of the worst gambling nations in the world. It is unbelievable that the Government wish to use the lottery to raise revenue. If people outside believe the Minister when he tells them that buying a lottery ticket is not a gamble, they must be nutters, but my constituents are not nut cases; they know what gambling is.

It is suggested that ordinary people who are living in poverty, many of whom live on benefit, will aim for the pipedream of being the one in 6 million who win. What a way of getting out of deprivation and poverty. Some estimates suggest that they will spend £2 from the pittance that they receive in benefit. The Government are encouraging those people by offering them a pipedream that is unrealisable. Two pounds buys four tins of beans in Asda at 75p. The local shop in my area sells a dozen eggs for 78p and two loves of bread for 78p. That is a good breakfast for a poor family—eggs, beans and bread. The Government want to encourage people to buy a lottery ticket—but for what?

I am not opposed to arts, culture and sport, which are important, but the Government should fund them through direct taxation rather than taking the cheap, shoddy road of a lottery. The Government should not take pot luck and gamble with people's futures, and they certainly should not gamble with the jobs of the 6,500 people who are employed directly in the pools industry. I have heard many comments today, and we can all play the numbers game, but the numbers game that matters to me is the 6,500 people who are employed in the pools industry.

There is no question but that the Bill will lead to substantial redundancies. More than 1,000 redundancies are suggested in the Government's secret report. It is such a secret that everybody knows about it! I wish that the Government had given it to us so that we could have discussed it further.

The Bill is back-door nationalisation. The Government say that they believe in privatisation, yet they are nationalising a private industry, but for what I honestly do not know.

Someone sent me the Scottish Sports Council's document, "A Golden Opportunity for Scotland". What a deep insult that is to almost 650 people who are now facing the dole because of the proposed lottery. I have examined that document and its contents did not surprise me because most quangos have Tory placemen anyway. That frightens the life out of me because in Scotland most of us who are Labour, Liberal or even SNP minded are not on any boards, so the quangos carry on in their merry way, promoting Tory policy.

The document mentions a golden opportunity, a bonanza for the arts and a restorative revenue for our heritage. People in my constituency do not live in castles; they do not go to the ballet and cannot afford to go to the opera—they find it difficult enough to survive in this day and age without seeing unnecessary revenue going to support such activities. I have nothing against Windsor castle—it is terrible that it burnt down—but £50 million is to be spent on it. I am not against the Lord of Argyll receiving a pittance, but heritage money is being spent on places that already receive money. Quangos consist of Government placemen, so they do not represent the democratic view and do not offer the democratic right to be heard.

I sincerely wonder what we shall get when the lottery quangos are established. Shall we see Jimmy Tarbuck, the comedian of the Tory party, Kenny "blow 'em and nuke 'em" Everett, or Ken Dodd who is such an expert on money matters? Shall we have one of the greatest fiddlers in Great Britain, the superb Yehudi Menuhin—I do not mean that as an insult—or will Gazza the great footballer kick it off, as he is also a Tory? Will Tessa Sanderson be throwing the javelin? I am sure that the Prime Minister would love to have Clive Lloyd, the cricketer, doing a wee spot, and Bruno punching a few dots here and there to help the draw. Perhaps Cilla Black could host a blind date to win £1 million—she was the woman who said that the Tories would put the "great" back into Great Britain. Is the national lottery the way to do that? What an insult!

Many organisations have written to me on the subject. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations said:

"Low income households, on the experience of the Irish National Lottery, are likely to have a higher than average participation rate and unless the allocation formula reflects social need the National Lottery may take disproportionate sums."

That means that the low-income folk will be the most involved. USDAW knows its business and states:

[Mr. Thomas Graham]

"The National Lottery is wrong in principle. We believe that the introduction of a National Lottery is undesirable in principle both as a regressive form of consumption tax and an impulsive and potentially addictive form of gambling."

So far all we have heard from the Government are the so-called benefits of the lottery. Meanwhile, Ministers have refused to publish their own research, which shows that more than 1,000 jobs will be lost following its introduction. The pools companies themselves have estimated that about 4,000 on-site jobs will be lost in the first year and a further 750 in the second year, leaving only 1,175——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the trap has operated.

6.14 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I have listened carefully to the debate and have noted what has been said. Time is short, but I refer to the fact that we have been told that a national lottery will increase the income of charities. Some hon. Members were holding up the Irish hospitals sweepstakes as an example, telling us of the benefits to the Irish Republic. However, that flies in the face of the facts. There is evidence that, back in the 1930s, the Irish hospitals sweepstakes caused many hospitals hardship because they resulted in a decline in charitable giving which contributed to running costs while sweepstakes money was available only for concrete projects. In response to the Government, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations said that recent evidence from Ireland, where the national lottery has been running since 1987, suggests that 10 per cent. of money spent on the lottery was at the expense of charities' fund raising, with a further 60 per cent. decline in the sale of charitable lottery tickets. If the introduction of a national lottery here had similar effects, there could be a loss to charities of between £267 million and £395 million.

I resent it being said that giving to charities was declining in Northern Ireland because, in fact, giving is increasing in Northern Ireland although we are in a terrible recession. It is nonsense to say that charities will benefit greatly from the lottery. Charities are raising a hue and cry because they know that it will tell against them.

We were also told that the lottery would be a good way of giving, but if only 25 per cent. of what is given goes to charity, that is not such a good way of giving. Certainly people in Ballymena where I come from would not think that it was a good way of giving. I see that the Secretary of State is smiling because he has some experience of how Ballymena thinks—it is called the Aberdeen of Northern Ireland and I am proud to represent it.

We are also told that we cannot raise the necessary money through taxation, but the lottery is a tax—let us get that perfectly clear. It is a tax across the board. I refer again to Ireland—which people participate most in lotteries there? The answer is, the unemployed, because it holds before them something which they can never attain. It is terrible that the Government should apparently be placing the possibility of great riches within people's grasp. By doing so, the Government foment discontent with one's present standard of living. Far from promotng harder work, it will encourage consumer debt which, at the moment, stands at £56 billion in the United Kingdom. What will it be when the lottery is established?

To me, however, they are peripheral points. I am opposed to the principle of gambling. I do not believe that one should offer people something that they could not attain by exercising the proper work ethic. After wide experience in pastoral work for more than 40 years, I know something of the results of gambling. Last year I said:

"The desire and aim to get money without doing the equivalent of necessary work strikes at the heart of the well-being of mankind. The man who works for what he gets is happy and contented. He is not shadowed with the frustration, disappointment, tension, agony and remorse of the gambler. A trade and occupation are ennobling things. They bring out, to the best advantage, the talents and energies of the individual. Anything that debases those talents and energies and puts them to a wrong use is not good for a person"

or for the nation as a whole. I continued:

"Gambling tells against domestic happiness. The charms of the home do not satisfy the person caught up in this craze: he wants louder laughter, something to win or lose and excitement to drive the heart faster, fillip the blood and fire the imagination."—*[Official Report,* 17 January 1992; Vol. 201, c. 1243.]

It is terrible that we as a nation are going to sponsor gambling, to spend money to create the appetite for gambling and to encourage people who perhaps have never indulged before. I think that it was the Secretary of State who said that everyone could have a flutter. Some of those who have fluttered have broken wings and some of us have had to pick up the broken wings and the broken homes.

We are certainly going down the wrong road when we reverse what the nation decided almost 200 years ago. It is a retrograde step and I will not vote to give the Bill a Second Reading.

6.19 pm

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): I hope that when the Minister sums up later, he will do two things. First, will he confirm that there is an intergovernmental agreement within the European Community to prevent the legitimate sale of other countries' lottery tickets? Secondly, will he explain how 1,000 jobs would be created in the lottery when the West German lottery is run by 140 to 150 people?

For good reasons, there is disquiet among hon. Members of all parties about the Bill. There is the threat to jobs, there is the danger to charities and there is the anxiety, felt by many, about the Government's promotion of gambling. The Government argue that the lottery is a good thing and that it will create a bonaza for good causes while causing minimal problems in other areas, such as the pools industry.

Underpinning the Government's case has been the argument that a national lottery is merely harmless entertainment. It is so harmless that over the past 300 years countless hours have been spent in the House debating the merits or otherwise of lotteries. The debate began in 1698, it resumed in 1716, it resulted in the Lotteries Act 1823, it resumed in the various debates in this century, including the debate on the National Lottery Bill last year, and it continues today.

Throughout those debates, Governments have seen a lottery as a source of revenue and as a means of controlling

gambling without stimulating any new gambling. Opponents always question the ethical probity of lotteries and see them at best as a form of regressive taxation.

I have read through the debates and I was reminded of the contortions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on black Wednesday. Bearing that in mind, it is worth paraphrasing the question that was put in the House by William Parnell during the debate on the national lottery on 4 May 1819. Do Ministers themselves gamble? If not, why do they recommend to others that which they have rejected?

A lottery is, without doubt, gambling and I am glad that the Secretary of State confirmed that today. Research has shown that the lottery will be funded primarily by the C2, D and E social classes. A report by London Economics shows that those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale have one third less participation than average in sport and only half the average participation in the arts. Conversely, socio-economic classes A, B and C1 have one third more participation than average in sport and twice the average participation in the arts. Research in Ireland shows, as the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) said, that it is the unemployed who disproportionatley subsidise the lottery. It it is the poor paying, in effect, for the distractions of the rich.

It is appropriate to read a quotation from George Orwell's "1984" which was sent to me in the post. The quotation reads:

"The Lottery, with its weekly pay-out of enormous prizes, was the one public event to which the proles paid serious attention."

I assume that we are the proles. The quotation continues:

"It was probable that there were some millions of proles for whom the lottery was the principal, if not the only reason, for staying alive. It was their delight, their folly, the anodyne, their intellectual stimulant."

Orwell's idea is not as fanciful as it seems. Anyone who has seen Spain during the draw of El Gordo—the big one—knows how people can be besotted with a lottery when huge prizes are involved. Hon. Members should go to Australia and watch prime time Saturday night television when Australia's National Lotto prize is drawn. It is the focus of society. Similar phenomena are observed anywhere where there are huge prizes. It becomes a preoccupation. That does not mean that we are philistines or anti-gambling. The point is that Governments should not stimulate more gambling.

Illusions should not be fostered by any responsible Government. The notion that people can be distracted from the realities of their lives by such disingenuous promotion is worrying. The Government have repeatedly used the definition of a lottery being harmless entertainment.

There is no doubt that a national lottery as envisaged would destroy thousands of jobs, mainly women's jobs, in the pools industry. In country after country, it has been shown that the pools industry cannot co-exist with a national lottery. In the minority of cases in which it has, the reason has been that the Government have allowed both a level playing field, including in terms of the tax regime.

Research was commissioned by the European Commission—not by the pools industry—and carried out by Coopers and Lybrand. I have confirmation of its findings from the manager, Mr. Frank McFadden. The report concluded that the introduction of a national lottery in the United Kingdom "would effectively kill off the football pools within weeks."

The lottery would directly affect the jobs of more than 4,600 people in my area and the jobs of another 2,000 elsewhere. It also affects the 70,000 part-time collectors, the printers, the suppliers and others. It is not only those involved in the pools industry who fear for their jobs. We must bear in in mind the fears of the Betting Office Licensees Association, the Lotteries Council and many charities who fear for the future of their employees if the national lottery is introduced, especially in its present form.

All that we can get from the Government are vague promises about jobs. The lottery will be operated by a few hundred people at the potential cost of thousands of jobs. The way in which the Government could cater for the pools industry would be to offer the level playing field of the same trading conditions for the pools as for the national lottery. We all know why the Government are reluctant to do that.

I have no doubt about the reason for the Government's reluctance. We have only to look at the Rothschild submission to the Government on the national lottery to see that there is no way in which the pools and the national lottery could co-exist. The Rothschild submission refers to a more intrusive, but lighter regime. It means favoured treatment for the national lottery for it to be able to compete against a well-established and efficient pools industry. I can only conclude that there is a straight choice between the pools and the lottery.

It is ironic that the Government intend to intervene on behalf of nationalised gambling and are willing to ignore the wishes of private enterprise in this case. The Government can take that step only by characterising the lottery as harmless entertainment and by characterising the pools as gambling. That device is also lifted straight from the Rothschild report.

It is clear that the income of charities will be devastated by the lottery. The research in Ireland has been referred to by other speakers today and it was used in the submission by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. The research shows that 10 per cent. of the money spent on the lottery is at the expense of the income of charities. A £1·5 billion lottery turnover would cost charities £150 million. Yet that same £1·5 billion turnover, untaxed, would provide £525 million for good causes, of which £105 million would be for charities. That is a net loss of £45 million. Only an outrageous optimist envisages no taxation on a lottery.

Let us suppose that the taxation rate was 20 per cent., as mentioned by the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). Let us take a notional £1 investment in the national lottery. Incidentally, no country in Europe has a tax rate below 25·7 per cent., which is the figure for France. The average tax rate is 29·5 per cent., so we are being generous in assuming that the rate would be 20 per cent.

Of that £1, 50p would go back into prizes. Some 15p would go on operating costs and some 20p would go in tax. That would leave 15p of the orginal £1 to be divided among five good causes. Somebody who made a donation of £1 to the national lottery to make a donation towards his favourite charity would end up by giving it 3p. That is not a fair deal. It is far better that the money should go to a charity of people's choice without being reduced and without the reduction, which I foresee, in personal

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commitment to charitable giving. Such giving will be reduced to the level of gambling and that gambling will be done with a stacked deck.

Given that the Government will tax lottery income, how will other sources of funds be affected? What will be the effect, for example, on the local authorities' discretionary support for the voluntary sector? As they are squeezed more and more by central Government, is it not sensible to understand their view that perhaps the voluntary sector would be a prime area for cuts?

As I have now run out of time, I will conclude by referring to a written reply that appeared on 16 March 1992 at column *789* of *Hansard* in which the Prime Minister confirmed the view of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs that demand for gambling should not be stimulated. However, the White Paper demanded that the national lottery should be widely advertised and socially acceptable.

6.29 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) said that the national lottery would kill off the football pools within weeks. With respect to him, I do not believe that for a moment. I, for one, would take tickets in a national lottery; but I never bet on the football pools. I am sure that the same would apply to millions of our fellow citizens.

I strongly support the Bill, and I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage on taking this important and positive action which will bring tremendous benefits to the arts, heritage, sports and charities.

I want also to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who basically worked the whole thing out with his White Paper a year ago. I also congratulate my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), who introduced a private Member's Bill which had a tremendous impact on the House. I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton will not mind if I bracket with his name that of our former colleague and former Member for Hyndburn, Ken Hargreaves.

My interest lies first and foremost in the arts and heritage. I believe that we must, as a country, build on our strengths, and the arts and heritage are one of the great strengths, not only because they fulfil and enrich the lives of our people, but because of the volume of employment that they generate, partly as a result of people visiting this country from abroad.

People visit the United Kingdom, not for our weather, but for our arts and heritage; for our theatres, opera, ballet and concerts; for our museums, art galleries and art auctions. They come to visit our historic houses and royal palaces such as Hampton court, which is in my constituency. They come to visit our cathedrals, abbeys and churches—

Mr. Wareing: And Kneller hall.

Mr. Jessel: And, indeed, they come to hear military band concerts at Kneller hall.

They come to see our villages, historic towns and our countryside. They come also to see something of our monarchy, ceremonies and our tradition.

When people visit this country, they spend money on the arts and heritage. They also spend money in hotels and restaurants. They spend money in the shops and on internal transport. Those activities are labour-intensive; and a huge amount of employment, income and tax yield is generated for the Government. I do not believe that Opposition Members have attached sufficient weight to those important factors.

I reject the suggestion that the gambling aspect is detrimental to the national character. I notice that Opposition Members have said nothing about gambling on the pools being detrimental to the national character. They cannot have the argument both ways. Opposition Members cannot complain that the national lottery will damage the national character through gambling and then say that they will support the football pools because of the employment that is generated without referring to the fact that the football pools are a form of gambling.

I do not believe that the national lottery will sap the morale of the country. I want to quote the words of an Opposition Member as recorded in *Hansard:*

> "I believe that this proposal will affect a great number of our people throughout the country on sincerely-held religious and moral grounds . . . Now Britain's strength, freedom and solvency apparently depend on the proceeds of a squalid raffle."

Those were the words of Harold Wilson referring to the proposal of Harold Macmillian in the 1956 Budget to introduce a premium bond. Another Opposition Member, Mr. Simmons, said:

> "I regard the Premium Bond as a record low for any statesman of stature in this country. It is an appeal to the least desirable instinct in the community, the instinct of getting something for nothing."—[*Official Report*, 18 April 1956; Vol. 551, c. 1026, 1083.]

That was said 36 years ago. Since then, we have seen one of the most self-confident and expansionary phases in the history of Britain—the 1980s—when the arts and the whole of our national life flourished as it had never done before.

I do not accept the argument about gambling. It is a Victorian argument that a man, without the necessary strength of character, might gamble away his wages and destroy the living standards of his wife and children. That related to betting on horses when one could wager all one's salary or wage. It is most unlikely that anyone will do that in respect of the football pools or the national lottery.

There is a serious argument about employment in Liverpool, not only because of the number of jobs involved in Liverpool and on Merseyside and, to a lesser extent, in Glasgow and elsewhere, but because—and this point has not been made so far by Opposition Members—the families who run the football pools, such as the Moores who run Littlewoods, have given Merseyside and, not least, the arts an enormous amount of support which has benefited the whole community. They have done that on a philanthropic basis.

For example, the Moores and Littlewoods have rescued the Liverpool Playhouse which is highly important to the arts. My wife, who was an actress, tells me that the Liverpool Playhouse has been the nursery of many of our greatest actors and actresses. The same family contributed a great deal to the new Tate gallery in Liverpool.

However, I cannot see why the offices of the national lottery and their machinery should not be located in Liverpool as partial compensation. One must recognise that automation is increasing and the number of jobs involved with the football pools was already declining. We must also consider the national aspect mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley and the volume of employment that the lottery would generate.

So far, no one has referred to the spending that would occur as a result of the prize money. Some of the money would be saved, but many prize winners would spend their money. That, in turn, would generate employment, income and a tax yield to the Government.

We must look at the widest possible picture. I strongly support the Bill, and I hope that there will be as little delay as possible before it reaches the statute book.

6.37 pm

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): I broadly support the concept of a national lottery. As most advanced countries and all other members of the European Community have already introduced national lotteries, if we do not introduce a lottery here, it would be only a matter of time before national lottery tickets from other countries were available in Britain.

Nor do I shrink from nationalising a part of the nation's gambling industry. As some of my colleagues have pointed out, the Government are in an odd position in that they are involved in a nationalisation measure. I rejoice in that. There is a great deal to be said for the development of part of our gambling that is directed towards good causes in which there will be public debate and a contribution from the wider community about the direction of those resources.

I can think of only one form of gambling which is responsive to public pressure, and that is the pools industry, with its support for football grounds and, in response to the Taylor report, the improvement of safety at grounds. That certainly has been beneficial—I would be the last to speak against it—and it shows the relationship between the pools and the industry which gives rise to the employment in the pools.

The national lottery gives an opportunity for a quantum leap in public support for the arts, sports, the national heritage and the millennium fund. We should recognise the extent to which the country is ill served at present in terms of capital for the arts and sports, for example. One of the great weaknesses in recent years with the bids that have been put forward by Birmingham and London, and now by Manchester, which I fervently hope will be successful, for the Olympic games in the year 2000, is that the initial sporting capital that we are relying upon is abysmally low.

To take an obvious example, the British national football stadium is now 70 years old. Wembly stadium was built in 1924 to host the Empire games. Although there have been modernisations since then, that indicates that this country has been notoriously slow to update its sporting and artistic facilities and that we have failed, in terms of public support, to provide them.

It has already been pointed out that a comparison might be drawn with the 1851 Great Exhibition and the 1951 exhibition. I hope that the millennium fund will be directed at the creation of significant buildings. We have some of the greatest modern architects in the world. All too little are they employed to design great public buildings. In recent years they have concentrated upon buildings in the private sector or the redevelopment of British Rail stations. I commend Liverpool Street and Charing Cross stations as fine examples of modern architecture. All too often, because architects have been in the private sector and because mammon has been dictating the terms, those buildings, far from being showplaces for the nation, are to be found in city streets in which it is difficult to obtain a true perspective of them. Vast numbers of people, not least hon. Members, from other parts of the country are too unaware of the achievements of British architects in recent years.

I hope that the millennium fund will give us the chance, first, to have major building projects which employ such talent, and, secondly, to get away from the terrible concentration only upon the capital city. One of the great tragedies of the past decade or so, the period when considerable oil wealth was siphoned off into the private sector through the beneficence of the Government, is that so much of the concentration of that wealth has been in City finance. The City of London has had opportunities for such development and the rest of the country has frequently been neglected.

I hope that we will have a full, major debate on the way in which resources will be used for the millennium fund. I trust that other parts of the country—for example, the regions, not least the north-west—will have opportunities for major building projects of real stature, which will be of great advantage to the nation and will be part of our national heritage.

The Secretary of State will have recognised the basis upon which the reasoned amendment was tabled and will know as a result of our questions to him in the Select Committee on National Heritage that there is enormous anxiety among Opposition Members about the impact upon the football pools industry of the introduction of the national lottery. I do not think that the present distinctions that the right hon. Gentleman draws between the two will hold in terms of public acceptability.

There seems to be an entirely spurious proposition that the national lottery will just be a game of chance, that it is not gambling, that gambling is without the application of one's brain to a game of skill in which one's intellect is engaged in making predictions about the results of certain sporting events, and that football pools fit into that category because one must predict the outcome of football matches. The Secretary of State and all those who argue in that way are living in a time warp.

Ever since the treble chance was introduced 40 years ago, it has been quite clear that the prediction of results has given way to the random selection of eight score draws out of 58 possible matches. It is completely a game of chance. That is why the big wins are made only when everybody else gets it wrong. By definition, the reason why everybody gets it wrong is that one cannot predict through skill, intellect or rational judgment. Pure chance produces the major dividend on the national pools.

What is more, the national pools continue to flourish throughout the summer. I have never met anybody who is interested in football in this country who has shown any capacity to understand the Australian football leagues and the Australian football results. The final nail in that coffin was delivered a few years ago when, in order to avoid the potential loss of income due to the disastrous effects of harsh British winters, the football pools introduced the

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pools panel—a band of extremely worthy individuals. In fact, the chair is a personal friend of mine. He happens to be an Arsenal supporter, which shows how much he knows about football, but I will leave that point. It is abundantly clear that if one is laying bets upon the potential forecasts of a gathering of individuals loosely connected with the football industry actually producing results for the treble chance, clearly that is, in everything but name, a lottery.

My conclusion is not that we should abandon support for a national lottery but that we should play fair by the football pools industry. We should give the football pools industry what it asks for—a level playing field. If the national lottery is to be advertised on television, I see no reason why the football pools industry should not have the same rights. If, however, it is decided that it would be demoralising to the nation for such advertising to appear on television, that must apply to the national lottery as well.

I do not see why the football pools industry should not be able to match the national lottery in terms of potential prizes in order to retain its attractiveness. Nor do I see any reason why it should not have the same rights to provide its coupons through retail outlets in the way that is envisaged for the national lottery.

My other great anxiety—the Secretary of State will know about it from the concerns of members of the Select Committee—is the concept of the word that I shudder to use, but we all seem to be trapped by it—"additionality". It is marginally better than "subsidiarity", I suppose, in the sense that it means a little more, but nevertheless it is an extremely crude concept which is obviously central to the benefits that the national lottery will bring. If the Sports Council and the Arts Council are to distribute resources that are allocated by the Department of National Heritage and the Treasury, and if there are to be resources from the national lottery, we will have to lay down in the framework of the Bill a clear indication of how that process will work. Otherwise what we fear will happen —there will be a substitution of one form of expenditure for the other.

6.47 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I welcome the opportunity that the national lottery uniquely provides to mobilise substantial extra sums for the arts, for the heritage and for sport. I also welcome the millennium fund. I hope that the effect of it will be to make us more cheerful as we approach the forthcoming millennium than our ancestors are reported to have been as they approached the previous one. If we should, however, decide that the end of the world is at hand, no doubt we shall draw some comfort from the thought that my right hon. and hon. Friends will be judged more lightly on judgment day for having sent the rest of us to perdition with an endowment.

I should like to say a word about additionality, although some of my hon. Friends might think that I am already a lost soul for descending into Euro-speak. I very much welcome the pledge of my right hon. Friend that the proceeds of the national lottery will not be a substitute for current Government spending. Hon. Members will be watching to ensure that that is so and helping my right hon. Friend to achieve that objective. However, in truth, we shall never know whether public spending on certain activities will grow by less than it otherwise would have done had there not been a national lottery.

I urge upon my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, therefore, an act of forbearance and suggest that he refrain altogether from taxing the lottery. I know how keen he must be to find every additional source of revenue. He must be concerned about the possible loss of pools revenue. But, realistically, he will be limited in what he can take from the lottery to some 5 per cent., or 7 per cent. at the most. Experience in other countries has shown that at least 48 per cent. of turnover will need to go to prizes if people are to buy enough tickets. The Minister must allow not less than 12 per cent. for the costs of promotion and administration. Unless 35 per cent. is spent on good causes, the prospectus of the national lottery—that it is a grand design intended to achieve a quantum leap in funding for those good causes—will prove to be a deception. That leaves only 5 per cent. or, at the most, 7 per cent. to be taken by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor directly from the lottery. It will certainly not be the 15 to 20 per cent. which has been bandied about. About 5 or 7 per cent. would keep the Chancellor in phase with the level of taxation in other European countries.

However, in his remarks to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations conference, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary observed that the intention was that the lottery should be "good fun". My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State unbuttoned himself before Christmas so far as to describe the national lottery as "an exciting project which will capture the imagination of the nation". The lottery will not be such fun or as exciting if the tax man appears at the party like an undertaker.

I urge the Government to consider seriously the possibility that the Exchequer would do better if the Chancellor refrained from taxing the lottery directly. More people will want to buy lottery tickets if the lottery is tax free and a vigorous flow of money into the lottery will stimulate and finance economic activity—construction and employment—all of which will yield tax downstream. If the Chancellor were to go in for such an act of apparent self-abnegation, it might be possible for as much as 40 per cent. to go to good causes. I suggest that the Government settle for that amount, which would be a good bargain all round.

I should like to say a word about the impact of the national lottery on charities. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary rightly emphasised that everyone involved in charities should look on the national lottery as an opportunity which, if properly taken, will yield great benefits for charities. His qualification was right and the opportunity must be properly taken by the Government.

My hon. Friend's decision that charities should be among the principal beneficiaries of the national lottery has been widely welcomed. It is good that the Government listened and responded to the case which was made. But genuine anxieties remain on the part of charities.

I hope that Ministers in the Department of National Heritage and the Home Office will be vigilant to ensure that additionality operates in the field of public expenditure on charities and voluntary organisations. Central and local government are important providers of funds to charities and voluntary organisations. Increasingly, statutory agencies are working in partnership with charities and voluntary organisations to provide

services and address the multiplicity of needs in our society. Even as it is, before the lottery and under the present pressures of public expenditure, there is a significant erosion of public support for charities and voluntary organisations. It is crucial that departments, whether in central or local government, do not get away with reducing further their support for charities and voluntary organisations on the basis that other money may be forthcoming from the national lottery.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will be alive and sensitive to the probability that the advent of the national lottery will divert money from charitable giving. It will be hard to assess the scale of that effect because nothing happens in a vacuum. Other extraneous effects such as recession and, indeed, economic recovery will have an influence on the totality of charitable giving. But common sense tells us that the impact of the lottery will displace some spending on charities as on the pools.

It is right that the Government should monitor those two matters in the context of the national lottery: the development of public funding for charities and voluntary organisations and of private contributions to them. The Government should recognise their responsibility. They need a flourishing charitable sector in the pursuit of many of their policies. They will be the creator of this juggernaut, the national lottery, and it is only right that they should accept responsibility in relation to its consequences. I hope that the Government will stand ready, if necessary, to provide further compensation—I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend use that word in this context—possibly by introducing further relief for charities from VAT and by entitling charities absolutely to relief from the business rate.

I am grateful that my right hon. Friend introduced clauses in part III of the Bill which enlarge the scope for small charitable lotteries. He is well aware of the concern of many charities which are significantly dependent on the proceeds of small lotteries that their revenue will be hit by the arrival of a giant national lottery which enjoys all the advantages of massive publicity and the allure of enormous prizes.

My right hon. Friend proposes to increase the prize limits and the permissible turnover for society lotteries and local lotteries. To an extent, he proposes to relax the rules on advertising. Those concessions are welcome, as far as they go, but I put it to him that they do not go far. Why should he set any limits on the turnover and prizes of small lotteries? If small lotteries are duly registered, if they are required to provide proper accounts and if a minimum proportion of their turnover is required to go to good causes, they should be free to compete. I am left with a suspicion that the Government are using their power of legislation to rig the rules in favour of the national lottery. I should like the national lottery to leave more space for small lotteries. In that context, I am sorry that my right hon. Friend envisages that the national lottery should use scratch cards. Scratch cards are a convenient and productive device for small charitable lotteries. The national lottery will be able to use the latest and most expensive technology. It would be fair and sensible if the national lottery left the field clear for small charitable lotteries to use scratch cards.

Rather than close opportunities for other charitable lotteries to raise funds, I would prefer my right hon. Friend to look further at the manner in which charitable lotteries are regulated. It must be said that the regulation of lotteries by local authorities is patchy. By doubling the levels at which society lotteries must register with the Gaming Board, there is a risk that the scale of abuse will double. I ask the Minister why the Gaming Board or the Office of National Lotteries should not regulate all lotteries.

I hope that it will be possible to find an opportunity in the legislation properly to regulate so-called games of skill. The Institute of Charity Fund-Raising Managers has provided some disturbing evidence of rackets in the operation of prize competition draws by commercial companies which claim to work on behalf of charities. "Games of skill" whereby questions are posed, such as "If today is Monday, what is tomorrow?", escape the net of lotteries regulation. Such games of skill should be brought within an equivalent secure regulatory regime.

I have spoken about ways in which money will be raised through the national lottery and other lotteries. I should like to say a word about distribution. The Government are creating a great engine of fund raising which will be accountable to Parliament for the propriety of its operation. It is appropriate that the Government should have a policy about the use of the proceeds. I take issue with those who argue in favour of the purest application of the arms-length principle. It is legitimate that the Government should take a view in response to public debate, and I support that.

6.58 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): What amazes me in this debate, which in a sense began during Question Time today, is the apparent lack of doing homework on the part of the Government and the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State reminds me of the little boy who gets his exercise book out, does his homework, goes along to school the following day and then when he returns home refuses to show his exercise book to his parents because he got all his sums wrong. That is what happened with the GAH report.

I do not believe any of the nonsense about commercial probity—that the Government must be careful. If the report told us that the sums are correct, it would have been produced to us. Sums have been made out by the pools firms and by Coopers and Lybrand. The gross remittances to the football pools companies—their income—which stood at £880 million in 1991-92 are likely to be reduced to £442·3 million by 1995-96.

That reduction will affect the contribution by the pools companies to good causes. We have heard much talk about good causes being assisted by the national lottery. Let us examine the amounts which the football pools have contributed to good causes in recent years. In 1991-92, £21 million was provided for the Football Trust, mostly for improvements to stadiums and seating accommodation. By 1995-96, that will fall to £11·1 million. The Foundation for Sport and the Arts received £20·3 million in 1991-92 from the football pools. In 1995-96, that will fall to £11·1 million. Let us not forget that the pools pay out the large amount of 37·5 per cent. of their takings through the pools betting duty. According to a recent parliamentary reply, in 1991-92 the pools contributed to the Exchequer no less than £319·5 million. That is almost half the pools turnover during that period.

[Mr. Robert N. Wareing]

The lottery will be expensive, with some 50 per cent. going on the prizes. That will leave very little: 35 per cent. will be left to be distributed, not to good causes but between good causes and the national Exchequer.

I reiterate what I said about the so-called competition between the football and national lotteries in other countries. The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) claimed that Italy was a good example of a country with football pools and a national lottery. The position is not comparable because the Government envisage that the national lottery in Britain will compete with the football pools for 52 weeks of the year. In Italy, there are only four or five draws of the national lottery each year, so the Italian football pools have to compete with the national lottery for only four or five weeks a year.

All the evidence is that considerable sums will be lost to both the football pools and charities. The Jubilee Policy Group showed that the pools companies stood to lose £325 million a year. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimated a loss of £428 million to charitable organisations. Those figures are the results of research carried out by people who did their homework. It is a pity that the Government have apparently discussed the matter with the pools promoters only once—on 9 December.

The greatest impact of the national lottery, especially in the eyes of Members of Parliament who represent Liverpool constituencies such as myself and my hon. Friends, will be the job losses that it will cause. Of the 4,997 jobs provided by the Littlewoods organisation alone, 1,833—14 per cent.—are at the Walton Hall avenue office in my constituency. But considerable unemployment would be caused in other parts of Merseyside. Birkenhead is one. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in his place. I hope that perhaps he will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Vernons and Zetters are likely to go out of business altogether, according to Coopers and Lybrand. Of course, the Government are used to businesses going bankrupt; what do two more matter? It matters to my constituents. The position is appalling. Almost 5,000 people are employed in the pools industry on Merseyside now but it is estimated that by 1996-97, only 1,175 people will work for Littlewoods pools.

If the Government want to refute my figures, let them produce their evidence. Let the little boy come home with his exercise book and show his parents—the House of Commons—what they have a right to know. They have a right to know the evidence on which the Government have determined their case.

The job losses in Liverpool and elsewhere will be among not only those directly employed by the pools firms. The Secretary of State talked about the indirect employment that would be generated by the national lottery. Littlewoods, Vernons and Zetters also create employment in the advertising, banking services, construction, electrical supplies, paper manufacturing, postal services, printing, stationery and office equipment industries. It is estimated that 1,025 jobs are indirectly generated by the pools industry in Britain.

We have had enough redundancies on Merseyside. In recent months, more jobs have been lost at Ford, Pilkington and the oil depot at Stanlow. Cammell Laird has been debated in the House. Another company in my constituency, General Electric, has been forced to offload 95 people as a result, not of technological changes but the recession, largely because of the Government's policies.

What can the Government do to compensate? When he spoke before the National Heritage Select Committee, the Secretary of State said that the lottery would create no more than about 1,000 jobs. It is appalling that the Government do not take into account the job losses which are likely to occur in the pools industry.

Why on earth should the pools organisations not advertise on television and radio, if the national lottery is to be allowed to do so? Why should not the pools companies sell their coupons in shops? Why should not they be allowed to pass on their jackpot from one week to another if there is no outright winner? Why should the pools be discriminated against in tax rates? I have been given no answer so far to those questions.

The Secretary of State talked about creating millionaires and museums when he launched the Bill. I can tell him that there will be precious few millionaires among the pools employees in Liverpool, but perhaps the pools industry, like so many other industries in Britain under the Tory Government, will be deposited in a museum

7.8 pm

Sir John Hannam (Exeter): I welcome the introduction of the national lottery as a means of raising additional resources for the maintenance of the basic structure of our arts, heritage and sports systems. I have been involved for some 13 years with the Royal National theatre, across the river. For some years, the difficulties which we have experienced in raising the necessary resources to repair, modernise and maintain the building have brought home to me the difficulties that our universities, sports stadiums, heritage buildings and museums throughout Britain face in finding funds for renovation and upkeep.

I welcome the measure but, having had some experience of the recent attempt to launch a nationwide lottery scheme aimed at raising funds for charitable schemes, I have two warnings. First, there will be a time lag before the money raised reaches the billions that we have heard mentioned in the debate today. Secondly, I am concerned about the impact on existing charity fund raising, which could be quite serious. Following on from the matters raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), I have some comments and suggestions for changes in the Bill to help to alleviate the damage that could be caused to many organisations that raise money through small lotteries.

It is generally accepted that the national lottery will result in a significant reduction in direct charity giving, and that funds raised will be used principally to finance capital projects. In 1989-90, approximately £235 million was raised in this country from small lotteries. For many charities, existing lottery income forms a key element of the operating budget and cannot be replaced by capital project financing from a national lottery. I received today from the Lotteries Council a list of 120 such clubs—mostly football clubs, including Exeter City football club in my constituency. Many such clubs rely on small scratch-card and similar lotteries for vital revenue each year.

Other community organisations and charities have received life-saving income from United Kingdom Charity Lotteries—a lottery management company owned by and

operating lotteries for a consortium of charities, including the Rehabilitation Institute, the National Autistic Society and the Children's Family Trust. UKCL is the country's largest operator of charity lotteries under the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 and has sold more than £40 million worth of scratch-card lottery tickets under the very tight supervision of the Gaming Board since its launch in February 1991.

The cash benefit to a wide range of charities and clubs already exceeds £10 million and, in my area of activities, my local rugby club has benefited from a £40,000 pay-out, as well as British Youth Opera and Action Research for crippling diseases, which gives some idea of the range. I know that many other hon. Members have participated in local cheque handover ceremonies and can testify to the value of the contribution made by lotteries to the hard-pressed organisations concerned.

The effect of the national lottery would be especially devastating if the Government proceeded with their stated intention of including a scratch-card element as well as the expected on-line computer-based jackpot scheme. Charity lotteries have pioneered the introduction of scratch-card lotteries in this country, which are ideally suited to charities' needs. Unlike on-line computer-based games, which can only be run effectively on a national scale and continuously, a scratch-card lottery can be run within limited time periods, on a local or regional basis, as may be appropriate for particular charities.

The national lottery should not therefore have any scratch-card element if it is not to present such a potential for damaging our charities, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will eliminate such a proposal from the Bill.

Having removed scratch cards, I am afraid that some further steps need to be taken if charitable lotteries are to have a reasonable chance to compete. The 1976 Act governing such lotteries is restrictive and needs more amendment and development than the Bill suggests.

First, on prizes, whereas the national lottery will provide weekly prizes of more than £1 million, the Bill proposes that the maximum prize in any charity lottery should be limited to £25,000. I see no reason why a charity lottery should not offer up to 20 per cent. of its turnover in a top prize, which is well within the confines of the overriding limit of 50 per cent. of ticket sales provided under the 1976 Act. Of course, prizes should be linked to turnover and the frequency of the lotteries. Unless a lottery is permitted to have a sizeable turnover, it cannot hope to produce attractive prizes.

The Bill proposes to limit each society to £5 million worth of lottery sales a year. I do not cavil at that target, but unfortunately the Bill also arbitrarily requires that to be achieved through a minimum of 20 district lotteries, thus raising the running costs and reducing the scope for prizes. I see no reason for that. A society or charity should be able to hold a smaller number of larger lotteries with a turnover of up to £1·25 million—in other words, four lotteries within the confines of the £5 million ceiling. Provided that the prize limits are also amended, that would allow a top prize of £250,000, which, while falling well short of the national lottery weekly jackpot, would allow charities to offer attractive occasional prizes. It is impossible for any operator to run 20 instant lotteries a year, which one would have to do to reach the annual limit for each society. Throughout the world, no more than four, or at the most five, instant lotteries are run annually by any operator. A reasonable number would be four—one each quarter—and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will accept such a proposal.

Advertising is a subject of great concern to the football pools promoters. One can understand that the national lottery will need substantial publicity and paid advertising if it is to be successful and that has been anticipated in the Bill. However, charitable lotteries still operating under the 1976 Act will continue to be subject to a code developed by the Independent Television Commission, the ITVA and the Home Office—a code that massively restricts their ability to advertise.

United Kingdom Charity Lotteries is not even allowed to inform the public on television of the chances of buying a winning ticket. The Bill needs to be amended to clarify that. Although general codes of advertising conduct must obviously apply, no special code will limit the manner in which either the national lottery or charitable lotteries, under the 1976 Act, may advertise in any media.

Expense limits are another concern. The present allowance of 25 per cent. of sales is proving nearly impossible for many charity lotteries. They are worried that, with value added tax absorbing a larger proportion of their expense allowance, and with higher promotional expenses required in the light of competition from the national lottery, they will be squeezed out of existence unless expenses can be raised to a higher proportion of sales.

If the amendments on prizes and turnover are accepted, they will allow charities to operate more cost effectively. However, to be fair to them, the ceiling should be raised, or the allowance should apply to expenses before VAT, which would enable them to continue their operations.

I do not think that restrictive practices have been mentioned in the debate, but in other countries they have resulted in national lotteries effectively denying other organisations access to distribution. It is essential that the Bill prohibits the national lottery operators from attempting to bind retailers, distributors or other service providers to exclusive arrangements. Our charities, which are already finding fund raising difficult, should not be squeezed out of existence by the national lottery. The draft Bill does a good job of making the national lottery a heavyweight contender in the market place, but it throws lightweight charitable lotteries into the ring with their hands tied behind their backs.

Clubs and organisations that serve the community will be looking to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to ensure that their vital fund-raising activities are not endangered by the national lottery. As a supporter of the national lottery, I am confident that the Government will listen and act on my recommendations, which will enable me to give my full support to a long overdue measure.

7.17 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) mentioned his hopes for the Committee stage of the Bill. Along with many other Opposition Members who have spoken, I hope that we shall not reach that stage and that the House declines to give the Bill a Second Reading. That will come as no surprise to hon. Members who have heard other impassioned pleas from people from the Merseyside area, from Glasgow and Cardiff, who are obviously worried about the impact of the national lottery on jobs.

[Mr. David Alton]

In Question Time today, the Under-Secretary of State said that he regarded the football pools as a sleeping beauty. He will not be surprised to hear that neither the people of Merseyside, Members representing Merseyside, nor the pools industry regard him or the Secretary of State as the handsome prince in waiting. Given the fact that jobs in the Merseyside community will probably be lost as a result of the Bill, the two Ministers can probably understand why Opposition Members feel so strongly about the impact of the national lottery on the football pools. It is not good enough for Ministers simply to say that, in the past, Merseysiders have shown a great capacity to adapt and change. There is only so much that a community can stand. Currently 71,000 people in the Greater Liverpool area are unemployed. Our community would find it difficult to cope with the possibility of 4,000 or 5,000 jobs disappearing.

The right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) said that he was working on "the best evidence available" when he discounted the possibility of the pools being unable to coexist alongside a national lottery. However, the problem for the House is that the best evidence has not been available today. As the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) said, the GAH report has been withheld.

If the Bill is given a Second Reading, I hope that, in Committee, there will be an opportunity for hon. Members to study the detail of that report so that they can come to sound conclusions about the effects of a lottery on the pools industry. If they cannot, how will it be possible to assert, as the Secretary of State has today, that there is no need to provide the pools and the national lottery with a level playing field on which to compete? Therefore, clause 12 will have to be amended in Committee. The same terms should apply to both the pools and the national lottery, or they should apply to neither. I have no great wish to see more television advertising for gambling—whether it be on a lottery or the football pools—but if one type of gambling is advertised, the same opportunity should be made available for the other.

All the evidence from overseas shows that a national lottery will result in the loss of jobs. Football pools were established in Belgium and when, subsequently, a national lottery was introduced, the football pools went out of business almost overnight. Malcolm Hughes, the managing director of Vernons, said:

"It is not possible to find an example anywhere in the world of a National Lottery and a Pools industry thriving side by side."

They can exist but not thrive. He continued:

"In case after case, arrival of a lottery has squeezed out Pools Games and the examples of Australia, Belgium and, more recently, Greece all bear testimony to this fact."

Other hon. Members have mentioned the Coopers and Lybrand report, which makes the same point, so I shall not expand on that issue. It is clear that, if the national lottery becomes a reality in this country later this year, the prospect for the pools industry will be one of decline. That will mean that many of my constituents who work in Littlewoods at Edge Lane, Liverpool, and other people working in the pools centres to which reference has already been made, will face the possibility of losing their jobs.

If the Bill is given a Second Reading, I hope that, at the very least, the Secretary of State will recognise that in districts where people are displaced due to loss of jobs, those people should have first claim on potential jobs arising from a national lottery. Therefore, the headquarters of a national lottery should be in a place like Liverpool.

We should not gamble with people's jobs and livelihoods. If the House insists on taking that gamble without making available to hon Members the information that they have requested, it is the responsibility of the House to ensure that, at the very least, jobs that result from the national lottery—they will be in the hundreds, not thousands—are made available to those living in the districts that will suffer.

The national lottery is also likely to have an impact on charities. We are constantly being tantalised by the idea of the unimagined riches that will flow from the national lottery, but no figure today has been put on the rewards. In the past, figures such as £3 billion, £2 billion and £1·5 billion have been mentioned. Sensibly, the Secretary of State today declined to state a figure. Certainly, many organisations fear that their charities will lose money and existing gifts as a result of a national lottery.

In a letter published on 18 January the Lotteries Council stated:

"We are, however, greatly disturbed about certain aspects of the Bill in its present form, especially Clauses 42-47 which propose changes to societies' lotteries provisions contained in The Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976. These changes will *not* assist charitable and sporting lotteries to be more attractive, as implied by Heritage Secretary, Mr. Peter Brooke."

A report published by the Jubilee Centre in Cambridge, entitled "All In a Good Cause", states:

"The impact of the lottery on existing charitable income, and on the football pools, means that the net benefit to good causes will be much lower than the Government claims. It is possible that charities will end up as losers. The NCVO, for example, estimates the lottery will lead to a loss of income to charities of between £107 million and £395 million. Income from the lottery may well not match these losses."

We must consider the impact on existing charities of setting up a national lottery.

We must assess the effect that a national lottery will have on poorer families in this country. Almost inevitably, they will be the ones who will spend most on the national lottery and will be least able to afford to pay. If a school needs a soccer pitch or a community needs an arts centre, surely such facilities should be paid for through taxation or voluntary fund-raising efforts, not by encouraging people to take a chance and spend more money on gambling of one sort or another. That is a regressive form of taxation and surely not one that the House should encourage. We should raise resources on the basis of people's ability to pay, not by encouraging them to take a chance.

The report "All In A Good Cause" states:

"The experience of lotteries in other countries shows that pressure to increase revenue can weaken safeguards, leading to significant addictive gambling. The promotion and advertising of gambling by the state is also highly questionable on ethical grounds."

It is not only our existing charities that will be hit. Sports, arts and the Football Trust stand to lose up to an estimated £100 million a year. We do not know what will happen to the £300 million currently paid to the Exchequer by the football pools. We can estimate that the people who are least able to pay will be hit hardest by the national lottery. It does not seem rational or sensible that poorer people living in districts of Liverpool, Glagow and Cardiff

and inner city areas in London should be expected to subsidise disproportionately places such as Covent Garden. However estimable it is for national institutions to be adequately financed so that they can see out this millennium and see in the next, and however worthy it is to propose new museums and more funding for the arts, that should be done through national taxation, not by encouraging people to spend money that many of them simply do not have. That will be a punitive form of taxation.

For those reasons, I hope that the House will not give the Bill a Second Reading. If it should do so, I hope that, in Committee, the Secretary of State will consider many of the issues raised today, not least the undoubted impact that the Bill will have on many people living in regions of high unemployment.

7.27 pm

Sir Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): Contrary to many of my colleagues who represent Merseyside, I am not against the principle of a national lottery. However, I am concerned that the present proposals do not adequately reflect the needs of other organisations such as charities and the football pools.

I make no apologies for concentrating my remarks on the football pools as Vernons has its headquarters in my constituency. It has just spent about £10 million on new headquarters. It has the most up-to-date technological system of any football pools anywhere. It employs a vast number of people throughout Merseyside, many of whom live in my constituency. I am naturally concerned at the effect that the Bill will have on those employees' future if the Government do not heed the concerns expressed by the pools promoters.

Vernons was founded in Liverpool in 1925 and has a record of tremendous employment—and stable employment—as does Littlewoods, throughout the city. We want that stability to be maintained. We recognise that technological advances will result in fewer people being employed over the years, but it would be unacceptable if they were seriously disadvantaged by Government legislation—a national lottery.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) said, it may be that the news will cheer people up, but I do not believe that they are desperately unhappy about the prospect of a national lottery. It may be that more jobs will flow from it—it is suggested that it will create 80,000. I shall not follow my right hon. Friend down his literary road. Suffice it to say:

"Oh, the brave music of a distant Drum!"

I believe that the Bill will be given a Second Reading. I believe also that in Committee the legitimate interests of the pools promoters will be heeded. So too, I am sure, will be the views expressed by my hon. Friends about charities. If we are to have a level playing field in every sense of the term, we must not allow this proposed legislation to tilt that field in favour of a national lottery with the result that accepted and stable businesses are seriously affected.

I was interested and pleased that the Select Committee's report stated that:

"Lottery and the pools should be treated equally with regard to advertising on all media; in the marketing of their products; in the ability of roll-over jackpots; and in the way the pools are promoted to clients who do not wish to exercise the use of skill and judgement."

It has been suggested that the pools promoters are trying to have it both ways. It is a fact that about 90 per cent. of those who participate in the pools use their lucky, or unlucky, numbers as the case may be. The promoters have used the phrase "a scintilla of skill". It was fixed odds that required some skill, but the treble chance was always a matter of chance. Therein lies the attraction—the big prize.

The promoters have already brought in the larger jackpot. In other words, they are already responding. The Government say, "Would they have done that had it not been for the Bill?" I would not necessarily disagree with that argument, but that does not invalidate the need for the Government to recognise the serious problems that will be presented to the promoters if the Bill proceeds unchanged.

There is much support for the principle of a national lottery. As the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and others have said, Merseyside does not want to lose if the pools are affected, but it would be an admirable place for the headquarters of the national lottery. I hope that all my colleagues from Merseyside will join me in supporting that principle. Let us obtain the opportunities that would flow to Merseyside on the basis that it would be a first-class place for the establishment of the national lottery.

Legitimate views have been expressed that, I believe, will not be unheeded by the Government. There will be opportunities for these views to be taken on board during the Bill's passage. The Government can have their national lottery and charities, and the arts and sport can benefit from the obvious advantages that will flow from its establishment. In achieving that end, however, there is no need to destroy businesses that employ many people in my constituency, throughout Merseyside and in many other parts of the country. If the Government take heed of that, they will have my full support in all that they are trying to do.

I was delighted to read on the Order Paper the proposal —I am sure that it will not find great favour—that the Bill should go to a Special Standing Committee. I am a great supporter of the concept of SSCs. Surely we should have more of them. Having sat on one such Committee in the past, when there was a large measure of agreement, I am aware of the benefits that the members of the Committee were able to derive from the early sittings that took place under Select Committee rules.

There is general good will for the Bill. That good will is not total, but there is a recognition that things can be achieved. We have an opportunity to take people's legitimate concerns on board. I believe that we shall end up with a good measure that we can all support.

7.35 pm

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): I echo the interests that the hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton) has declared. My interests lie with those of my constituents who work for the pools or who live in families where one or other members of them are employed by the pools on Merseyside.

I was disappointed to hear the way in which the arguments of football pools workers and those of the Pool Promoters Association were summarily dismissed by the Secretary of State for National Heritage and other Conservative Members. I have much in mind the case that

[Mrs. Jane Kennedy]

has been made about job losses and the fears that have been expressed for the future of the pools industry if the Bill is enacted.

The football pools game, as it exists in the United Kingdom, is a hybrid of the lotteries and football games that exist in Europe. In the way in which it is played, it is unique to the United Kingdom. It is so close to a lottery Euro-style, however, that it is almost indistinguishable. Both games involve long-odds gambling. Both offer a high win for a low stake, which are the key motivating factors which cause people to play the pools here and lotto in Europe.

The argument frequently advanced by the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State before the Select Committee and in public that there would be only one national lottery gives the game away to some extent. It is clear that the Government are prepared to see the demise of football pools if that is what it takes to establish a successful national lottery. I accept that it may be possible for a national lottery and the football pools to co-exist, but that will be possible only if they are able to compete fairly. As the lottery and the pools would be competing for the same market, they should compete on fair terms.

The Coopers and Lybrand report that was commissioned by the Pools Promoters Association and published in May suggests, unlike the report on which the Government rely, that the propensity to bet in the United Kingdom cannot increase very much without adversely affecting the pools. As a Merseyside Member, I point out that entire families are employed in the industry, which has been a source of secure employment for decades. To put that at risk with a gamble without taking steps to safeguard the interests of those who are employed by the pools is shameful.

There have been several reports on the possible revenue that might be raised from a national lottery. The White Paper estimated a potential revenue of £3 billion. The Sports and Arts Council, the Henley centre, London Economics and Saatchi and Saatchi estimate £2 billion, £3 billion, £1·3 billion and £1·6 billion respectively, while the GAH group estimates a massive £4·2 billion. Those who hope to profit from the introduction of a lottery pick the figure that they hope will be achieved and begin immediately to spend the proceeds. Talk about counting chickens before they are hatched.

The one point of agreement in all the reports is that the pools will be adversely affected through lower turnover, which will lead inevitably to job losses. The introduction of a national lottery on terms that do not allow the pools to compete fairly may cause the collapse of the pools. The Government cannot be sure that that will not happen. It is not only employment in the pools industry that will suffer. We must consider also the jobs of those in businesses that rely on the pools. For example, N&B Direct Ltd has printed Vernons pools coupons since the early 1950s. That work is 70 per cent. of their business. If Vernons goes under, so will N&S Direct Ltd and 75 more jobs will be lost. Littlewoods estimates that if it suffers large losses, at least a further 800 jobs will be lost in the businesses that rely upon it. As corporate and consumer expenditure decreases, so other areas of the local economy will be affected.

What will be the Government's response? Rather than significant policies aimed at regeneration and growth, they will infest rundown areas with billboards encouraging people to play the lottery. Perhaps they will use the words, "This could be your ticket out of here." If the House thinks that no Government would be so cruel, I assure hon. Members that those were the exact words on a billboard in inner-city Chicago used to sell the Illinois state lottery as short a time ago as last summer.

To achieve the £4·2 billion estimated by the GAH group, 65 per cent. of the population have to participate, with games being run initially once a week, but quickly moving to twice-weekly draws and daily prizes. That could be sustained only with blanket television advertising. No other study among those that I mentioned has accepted that that can be achieved. Without similar opportunities to advertise on television, the pools companies will quickly find themselves with a loss.

The Coopers and Lybrand study said that without fair competition—and bearing in mind the two important incentives that I mentioned of the large prize and the small stake—more than 80 per cent. of pools players would split their stake between the lottery and the pools in the first weeks of the lottery. That could cause a drop in revenue to Littlewoods alone of 30 per cent., which would impact on its first prize, dropping it from £2 million to an estimated £800,000. The downward spiral from there is obvious. If we ignore that, we risk the thousands of jobs in Liverpool.

That downward spiral can be combated only if the pools companies are allowed to advertise their products on television, to sell their coupons through retail outlets and to roll over their prizes to form jackpots. Treating the two games equally for tax purposes is of great importance to the smaller pools companies, which do not have the revenue to spend on television advertising. If Vernons is required to pay much larger sums than the lottery to the Exchequer, its prizes will be reduced in size and consequently its ability to compete will be lost.

When I met the Minister last week, he told me that he could not predict the Government's future spending plans and, therefore, could not guarantee that lottery revenue would always be additional to present levels of public spending on the sports, arts and national heritage. Hon. Members would do well to learn from the American experience of lotteries. In Florida, people thought that the state lottery would provide extra money for education. However, since it introduced its lottery in 1986, the proportion of state tax revenue going to education has fallen. What happened? Legislators played a game of their own—when the lottery proceeds rolled in, less general fund money was given to schools. The lottery inevitably became a funding substitute.

Of course, the Secretary of State will say that that will not happen here, but as I was reminded last week, spending plans are not carved in stone. Who knows what will happen in this country? A future Government might include lottery forecasts in the Budget, as is done in Virginia. Judging by the current Chancellor's success at forecasting, it would not be recommended as a safe bet.

As we have heard, the idea of raising revenue through a lottery is not new. It was abandoned in 1826, all concerned having finally accepted that lotteries were a discreditable business for any Government to become involved in. In 1819, a petition was presented by the then

hon. Member for Sheffield, a Mr. Stuart Wortley, which, as reported in columns 1115-16 of the Parliamentary Debates for 22 March of that year,

"most earnestly and respectfully solicit the House, that no bill in future may pass which shall have for its object the raising of money for the public service by way of lottery."

The petition was ordered to lie upon the Table; presumably, it still does.

A national lottery is a poor substitute for a fair taxation policy, and it is no substitute for a proper plan to tackle unemployment and poverty. On behalf of my constituents who, like those in Sheffield in 1819, believe that state-sponsored gambling is not a proper business for Government, I ask the House not to gamble with their jobs, and I urge hon. Members to decline to give the Bill a Second Reading.

7.45 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I am delighted to support the Bill. I am grateful to the Government for picking up the ball that I passed to them and for running with it to the touchline, hopefully to score well with this improved Bill.

The proceeds of the national lottery will be substantial. The public opinion polls have given us some idea of how much will be raised. They show that 72 per cent. of the population will play, so we need only to compare that with European countries to have some idea of the amount involved. In France, 50 per cent. of the population play the national lottery and in Ireland the figure is 60 to 65 per cent. Spain raises between £3 billion and £4 billion with a roughly similar population to that of Britain. Therefore, there is some sign that the Government are being a little careful in placing the overall gain as low as £1·5 billion. The benefits and advantages are so extensive that those who oppose a national lottery are arguing against a tide of public opinion that they cannot possibly withstand.

Of course, I understand the concern of those who represent constituency interests, especially the pools companies in the Liverpool area. I want to make a number of points about that. Before they get too cock-a-hoop, the pools companies should realise that it is actually illegal to pay out a prize of more than £12,000 in any game of chance. It is difficult for them to justify their game, as played at present, as anything more than a game of chance. It is hardly a game of skill. They should bear that in mind when talking about a level playing field. Nevertheless, I support the Select Committee's recommendation that there should be a level playing field. There should be one for everything; there should be one for the scratch cards. We should not abolish them to help to make other lotteries more viable. In any case, I do not think that that would be achieved.

If those who represent Liverpool are right and 1,000 jobs are lost, that must be weighed against the massive increases in jobs that will be created by the national lottery. Job losses in the pools industry will happen anyway as it comes more technically on line. I do not think that those Labour Members who attack the Government for creating private monopolies in other spheres of the British economy should too strongly justify a private monopoly here and be too fearful of competition. That tends to show, first, that they have not studied some of the statistics, and, secondly, that they have no confidence in the pools industry.

In Britain, we spend about 27p per head on the pools. The people of Europe spend about £1 per head on gambling. That means that there will be a substantial amount of new money. Only about one in three people in this country play the pools. If 72 per cent. of the population say that they will play the lottery, it means that a large number of people who do not play the pools will play the lottery. Therefore, the pools industry need not be too worried. In countries such as Italy, where there is a strong football industry, the pools continue side by side with the lottery, flourishing as they always have done.

While we understand the fears that have been expressed —I would express them myself if I were a Liverpool Member—we must place those fears and concerns in context. We must do likewise with the concern about small charities. Some 56 per cent. of people do not give to charity, so there is the potential to raise a great deal more money for charity through the lottery. I do not believe that when someone knocks on a door and asks for money to repair the leaking local church roof or for the local scout troop, he will get the reply, "I am sorry, I will not give to you because I have already given to the national lottery this week." It does not happen that way. People will continue to give money to local charities. Charities will anyway be one of the substantial beneficiaries of the national lottery, and there is too much concern and fear that small charities will suffer. There is no indication that they are likely to do so.

As for the substitution of the lottery for Government spending, we have the Government's assurance on that. As far as Government assurances are worth anything, that must be worth something. But I will return to that point before I conclude, because I am a tiny bit fearful that when this wonderful Government is replaced by one that finds it more difficult to make the economy work, there might be a temptation to change that.

I said that I am in favour of a level playing field, but it must be level for the pools industry as well. It ought to be just a little careful. It does not give anything like as much money to sport and the arts as a lottery would. I say that as a beneficiary of the Football Trust, which recently gave Burton Albion a substantial amount of money, which put Burton Albion on the map—so now, hopefully, I will not be the only person who attends its matches on Saturday.

The pools industry gives only a relatively small proportion of its income to sport and to the arts. The sum total is about £100 million a year, and most of that comes from a reduction in taxation—yet the sports part of the national lottery will produce several times that figure.

The argument that the national lottery will encourage gambling is old fashioned; it is yesterday's argument; it is very patronising and authoritarian, and also unrealistic. If we do not have a lottery, a lot of the money will go elsewhere. The Church also has lotteries. It is difficult for religious people to argue today that they do not believe in lotteries. Generally speaking, those who say that others should be forced not to gamble are yesterday's people.

Against that kind of opposition, the national lottery offers so many outstanding opportunities as to make the case for it absolutely overwhelming. Ours will no longer be the only country in the world that does not trust its people to spend money on a lottery. We will keep large sums of money in this country to the benefit of British causes, instead of letting that money go abroad to other countries, to benefit those countries' causes.

We will be able to spend money on the arts that we do not spend at present—on local theatres, orchestras, and museums, and perhaps also on national concert halls.

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

Germany has 96 more opera houses than Britain. We will be able to spend more on covered tennis courts, athletics tracks, and sports halls. France has 20 times as many tennis courts, and Germany 20 times as many swimming pools as we do. There are 50,000 swimmers in this country, but if they want Olympic-standard training they can choose from only 12 swimming pools.

We will be able to spend more money on stopping our crumbling national heritage from crumbling any further as the waves of tourists swarm around it. Within the £3 billion liberated into the economy, there will be a substantial increase in jobs in the construction and service industries, management, training, architecture, tourism, sporting supplies, the musical and theatrical industries, and so on. Other parts of the country suffering unemployment should also be considered, apart from the people in Liverpool who are fearful that they might suffer.

One of my strongest reasons for supporting the national lottery is that our country has an immense problem with juvenile crime today—so immense that the Home Affairs Select Committee is to make that the subject of its next main investigation. It is generally agreed that one way to reduce juvenile crime—in which the peak age of the offender is 15 or 16—is to get young people to move from mischief making to a leisure interest that is constructive and worth while in the realms of sport, arts, education and other pastimes.

How much less crime would there be in troubled estates in Manchester, Bristol and London if our young people were given a constructive, alternative activity to pursue in their spare time? Claudio Abbado, the great conductor, remarked:

"When young people are playing music together in an orchestra, there's no drug problem."

When there are targeted projects for the young, as there are in Staffordshire, under the police Space programme —which provides activities for young people during school holidays—juvenile crime falls. With so many young people out of work, this is not the time to pass over an opportunity to direct more of our money in to the kind of sporting and arts activities that will lead young people away from the tendency to become involved in crime.

7.55 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): Numerous speakers have identified three broad categories of concern about the Bill—moral objections to the promotion and exploitation by the state of gambling; the impact on the pools industry; and the impact on charities and voluntary organisations. I have an active interest in all three.

As a member of the amusement arcades action group, I am concerned about the promotion and impact of gambling. As a Merseyside Member of Parliament, I am obviously concerned about the Bill's impact on the pools industry. As a trustee of the Community Development Foundation, I am deeply concerned about the impact of a national lottery on local charities and voluntary organisations that operate at community level.

As a member of the amusement arcades action group, I start with a presumption against gambling. That is a moral but also Aristotelian principle. The Aristotelian principle to which I subscribe is that it is better to concentrate one's attention on the likelihood of the impossible than the possibility of the unlikely. In citing Aristotle, I draw to the attention of the Secretary of State the virtues of the Aristotelian maxims of practical wisdom and moderation in presenting his Bill.

I acknowledge that not all right hon. and hon. Members share my moral principles, but I hope that many share my social concern for the problem gambler, and for his or her family, who will be affected by that addiction to gambling. I have no wish to be melodramatic and I freely accept that the problem gambler is not typical. However, for his or her family it is a total problem.

The Government have a duty, and it is their stated policy, not to stimulate gambling. It may be argued that promoting the national lottery does not stimulate gambling, but the Government are circumspect in that regard. They state in the White Paper:

"For most people"—

I emphasise the words "most people"—

"participation in the national lottery will provide a harmless form of entertainment. Many countries which have had national lotteries for many years do not report any major adverse social effects."

That is guarded language.

Evidence from the United States points to the emergence of lottery addicts and that increased availability of that form of gambling has led to addiction to other forms. I trust that the Government will give the fullest consideration to the moral issues and dangers involved in the proposal to introduce a national lottery.

A related moral issue aired by several hon. Members is whether the proceeds should be used to substitute for spending from taxation. That would be a form of parataxation of the most regressive sort if, as estimated, lottery tickets are bought in disproportionately high quantities by those on low incomes.

No doubt we will be assured that the proceeds of the lottery will provide extra funding, but that will be difficult to prove. I assure the Secretary of State that my right hon. and hon. Friends will be vigilant in guarding against attempts by the Government to set expenditure on local projects against local authorities' spending allocations. Such an attempt would be cynical in the extreme. I ask the Secretary of State to give whatever assurance he can that that will not happen. If the right hon. Gentleman cannot give such an assurance—because, as he said himself, he cannot predict future Government expenditure—he should say what measures he will seek to introduce to ensure that such a thing does not happen.

As a Member of Parliament representing a Merseyside constituency, of course I share the concerns expressed by my hon. Friends about the effect of the national lottery on the pools industry. Of the 6,500 jobs that it provides, 4,600 or more are on Merseyside. They are expected to halve in the first year of the national lottery's operation and to reduce by three quarters by 1996-97. A further 2,000 jobs in Glasgow, Cardiff and London will disappear almost immediately.

Moreover, not only jobs directly connected with the pools industry will be affected. It is estimated that between 70,000 and 80,000 pools collectors, earning about £20 a week, will be reduced to 30,000. Their jobs are important to the economy of Merseyside and to the wider economy of the country as a whole.

The process workers in the pools headquarters in Merseyside are mostly female and the Government may regard their jobs as less important than men's—as second incomes supplementing family budgets. Opposition

Members reject such prejudice against female workers, who are entitled to work in their own right; but, even if we leave that argument aside, in an economy as depressed as Merseyside's it is highly likely that such jobs produce the only family wage.

Nor must we forget the income lost to the pools collectors. If someone takes on the arduous task of door-to-door collecting for £20 a week, that £20 must make an important difference to the family budget. It must be seen in that light—not as a mere £20 income, but as a £20 loss to a family budget that is already stretched to its limits. The Bill puts between 70,000 and 80,000 such vulnerable family budgets at risk.

We who oppose the Bill are not seduced by suggestions that the pools industry may have the opportunity to administer the national lottery. Certainly, the Merseyside pools companies are well qualified to do so, on grounds of experience, resources and systems. However, we would like more guarantees and such guarantees are contrary to the Government's ideology. We also note that the number of jobs gained would only partly offset the number of jobs lost. Evidence suggests that lotteries can be run on minimal staffing. For example, in the New Jersey lottery, 185 staff were required to administer income of £825 million. In the Pennsylvania state lottery, 161 people were required to administer a turnover of about £1 billion. As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) said earlier, 147 people were required to run the West German lottery. To present the pools companies with an offer to run the national lottery is like inviting the work force of the pools industry to apply for membership of the firing squad that will execute those whose applications fail.

Much more important, if the lottery is introduced, the pools companies should be allowed to operate on equal terms, as described by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy). Five principles should apply. The collection of pools coupons should be allowed from retail outlets; television advertising should be allowed; promotion of the game of lucky numbers should be allowed; roll-up jackpots should be allowed; and there should be a level playing field on tax outtake.

Let me now turn to the impact on smaller charities and voluntary organisations. I share the general concern that money spent on lottery tickets will largely displace money spent on donations to charities. It is all very well to say that money will be disbursed to charities from the net proceeds of the lottery; but, to a particular charity, £1 donated is £1 income. NOP research suggests that substitute funding from the proceeds of the lottery may be as little as between 3·5p and 6p for a particular charity. That is the harsh reality behind global figures such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' estimate of annual loss to voluntary organisations of £232 million per annum. We must view the problem in terms of the particular impact on particular charities and voluntary organisations—that is, at local level.

As the chief executive of the Community Development Foundation has pointed out,

"half or more of the voluntary sector consists of local groups and organisations which are not members of national organisations"——

although it is likely that the big national organisations will be the major beneficiaries of the proceeds of a national lottery. He went on:

"Indigenous local voluntary groups are not the tail-end of the voluntary sector, but on the contrary are its roots and in aggregate its largest part. In any scheme to distribute benefits of the national lottery to charities, these local organisations are liable to be overlooked unless definite measures are devised to take them into account."

In other words, mechanisms must be built into the administration of a national lottery, in terms of both collection and distribution of income.

I have numerous objections in principle to the Bill, as well as numerous practical objections. The hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton) mentioned the call of the distant drum. Let me quote Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat more fully:

"Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!"

The message of the drums is unemployment in the pools industry, damage to local charities and voluntary organisations and damage to the very people who need those organisations—the very people who would contribute to a national lottery. That is inequitable, in principle.

The reasoned amendment goes some way towards meeting those objections and I shall support it. However, investigations are necessary in regard to other aspects of the Bill before it can safely be introduced. For that reason, I shall oppose its Second Reading.

8.5 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Earlier, there was much talk of the lottery being a tax. I wish that all taxes were as voluntary as participation in the lottery will be.

I welcome the principle behind the Bill. I am rather sad that the debate has been marred by so much discussion about jobs in the pools industry. Surely hon. Members should have lifted their eyes to the much greater opportunity that it will provide for the public good in so many important areas. I do not wish to mention all the good causes that will benefit: they are all worthy and I know that the task of deciding which should benefit, and how the money shall be spent, will be invidious. The fundamental issue at stake is this: will the lottery attract new money, or will it divert money from existing opportunities, mainly in the gambling and betting area?

My own view—and, I suspect, that of many others—is that the lottery will do a bit of each. I think that the majority will be new money and that many of the concerns expressed will prove groundless; I also think that, inevitably, there will be a certain degree of diversion.

I want to make two points. The first concerns the question of diversion. The House will be aware of my particular interest in the racing industry, for constituency reasons and because I am chairman of the all-party committee. The lottery's impact on the racing industry concerns me greatly. The settlement in February last year of the horse racing levy—which came at the same time as the reduction in the general betting duty, which targeted the levy to raise £48 million—was widely welcomed: it constituted a major gesture by the Government to help the industry, in response to the previous year's report by the Select Committee on Home Affairs. It is generally recognised, however, that that is the bare minimum that the industry needs to survive. The horse racing levy simply returns to the industry money taken from it by the exploitation of its product: it is part of the major income that allows the industry to continue.

[Mr. James Paice]

In the past two years, there has been a fall in general betting turnover, which means a fall in Government taxation and also in horse race betting levy. In 1991-92, general betting turnover fell in cash terms—let alone real terms—for the first time in 10 years. The Irish experience has been prayed in aid several times today. Before the introduction of a lottery, there was considerable evidence of positive growth in betting turnover—over and above inflation—every year. Since the introduction of the lottery, that trend has been substantially reduced. Any reduction, therefore, in betting turnover will, because the horse race betting levy is decided on a percentage system, have a knock-on effect on the industry. To put that statement into context, horse racing in this country employs about 100,000 people.

Nobody knows what will happen. I hope and believe that the concerns that have been expressed will prove to be completely misplaced. Until it is in place, nobody knows what the impact of the lottery will be. I do not therefore ask the Government to make sure that the racing industry receives a good share of the hand-out from the lottery. All that I ask is that the Government should reassure the House, and through the House the industry, that if there is obvious evidence that the betting levy is falling as a result of the introduction of the lottery they will look at ways of increasing the money that is returned to the racing industry. Without it, the industry will suffer severely.

The money returned to racing could be increased simply by increasing the percentage of the levy, perhaps backed by a reduction in general betting duty. I do not believe, however, that that is really necessary. If 15 per cent. of the money that has been spent on horse race betting moves over to the lottery and if lottery turnover amounts to £4 billion, that would remove, in one go, the additional £13 million that the Government arranged to be put into the industry a year ago, thus undoing all that good. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to reassure me about what when he replies on behalf of the Government, not just on behalf of his Department.

My second point is this. I hope very much that the introduction of this national institution will herald the liberalisation of our attitude towards gambling, betting, lotteries and all the other ways of enjoying our money in a speculative way. As the Government are the progenitor of a national lottery, they cannot at the same time connive at suppressing other betting activities.

Only last week my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced that betting shops would be able to open in the evenings. That is a step towards liberalising our attitude to betting. For how much longer must betting shops white out their windows, as though they were as insidious as sex shops? How much longer will it be before people appreciate that it is a perfectly reasonable activity to bet on horses, just as it will be a perfectly reasonable activity to buy a lottery ticket? Many people go to the races and happily queue up at the tote or the bookmakers stand to put a bet on a horse, but they act furtively if they venture into bookmakers' shops because they are not proud of entering a shop whose activities are hidden from view.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) referred to the fact that amusement arcades are proliferating. I share his concern about that development. I believe that they are a far greater danger to young people, who waste money in amusement arcades and often resort to criminal activities to fund their addiction to amusement arcade machines.

The Government must level the famous playing field about which we have heard so much. The need to advertise must be recognised. If the national lottery is to be allowed to advertise, it is only fair that other forms of betting and gambling should be able to advertise. I hope that betting shops will soon be allowed to open on Sunday, a point that would perhaps have been better made last Friday.

If such measures were introduced, betting would be able to seek in its own way to make up any loss that may result from the diversion of money to the national lottery. In my view, the Government cannot allow a national lottery without any constraints upon it to be established and at the same time leave in place constraints upon competition. I hope that lottery tickets will be sold in many places—in village shops, betting shops, post offices and, perhaps, benefit offices. The Bill will, I trust, herald a new, liberal 21st century approach to a common human activity and remove the stigma on betting and gambling. Only if they are given the opportunity to flourish will all these worthy causes benefit.

8.15 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): To some extent, the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) let the cat out of the bag, for without intending to do so he exposed the weakness of the Government's approach. I shall explain what I mean later. I intend to make only three points and I shall be as brief as possible, as I know that several hon. Members still want to speak in the debate.

Mr. Frank Field: Including some non-Liverpool ones.

Mr. Howarth: Yes, including my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who considers the presence of the River Mersey to be an insuperable barrier between him and Liverpool. I can assure him that the ferries are still running.

In support of his case my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) quoted Aristotle. Perhaps I may be allowed to bring the philosophical argument more up to date by quoting what John Stuart Mill said in his essay on liberty. He made the serious point that everybody should be totally free up to the point where their freedom acts as a constraint upon somebody else's freedom. We must bear that in mind, for we are not dealing with an unregulated market in gambling. Once we accept that central point—this is where, to some extent, I agree with the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East—the Government and, indirectly, Parliament are setting limits on the activities of any private or public organisation that is involved in gambling. That is most certainly the case here.

Reference has been made to the studies that have been undertaken, although it appears that we are not to be allowed to know the outcome of the Government's own study. My hon. Friends have referred to the Coopers and Lybrand study. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) referred to the Jubilee Policy Centre report. There has also been a Gulbenkian report. They have all come to the conclusion that there is a fixed amount of money in the economy that can be used for gambling in

one form or another and that the introduction of new options does not lead to the creation of new money for gambling. All that happens is that money is taken away from existing sources of money for gambling. Many of us, particularly those on Merseyside, fear that money will be diverted from the football pools industry and that that will have an impact on jobs. If, however, the national lottery creates new money for gambling, several hon. Members have said today that that money will come from the poorest members of the community.

It is important to subsidise the arts, the so-called culture —ballet, opera, theatre, in particular the National theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company—but it should be subsidised by central Government taxation of one kind or another. What is objectionable to me is that my constituents, who are among the poorest people in the country, should, by participating in the national lottery, be called upon to support ballet, theatre and opera. Those things should be supported, but not by that means, yet that will clearly be the implication of a national lottery.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key) *rose——*

Mr. Howarth: I am trying to take only 10 minutes. The Minister will probably have half an hour.

Mr. Key: No, 20 minutes.

Mr. Howarth: That is longer than any of my hon. Friends have had.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) clearly showed the possible effects of a lottery.

The second argument that I wish to consider is whether the football pools are games of skill or games of chance. The Secretary of State mentioned the 1963 legislation and said that if the pools are not games of skill the industry has been breaking the law for years. The pools can be a game of skill or a game of chance, and I shall give an example. Three members of my family do the pools. I am one of them, and I freely admit that for me it is a game of chance. I do a standing forecast with Littlewoods, and my predictions are based on the ages and dates of birth of my children, the number of our house and various other significant factors in my life. The two other members of my family take much time and care to predict the outcome of the following Saturday's games. Invariably they get it wrong, otherwise they would be far richer than they are today, but for them half the enjoyment of filling in a pools coupon is seeing how close their predictions are and, hopefully, winning some money.

If Ministers accept that gambling is a regulated activity, and it certainly is, they must ensure a level playing field for the new part of the industry that they are trying to create. An interview with the Secretary of State appeared in the *News of the World* yesterday. He said that

"the pools and the National Lottery are quite different."

Are not the similarities between them so great that his argument falls? Several hon. Friends have said that the national lottery and the pools offer long odds and, therefore, the chance of winning large prizes. That is one similarity.

Secondly, both are regarded as soft gambling: there is no opportunity for large roll-over jackpot prizes. Indeed, it is argued that they attract people who are not likely to get into harder forms of gambling as a result.

The third argument is that both are designed to benefit good causes. The Secretary of State has suggested that the lottery will pay out more than 50 per cent. With a prize fund of £14 million and an annual turnover of £1·5 billion, the figure comes to only 48·5 per cent. The lottery will pay a far lower percentage to good causes and tax than the pools.

The chance ratio for the pools is eight from 58, whereas for the lottery it will be six from 49. There are a number of similarities between the two that make the case for treating them equally unanswerable.

I urge hon. Members to vote in favour of Labour's reasoned amendment, but, more important, the Secretary of State and the Government have failed to make the case for a national lottery, as proposed in the Bill, and I therefore urge my hon. Friends and Conservative Members who agree with us to join us in voting against giving the Bill a Second Reading.

8.25 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): It would be churlish of Conservative Members, especially those who represent constituencies south of Liverpool, not to recognise the depth of feeling that has been expressed by so many Members on both sides of the House who represent Merseyside. I say to them and to my hon. Friend the Minister that I have some sympathy with their argument. I am concerned, as they are, about the advertising bias that the national lottery would inevitably have, which would affect the bingo industry, about which I shall say a little in a moment.

I am perhaps more concerned that the money that goes to football via the Exchequer will decrease if activity on the pools declines, as inevitably it will. Tremendous sums have been put back into football, not only by the generosity of the pools industry, which to a certain extent one must acknowledge, but by the football grounds improvement trust, by the Football Trust and by the Government putting taxpayers' money into ground improvements to meet the requirements of the Taylor report. Few league and non-league clubs have not benefited in some way from the Football Trust.

The Government must therefore answer the question that I tried to put to the Secretary of State earlier: if taxation receipts decrease, as the Coopers and Lybrand report forecasts, will the Government make good what could be a serious deficit in the moneys that go into our national game? Football clubs are always short of money, but none the less need money to improve their stadiums and bring them up to the standards outlined in the Taylor report and health and safety regulations. Merseyside Members can be assured that Conservative Members have great sympathy with their argument, even if we do not join them in the Lobby tonight. I hope that the Government will seriously consider the competitive nature of advertising and take seriously the Select Committee's recommendation that the headquarters of the lottery organisation should go to Liverpool, or certainly the Merseyside area.

Clause 26 is an admirable measure, the purpose of which is to sell as many lottery tickets as possible. All hon. Members want it to be a success because of the money that will go to the recipient organisations, yet the Government have restricted the point of sale almost to a ludicrous extent.

[Mr. John Carlisle]

I suggest that there are two ways of making some small amendment. The first is that the 80,000 pools collectors who knock on doors every week—it is remarkable that they still do—are an obvious point of sale for national lottery tickets in conjunction with pools coupons. The Secretary of State said that there is no reason why the two should not go side by side because, as he put it, they are adjoining playing fields. If that is the case, it means that there are not only the pools organisations with their vast experience of such matters but about 80,000 people knocking on doors across the country. We understand that about one third of the population do the football pools, so that provides a great opportunity to increase ticket sales. Sales could also be increased through the use of post offices and other retail outlets.

The Government might also consider selling tickets in bingo halls. About 3 million people play bingo every week and, of that number, about 84 per cent. are women. They tend to be elderly women looking for some social atmosphere. They enjoy their game and play for modest sums. In such respectable organisations, all the prize money goes back to those who are playing and duty is paid to the Exchequer. The organisations suffer enormously because of advertising—how ridiculous that a £50,000 national bingo prize cannot be advertised in the bingo hall where one goes to play but only in the national papers. In any event, bingo halls are another possible outlet for tickets, and the Minister has the opportunity——

Mrs. Wise: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlisle: No. I hope that the hon. Lady will forgive me.

The Minister has the opportunity to widen the scope for selling tickets to make the lottery the success that we all want it to be.

I hope that the lottery will be so successful that it will replace the taxpayers' money which is now being used for sport, arts and heritage. The Minister has been careful to say that money must be ring-fenced—all hon. Members agree with that—but would it not be splendid if the amount of money raised could replace the money currently being paid by taxpayers for sport and the arts? Before members of the Opposition jump up, I add that that in turn could release money for health, education and housing.

I wonder whether my right hon. and hon. Friends have been a little modest in their plans. A lottery could revolutionise sport, arts and national heritage. There is a great chance of replacing taxpayers' money with money from the national lottery. Therefore, the lottery scheme must receive enormous support from not only the House but outside. It must have the widest possible sales and advertisement and, if it is to be a success, the greatest support from those within the gambling industry, including my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), the football pools, bingo halls and other organisations.

If the scheme is a great success, my right hon. and hon. Friends will have done not only this Government but succeeding Governments a great favour by removing the burden from taxpayers and removing the political arguments which inevitably accompany the political funding of sport.

Clearly, sport is my main interest and I am sorry that time prevents me from saying much about it. All sports welcome the national lottery in all forms. I hope that it will be of enormous benefit throughout the world of sport, not merely among the highest flyers and for the building of new stadia but for the young sportsmen and women who lack opportunities in inner-city areas, right down to those in villages and towns. That is where we want the money to go and where we shall see the immediate benefit of the vast sums which, it is promised, the national lottery will give us.

On that basis, I give the Bill my fullest support and wish it every success in its passage through the House.

8.33 pm

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Many speeches have been made since my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said, perhaps rather optimistically, at the beginning of the debate that Labour was not divided on the principle of the Bill. I have felt increasingly isolated—physically, not politically—as I sat waiting to make my speech. I listened to most of my hon. Friends——

Mr. Frank Field: From Liverpool.

Mr. Mandelson: —from Liverpool and elsewhere making it clear that they would like the whole idea to disappear out of sight. They have made a strong case and expressed great concern to which I think all hon. Members must be extremely sympathetic, not least the Ministers who are responsible for introducing the Bill.

The strength of my hon. Friends' case stems from the huge employment implications and potential costs, not only in Merseyside but in Glasgow and Cardiff, if the lottery were to be introduced and were to operate in such a way as to drive out the pools industry and lead to unemployment. We have heard some immensely powerful speeches—chiefly from hon. Members representing Merseyside constituencies—by which it would be almost impossible for the Government to fail to be swayed.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake if we were to oppose the Bill. I offer at least a bridge, if not a level playing field, between myself and the many like me who favour the concept of a national lottery and other right hon. and hon. Friends. Perhaps I can provide some glue or a gloss—more appropriately—so that we can emerge rather more united from the debate.

It would be a colossal mistake for the Labour party to repeat the historical error that it made in opposing the introduction of premium bonds. It would be a mistake for three reasons. It would be very unwise for us to create the impression of being uninterested in and going against the tide of public opinion as though we were against new ideas merely because they were new and as though we were, in an old-wordly way, against innovation. I do not want to introduce a modernising argument or tendency to the debate, but we should remember that opposition to the lottery cannot possibly be regarded as the test of socialist purity. If that were the case, I do not know where it would leave all the constituency Labour parties which run raffles and bingo to raise funds. We should remind ourselves that it was not so long ago that my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said from the Front Bench that the Labour party would consider introducing a national lottery in the future.

Secondly, it would be unfortunate and highly undesirable for the Labour party to appear to be under the sway of a vested interest—we can safely leave vested interests to the Tory party, which is much more practised and proficient at being swayed than the Labour party. We must remind ourselves that the pools industry, from which we have heard a great deal in recent weeks, has not been arguing against the principle of a lottery—it has been arguing for fair competition, not no competition.

Thirdly, we must avoid adopting what I might call a rather sniffy, moralistic and intolerant attitude to those who want to have a flutter. I understand the argument about working people's income being used to finance middle-class interest in the arts and culture, but we need to guard against a trace of snobbery entering our remarks on that subject.

As it happens, I was brought up rather strictly by my parents never to gamble. I have never done so, either in the soft way, as it is called, or in the hard way. However, I was also taught by my parents to respect what others did for their fun and to get their kicks as long as it did not interfere with the fun of others and as long as it was not anti-social. A degree of tolerance and respect for how other people choose to enjoy themselves and how they choose to spend their money should be a feature of our attitude on this subject. The lottery is in that category.

The lottery will not have the impact on the quality of life which Ministers have advertised for it. It is as if the millennium arrived on the mere publication of the Bill. None the less, Ministers have exaggerated to make a point and it cannot be denied that in the absence of very much else about which people can shout under this Government, the national lottery will bring some individual enjoyment to many people. It will bring many benefits to organisations big and small for which they will have reasons to thank the Government for the creation of the national lottery.

The unanswered question for me is not whether we should be in favour of the national lottery; that question has been answered. The question for me is whether the national lottery should go ahead in the form proposed by the Government.

I have sat here throughout the debate and have heard the questions put to the Secretary of State. The attitude that he and his hon. Friend the Minister have displayed to the concerns expressed about constituency matters has been somewhat callous. They seem to be somewhat indifferent to the arguments made. They have been rather irresponsible in the way in which they have replied to those points, both in Question Time this afternoon and in the debate this evening.

Having recognised in the past the understandable concerns of the pools industry and having undertaken to consult extensively and to conduct research, the Government have indisputably hidden the findings of that research. They have ignored the concerns, which they previously described as understandable, of the pools industry and of hon. Members who represent constituents who are employed in that industry and they have simply buried the consultations——

Mr. Key *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Mandelson: The Minister shakes his head. He will have an opportunity to reply to the debate and we shall all be interested in what he says. The impression created by Ministers so far has been that they have been indifferent to the concerns expressed. It is appropriate and timely for Ministers to say more and to do more to acknowledge and to accommodate the legitimate concerns.

The pools industry and the national lottery occupy the same position in the marketplace. They both offer a remote chance of winning a large prize for a small stake. It is not reasonable for the lottery, as the nationalised player in the market, to be specially helped and abetted, as the Government propose. The Government must again consider creating a fair competitive framework in relation to advertising, marketing and distribution. I should have thought that the Government, committed as they are to a free market ideology, would not need a lecture on the subject of markets from a socialist like me. However, I am happy to deliver that lecture, of which I hope the Government will be mindful.

Money goes from the pools industry to football. I represent Hartlepool, whose football club tragically—due to unforeseen circumstances and a little local difficulty not of its making—was forced to appear in the High Court last week. Most regrettably, the club faces the indignity of being wound up. I look for encouragement, if not a generous contribution, for my football club when the Minister replies to the debate. He will not be surprised that I express considerable concern about the possibility of that money being jeopardised if the lottery succeeds at the expense of the pools.

Some £45 million annually goes to the football industry from the pools. That is a substantial sum. The best estimate made is that less than one tenth of the money presently going into football from the pools would be available if a national lottery were set up. That is serious, not only in view of the financial fragility of clubs such as mine, but for the sake of all the physical improvements, the safety measures and the developments that the Football Trust notably finances.

In setting up the lottery, if they are successful tonight, the Government are creating new opportunities. The House has a duty to protect what exists and is already enjoyed. The House must protect the money on which sport presently depends. It is the duty of the Government to ensure that in creating this opportunity, negative consequences do not flow.

I hope that hon. Members will support the amendment tabled by my right hon. and hon. Friends, although I believe that it would be wrong for us subsequently to vote against Second Reading. However, I point out that votes given on Second Reading can easily be taken away on Third Reading if the necessary changes are not made in Committee.

8.46 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) for many of his remarks with which Conservative Members largely concur. We were all slightly amazed by the rather sniffy attitude adopted by one or two Opposition Members towards people taking a flutter especially, as the hon. Gentleman said, when it goes on in most political parties throughout the country.

It is even stranger for Conservative Members to hear Labour Members expounding the virtues of cosseting a private sector company. The hon. Member for Hartlepool rightly said that a nationalised institution, or at least the

[Mr. Andrew Hargreaves]

nationalised part of an industry, should not be cosseted. I look forward to remarks in a similar vein when we come to talk about the coal industry or any of the other remaining nationalised industries which face competition from private sector companies.

It seems extraordinary to Conservative Members that in this debate on a national lottery quite so much attention has been devoted to the pools by Opposition Members. As I mentioned earlier, the pools companies are private sector companies. Although, under certain pressure from the Government, they remit money back into football, that money is not widely distributed. If I am fortunate enough to be a member of the Committee and if measures to level the playing field are agreed, I shall look for proposals to ensure that the pools industry contributes in a more even-handed way to sport generally and perhaps to the arts. The whole purpose of the national lottery is that it will endow the arts, sport and the new millennium fund.

The whole merit of the national lottery is that it will raise money for good causes. As such, I am sure that most hon. Members support it. It is regrettable that the Bill seems to create a conflict in terms of competition with the pools. However, there is a case for arguing that the broader interest should prevail, although not necessarily to the total detriment of our other interests.

The broader interest is clearly that the national lottery will provide additional money for a host of excellent causes for which money would otherwise be in very short supply. It is now many years since public subscription for good causes was a fashionable or successful way of raising money.

I worked in the arts for some time as an auctioneer. Alas, it is extremely difficult to find patrons willing to endow museums or even to purchase important works of art for the nation. Therefore, I very much hope that the various funds to which the lottery will contribute will be able to make up that shortfall.

I was slightly alarmed when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State indicated that the element that might be paid to Scotland might be out of proportion to the numbers there. As a good Birmingham Member, I will oppose that. I naturally feel that the money should be spent where the numbers are and in the same proportion.

I concur with my colleagues on the Conservative Benches and with the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) that we must have a secure way of ensuring that the tax take is not too high. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley mentioned a figure of 15 per cent. I believe that must be the absolute maximum. I would support my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), who made an excellent contribution to the debate, who suggested that it might be in the Treasury's longer-term interest to have a 0 per cent. or perhaps at most a 5 per cent. take.

It would be totally ludicrous for us to support the concept of an institution to raise money for good events and causes if most of that money was simply recouped in general taxation. That is not the purpose of the Bill. Hon. Members on both sides of the House must co-ordinate to ensure that the Treasury does not acquire creepingly that reasonable percentage that would otherwise go to those good causes.

We must also be very careful that we do not succumb to special pleading. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set up structures for the distribution of the funds that may become available. However, I would like to examine one or two of them again—particularly on the sporting side—in Committee to decide whether they are the best means of distributing the money that is raised in the fairest and most equitable fashion. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will know of my interest in removing drugs from sport. I would obviously like to ensure that the bodies which distribute the money can get that money where it needs to go, without hindrance.

We might try to find common ground on both sides of the House to assist smaller charities—and, indeed, the pools industry—in relation to which games the national lottery will encompass. Reference has been made to scratch cards and to whether the pools involve skill or total chance. Of course, the Skilball games are separate from that and there are also computer lotto number games.

I will seek to be persuaded in Committee that the national lottery needs quite such a wide variety of games. It may be more successful if it is identified with two specific types of game. I hope that we can examine that element more carefully in Committee.

As many of my colleagues still wish to speak in the debate, I will be brief. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends who are responsible for the Bill's progress in Committee will not offer themselves too much as hostages to fortune in trying to appease the pools industry. Those of us who have striven on behalf of the arts and on behalf of sport generally also have our corner to fight. The level playing field must be considered to be level only if the causes to which it contributes are also level, and in degree. However, I will support the Bill on Second Reading.

8.54 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I shall be brief, as I have only one point to make. Reference has been made tonight to the motion introduced by Ken Hargreaves two or possibly three Parliaments ago. I put my name to that motion and I voted for it. Indeed, I believe that I was the only Labour Member at the time to support the motion for a national lottery. I want to use my contribution tonight to explain why I will vote for the reasoned amendment and against the Bill's Second Reading.

We are talking about a measure that will decimate the pools industry and the jobs of those who work in it. That is one of the certainties about the Bill. The Secretary of State produced some figures and my colleagues presented other figures. Against that loss of jobs, we must realise that some of our fellow citizens are struggling to survive in a country that is now suffering its worst depression since the 1930s. The depression is on that scale.

We have spent this afternoon and this evening debating a Bill that will put many people out of work, including many in my constituency and in neighbouring constituencies, on the chance that other jobs and opportunities will be created and, as the former Home Secretary said, because the Bill will cheer us up. I can assure the Secretary of State for National Heritage that the Bill will not cheer my constituents up.

When the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) intervened in the introductory speeches, he was right to question whether we are talking about full-time or part-time jobs. Many of the jobs that we are talking about

on Merseyside are part-time jobs. However, they carry a wage packet which is sufficient to take those families above the benefit level. Therefore, those wages act as full-time wages. The Bill will destroy many of those jobs. I do not believe that we have the right to destroy them without creating other opportunities.

The Secretary of State is a cultured, fair and witty man. When, in his introductory comments, he reached the point about level playing fields, a brief hint of humour crossed his face as he knew that that was the dodgiest part of his contribution. He knew that it was crucial to argue that there were fundamental differences between the pools and what was to be offered. He knew that, if he put the national lottery as proposed and the pools on an equal playing field, one or other would survive, but possibly not his treasured national lottery.

The Secretary of State knows that his arguments about skill are untrue. If it means bringing the pools industry under another Act, it should be regulated by that Act. The right hon. Gentleman knows that, in the game that is about to commence, it is crucial that the pools have an equal chance with the national lottery to promote and advertise their wares. He knows also that, if he denies them that opportunity, as assuredly as anyone could be, he will be destroying jobs in Merseyside, Birkenhead, Cardiff and Glasgow.

It is extraordinary that, when we are still at the bottom —one hopes that it is the bottom and that there is not worse to come—of the worst depression since the 1930s, we should seriously think about giving a Second Reading to a measure which will destroy jobs, many of which are in my constituency. That is why I was happy to support the idea of a national lottery; I believed that its time was coming. However, until we deal with unemployment and give security to people who are currently in employment in the pools industry, we are talking about a vote to add to the official total of 3 million unemployed and possibly the true total of 4 million.

For that reason, and for that reason alone, I shall oppose the measure tonight. It is, as hon. Members have argued, a sectional interest. For too long we have tolerated the comfy cartel of those who are in employment which has operated against many of my constituents who are unemployed, and I am not joining it tonight.

8.59 pm

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I am grateful to be called at this late stage, Madam Deputy Speaker.

History has a habit of repeating itself. I dare say that our predecessors are looking down at us, or even up at us, and recalling that, in 1569, the first lottery in this country was held to raise funds to repair the Cinque ports. The prizes were plate, tapestry and money. Lotteries over the following hundreds of years went on. We found ourselves giving not only donations to the English plantations in Virginia in 1612 but fresh water to London, and relieving the ransom demands of English slaves in Tunis—all raised from lottery funds. Westminster bridge was built in 1739 and the British museum acquired its treasures and its building in 1753 from the sale of lottery tickets.

We have come full circle back to lotteries. We have heard many Littlewoods speeches tonight and we have heard much about effects on the pools industry. I do not feel that the pools industry will be decimated, but it will have to take a bit of a knock. However—this point has not been stressed enough—we have a terrific opportunity for more employment in the printing industry, through the distribution of lottery tickets and through the money that will be given to charities, sport and heritage causes. I am convinced that more jobs will be generated than will be lost.

Certain aspects of the Bill demand to be voiced. One is that the operator who will be appointed to promote and administer the lottery should be a British company. Clearly no one in this country has experience of running a national lottery, and I should be very surprised if a British company was doing so overseas; I know of none. Nevertheless, why do not the pools companies act positively, try to form a consortium and have something to do with the operation of the lottery?

It is important to consider how tickets are to be sold. I want the lottery to be blatantly biased in favour of small businesses and sub-post offices which should be able to sell tickets. At railway stations, terminals and so on, why not promote kiosks and allow people with disabilities to play a part in selling tickets? I should very much like to see in the British lottery operation an accent on the employment of disabled and disadvantaged people in the administration of the lottery and the sale of tickets. I do not want tickets to be sold through machines. The people element is most important.

It is important that we see the draw on television and that it is publicised. After all, the pools get the rundown on a number of draws on Saturdays. The draw must use television to its best advantage. The value of prizes is of immense importance. The size of prizes will have a crucial bearing on the success of the lottery.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) cleverly referred to tax. It is very important that the Government do not take out tax. If we give money to arts enterprises, sport, charities and the millennium fund, it is important that the Government do not get their hands on the money and deprive people of the funds that we want them to have. The lottery will create a huge cash flow. The operator must take full account of the fact that he can draw interest on the cash flow as it enters the system and before it is parcelled out to the different authorities. It is important that we understand where the lottery proceeds will go. There must be no confusion that the Arts Council has its own budget but which is supplemented by lottery funds. The public must be clear on where the national lottery funds are spent. As has been said in the debate, it is important that funding of our Arts Council, the Sports Council and so on do not suffer because of the money which will come to them from lotteries.

As I have said, there are a number of matters which must be examined, including the reference to charities. There are hundreds of thousands of charities in the United Kingdom. It is difficult to determine which charities should receive the funds. That matter must be addressed with great thoroughness to observe the terms of reference.

I shall end by referring to the millennium fund. We must have a spectacular development. France has built the great La Défense, which is the most incredible building and one of the great sites in Europe. In the United Kingdom, what do we have? We have absolutely nothing. We do not even have a museum of modern art. Provincial cities in Germany have the most spectacular museums of modern contemporary art. We do not have that even in London. It is a national disgrace. I hope that the funds will be specifically earmarked in that direction.

[Mr. Robert Banks]

For goodness sake, if we do nothing else with the millennium fund, let us do something which is architecturally great and which will put the City of London and the provinces firmly on the international map.

9.3 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I shall be brief. I have sat through this debate and I have been waiting for an answer to a specific question: where will the money come from? I have heard speculation about how much it will be—anything from £1·5 billion to £4 billion—and I have heard discussion about how the money should be utilised. I have not heard any hon. Member tell me where it will come from.

None of the proponents of the measure will say where the money will come from. It is an important matter because the idea that new money will be spent in addition to the football pools, the charitable giving and so on is extraordinary. Who is sitting around with all that money in his sock or under the mattress in this depression? It is certainly not my constituents who are having difficulty in paying their rent or mortgages or buying their clothes. If they start spending on the national lottery, what will they not spend on, for which they would otherwise have used the money? That is an important question.

I have been told, "Don't worry about the fact that members of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers will lose their jobs at Merseyside, Glasgow and Cardiff because other jobs will be created." The right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) said that about 80,000 jobs might result from the new money which is apparently being created specifically for the national lottery. Members of my union will not only lose their jobs at Merseyside, but families will suffer because money will be diverted. The people who make the goods and services on which they presently spend the £1·5 billion to £4 billion will also suffer. I do not know who it will be. I do not know whether there will be worse unemployment in the house construction industry or whether the members of my union who work in retailing and who are already in a deep recession will find an even bigger recession. I suspect that will happen.

People say that the Bill is a great idea. The hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) told us that a huge cash flow would be generated by the lottery. Where is that cash now and on what is it being spent? Who is able to contribute the largesse for this national lottery? That is the question that I want answered.

I have a subsidiary question. We have heard loads of lyrical statements about swimming pools, sports stadiums and contributions to the arts. Why are they good if they come from a national lottery and bad if they come from local authorities? Without an answer to those two questions I shall not only vote for the amendment but also vote against the Second Reading.

9.10 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I hope that the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) will forgive me if I do not follow up her two pertinent questions. I should like to raise half a dozen swift points at this late hour. I should like to pick up the points made by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). We need to give consideration to the people who have been working in the pools as the House takes a decision that has a direct bearing on their employment. It is not often that we take such decisions, but this is one of them. The Minister should give us some reassurance in his reply that help will be given to those people. I hope that that reassurance will immediately bring the hon. Member for Birkenhead and others back on to the right side of the voting pattern this evening.

With that rider, I thoroughly welcome the Bill, although I wish to make one or two stipulations. May I follow the two valleys—my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd)—in saying, "Keep the Treasury's hand out of the till." The maximum amount of money should go to good works, the arts, sport, heritage and so on. I hope that we shall aim to direct a minimum of a quarter of the sums raised to such works, but that we shall have it in our mind to push the amount up to a third. That should be the aim of the operators of the national lottery, bearing in mind administrative costs, too.

The lottery will need to be imaginatively and professionally run and imaginatively marketed. The organisers should use every modern technique. We should try to run the lottery with greater efficiency than any other lottery in the world. That will mean that more funds will be available for the good works for which the lottery was originally devised. It must be simple and readily available and must operate in a way which allows the maximum number of people to participate.

The use of roll-ups should be carefully studied in Committee. They should not be ruled out now, as people tend to do. They can be a successful influence in the operation of lotteries.

The funds raised by the national lottery could be put to myriad uses. One use has not been mentioned so far. Perhaps only through the lottery shall we be able swiftly to effect better access for disabled people to the span of arts and heritage buildings to which they so often cannot gain entrance. In some instances, it requires a considerable sum of money to provide access. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will bear that in mind.

I have five warnings to give. One has already been given by many others. The lottery money must be additional to other money. It must be additional to not only Government funding in general but Government funding in specific cases. That is important. It must also be additional to current charitable and voluntary funding. I hope that it will be additional to the excellent funding provided by the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, which in turn comes from the pools. It is much appreciated. I am sure that there is no constituency which has not benefited from such funding. They are small amounts of money, but they make a huge difference locally. It must be additional to contributions from business sponsorship of the arts and the matching Government funds that go with that—it must not be instead of any of these.

Secondly, large and small requirements must be considered—not merely the marvellous idea for a Welsh national opera house, but help for local museums, art and theatre groups, community arts and so forth. That is where the root of British culture is to be found—great oak trees grow from very small acorns.

Thirdly, small charities and voluntary organisations must be given the same leeway as the national lottery and

must be allowed to promote themselves in new ways and sell themselves in new locations, to enable them to continue their good work on the ground.

Fourthly, I question the choice of the National Heritage Memorial Fund as the principal acting in the purchase of new buildings. It has done the most marvellous job of funding and of saving our heritage and can be the instrument to do that, but it will skew its operations if it has to become the principal saviour of our heritage.

Finally, with one rider, it is crucial to allow any lotteries of fund-raising activities similar to the national lottery the same freedoms—the same promotional, advertising and sales activities. As my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) said, we have an opportunity to direct distribution of lottery tickets through small local businesses, which need every bit of support in these days of large supermarkets and superstores.

With those riders, I am pleased to support my right hon. and learned Friends in the Lobby this evening.

9.16 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not give way, as the Minister and I have decided to cut down our speeches to allow as many hon. Members as possible to take part.

The House is at its best when debating a subject that contains a cocktail of interests that span conventional party lines and we have had such a debate this evening. We have heard passionate and heart-felt speeches from both sides of the Chamber about moral, ethical, sectional and constituency concerns. Weighty arguments have been advanced for and against the Bill.

By now, Ministers responsible for this legislation are aware that many hon. Members on both sides of the House have no intrinsic objection to the principle of a national lottery—myself included—but feel that the Bill is not the way. Equally, as the House has heard, many hon. Members cannot accept a lottery at any price.

The fear that jobs in the pools industry could be lost, affecting their constituencies, is the main concern of many other hon. Members. They were sent to this House to represent their constituents' interests. We have tabled our amendment because of our affinity with the latter group and because a record number of our work force are in the dole queues in their thousands in areas such as Liverpool, Glasgow, Cardiff and east London, where the pools companies are situated.

The pools industry has not been afforded anything like the level playing field for which it asked so that it could compete in the same market place as the national lottery and my hon. Friends the Members for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle), Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy), Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) and for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) argued that passionately and eloquently. I am sure that their constituents will be proud of the way in which they batted on their behalf.

On a lighter note, the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) has shown us a unique way to display his Garrick club tie.

On a serious note, my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) made a powerful speech. She raised important issues that were picked up by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) and others, which I hope the Minister will answer. In particular, I hope that the Minister will address the issue that my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley raised as a result of acquiring—by whatever means—a Conservative research department brief. That paper stated:

> "Wherever possible, lottery money will be given on a partnership basis, with donations from the private sector or local authorities augmenting input from lottery funds."

I hope that the Minister will comment on that important issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) made an important, but perhaps obvious, point when he said that some capital should be invested in sport and the arts. I refer him to the briefing of the National Campaign for the Arts, which states:

> "It is always easy for politicians to justify putting up a building with a suitable commemorative plaque in prominent view. It is less politically rewarding—and usually extremely difficult—to prise out the money year on year for its operation."

We have seen too many white elephants up and down the country as a result of such exercises. I hope that the Bill will contain an assurance that, where money is given, it continues to be made available for the upkeep of the sports hall, museum or art gallery.

The hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton), who is not now in his place, said much in favour of the Opposition's stance. We shall look anxiously to see whether he joins us in the Lobby tonight. There were many other excellent speeches, but time does not allow me to refer to all of them.

It has been suggested that it is ironic—it has nothing to do with Clintonisation—that the Opposition are prepared to defend the legitimate interests of Britain's second-largest private company in the shape of Littlewoods pools, while Government Members are whipped to support what amounts to a state gambling monopoly. We take our stance in the interests of fair competition and fair play—hopefully, our argument will lend itself to many Conservative Members.

The all-party Select Committee on National Heritage came to the same conclusion. It decided that the pools industry should be treated equally in relation to advertising and marketing, the ability to roll over jackpots and the other factors raised by my Liverpool colleagues.

Some hon. Members were also concerned about the voluntary sector. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations is rightly anxious about the Bill's impact on its members. We shall insist that the commitment made by the Under-Secretary of State when he spoke to the NCVO conference is upheld. He said:

> "The Lottery is intended to provide an extra source of income for the charitable sector."

Charities are justifiably concerned that the Bill encourages excessive gambling and want proper safeguards to minimise that possibility. They say that studies show that low income groups spend a greater proportion of their money on lotteries than high income groups. Therefore, they want low income groups to benefit significantly from national lottery funding. They want the tax levels to equate with European tax rates. They fear that charities could lose as much as £230 million a year. Those are real fears that must be assuaged by the Government.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside) *rose*——

Mr. Pendry: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, who has just entered the Chamber and cannot have heard me say that I would not give way.

We should agree with the Select Committee on National Heritage, which has stressed that the National Heritage Department should monitor the lottery's impact on charities. That point was stressed by the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), who made a moving and refreshing speech. In fact, it was so refreshing that I think that he has worked his way out of being appointed to the Committee that will examine the Bill—should he ever wish to sit on it.

As someone who is known for his support of the national lottery, I feel that I should make my position clear. If there is one sin greater than an hon. Member reading back one of his speeches, perhaps it is quoting himself from a self-penned article in *The Times*. At the risk of penance later, however, I shall refer to what I wrote in my capacity as chairman of the Back-Bench sports committee at about the time that the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) proposed his national lottery. I wrote:

"While the possibility of a lottery, in its own form and context, is a measure which could do great things, it is vital that it fits in with existing aspects of funding and employment within the industries which it is designed to help . . . Sport has suffered far too long to afford further mishaps. If we are to go down the road of a National Lottery then we had better get it right."

That was my position then and it is my position now. It is one that is consistent with the Opposition's position on the Bill.

The Bill that was introduced by the hon. and learned Member for Burton was flawed and rejected by the House. We, the Opposition, say that this Bill is flawed and we shall reject it. Despite the many informed voices that have given their time and the benefit of their advice and experience to the Secretary of State, he has been unwilling to be flexible. That does not augur well, does it, for the consideration of the Bill in Committee, should it go that far? The right hon. Gentleman's basic mistake was not to give interested parties the sort of information that he gleaned from his commissioned report, the Goodhall, Alexander and O'Hare report. How many Members knew that GAH stood for that?

We all recognise that some commercially sensitive material might have had to have been left out, but how much of it was really sensitive? By the Secretary of State's course of action he has given the clear impression that he has shrouded himself in secrecy on the fundamental research facts that are necessary to make informed judgments about the Bill.

Mr. Kilfoyle: My hon. Friend has made a fundamental point because all the research that has been undertaken by the Government involves the GAH group. Indeed, I have a written answer from the Secretary of State stating that there will be no more research. Yet I can find no track record of GAH. Is my hon. Friend able to enlighten right hon. and hon. Members about GAH?

Mr. Pendry: My hon. Friend is perspicacious. I was about to do just what he asks.

I was about to say that I wonder whether there is another explanation why the report has been secret and remains secret. Could it be that it lacks the quality that we are entitled to expect of a Government-commissioned report? I ask because on 23 November my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) asked the Secretary of State to

"state the qualifications of the GAH Group to carry out the consultant's report on a national lottery; and if he will describe the process by which it was selected from the tenders received."

In reply, the Secretary of State said:

"The . . . Group was the best qualified in terms of experience, expertise and cost."—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1992; vol. 214, c. *493*.]

That can hardly be right. We know from another answer given by the Secretary of State on 5 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Broadgreen that tenders for the contract were asked on 24 July 1992. As GAH was formed, according to Companies House, on 8 June 1992, by my calculations it was in business for 34 working days. The Secretary of State, or the Under-Secretary of State, when he replies, must tell the House why that inexperienced firm, operating out of—wait for it—Nether Wallop in Hampshire, was even approached to undertake this important service. Experienced and with expertise?—hardly. The Secretary of State must answer that. From now on we shall give these selective and secretive operations much more scrutiny.

Fortunately, despite the defensive restrictions placed on hon. Members, we have had a debate worthy of the subject.

I hope that the Secretary of State realises that it is consistent both to be committed to the concept of a national lottery and to retain sound and deeply held objections to some parts of the specific proposals in the Bill. That is why the Government should think again before attempting to pursue the Bill in its present form. It is why we are asking the House to send away the Secretary of State to think again and not to come back until such time as he has conducted a proper, open and informed national debate.

The House may decide not to take that route. If so, I assure the right hon. Gentleman that we will do our level best in Committee to improve the Bill, I hope with the assistance of Conservative Members. This is not a party issue; it transcends party lines. Let the right hon. Gentleman make no mistake—there are many Labour Members who recognise the benefit that could flow to sport, the arts and heritage from a well-structured and well-run national lottery. Unfortunately, that is not on offer tonight.

It is fair to say that over the years the football pools industry has done a great deal to prop up the Treasury with millions and millions of pounds. It is a disgrace that Ministers have not given it the consideration that it deserves in the debate and in the Bill. The underfunding of sport and the arts has been little short of a national disgrace for many years. Hon. Members have rightly highlighted the problems for those trying to promote sporting and artistic activity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton)—a man who knows his football—made an interesting and hard-hitting speech. He clearly made the point that, following the Taylor report, the Government introduced legislation that makes it difficult for football clubs to survive. They have also suffered swingeing increases in police costs. The pools industry, which puts some £100 million a year into sport, is their lifeline. It is the

industry that is trying to help the footballers and their clubs. The Government should say what they would do for football.

The Bill contains many deep-seated flaws with which the Minister must deal when he replies. A central flaw is the lack of accountability. We welcome the principle enshrined in schedule 6 for a balanced membership on the proposed millennium fund, including a nominee from the Leader of the Opposition. Why not extend that principle to the rest of the Bill and to the national lottery itself? It appears that the Government believe that accountability is an expensive luxury to be granted for only a limited part of the millennium celebrations before being buried. That is not good enough. If the national lottery is to be a lottery of the nation, it must be seen to represent the nation in its operation. Too much power rests with the Secretary of State, as has been recognised by many organisations—not least the Lottery Promotion company, which has done more than anyone to put the national lottery on the agenda.

There are many other flaws in the Bill, but time does not permit me to go into them in detail. I will give a list of them to the Minister, who can then reply. Supporters and sceptics alike should unite because we are not prepared to have a national lottery that fails to deal with the needs and concerns of the whole nation and that is flawed and inconsistent. Unfortunately, that is precisely the prospect that faces us. I urge the House to send the Bill packing and to vote for our amendment.

9.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): Tonight's debate has been remarkable and special because so many right hon. and hon. Members have contributed. Including Members of both Front Benches, 31 speakers have caught your eye, Madam Speaker, or that of the Deputy Speaker. That itself is something of a record. The quality of debate has been high. The debate has been measured, temperate and well-informed—and of how many debates in this Chamber can we say that? That bodes well for the Committee stage that I trust that the House will approve.

The national lottery was a manifesto commitment, and nine months of national debate have drawn to a natural conclusion. We met the charities and the pools organisations, and held discussions with the bodies who are to distribute the moneys as to how they are to do that, how best to meet our objectives, and so on. After nine months, that debate is reaching a predictable and well-measured conclusion.

I hope that my answers will help to allay the fears that have not unreasonably been expressed during the debate. However, I have been asked well over 100 questions and I have a little over 20 minutes in which to answer them. I hope that the House will allow me to attempt to answer many of them and that right hon. and hon. Members will not intervene too often. The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) pointed out that he would rather get on with his arguments—and I would like to answer the questions.

Mr. Wareing *rose*——

Mr. Key: Of course I do not mind giving way to the hon. Gentleman. I am sorry that I was not in the Chamber for his speech, but I received a report of it.

Mr. Wareing: The Minister said that the issue had been debated for nine months, but it was only on 9 December that the Secretary of State for National Heritage held discussions with members of the Pools Promoters Association. He subsequently spoke of a "continuing constructive discussion". The Minister spoke of discussions reaching "a natural conclusion." Can he give an assurance that there will be further discussions with the Pools Promoters Association and with the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers before the Bill is finalised in Committee?

Mr. Key: USDAW has not sought a meeting with me, but I have heard its representations very clearly—not least from the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), who sought for many months to inform Ministers of her views and those of USDAW. The date given by the hon. Gentleman was accurate but there were many hours of informal discussion before that particular summit, if I may say so describe it, in December.

As for my own position, I have spoken to the pools promoters for many months about a variety of matters —not least promoting Merseyside to the United States last March with the leader of the city council and the chairman of Littlewoods pools. We visited Washington and New York and that was most successful. I am not sure whether I am allowed to quote myself from a newspaper, but I will allude to last Friday's Liverpool *Daily Post*. I am surprised that no hon. Members representing Liverpool constituencies made any reference to that. That clearly did not suit their purpose. I made it clear that we would listen carefully to the case that Merseyside might want to put to us on the location of the lottery's headquarters or of the games operators. That invitation was warmly received by Harry Rimmer of Liverpool city council. I am sure that we will hear more about that.

Tonight's debate engendered great interest inside and outside the House. I hope that the House will reject the Opposition amendment and choose to focus on the real issue. Giving the Bill a Second Reading will give the country what it obviously wants—an opportunity to participate in a national lottery that will bring real benefits to charities, the arts, sport, and the heritage in this country. We cannot stop our citizens from spending their money on foreign lotteries; how much better it would be if they spent their money on our own national lottery, not only to gain prizes for themselves but to benefit the good causes that we have identified in the Bill.

Mr. Colvin: My hon. Friend's mention of good causes prompts me to intervene on behalf of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). He was about to deal with this in his speech, but the 10-minute rule came into operation. The point is also relevant to a point that I was going to make about charities during the speech of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry).

Will my hon. Friend confirm there will be nothing to stop a charitable foundation from bidding to run the lottery? The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde suggested that charities might be out of pocket by some £230 million; that will be approximately the Treasury take, in tax, from the profits made by a company running the lottery. If it is run by a charitable foundation, all that money will go back into the kitty for the beneficiaries. I am sure that that is what most hon. Members want.

Mr. Key: I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will exercise due scepticism about every mention of figures in the debate. One or two estimates have been made, but I think that it would be wise not to speculate on some of the fairy tale arithmetic that has been bandied about.

As for the principle, it is important to recognise that one of the great benefits of our proposed system is the fact that beneficiaries of the lottery will not be involved in the distribution of funds. It is for precisely that reason that the National Heritage Memorial Fund, rather than English Heritage, has been chosen to deal with the heritage side. Otherwise, charities might have some difficulty in achieving their objectives.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): As chairman of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland, I find it unfortunate that an English organisation has been chosen to distribute the funds. I also felt, listening to the debate, that sport came first and heritage nowhere. May I ask for Scottish National Heritage to have a major share and a voice in what is being done?

Mr. Key: I will ensure that my hon. and learned Friend is very well funded. I assure him that the National Heritage Memorial Fund is a United Kingdom organisation, not an English organisation: that is precisely why we chose it.

Opposition Members who have not spoken today, and whose voices I certainly miss, supported the private Member's Bill presented last January by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir. I. Lawrence). On that occasion, many of them made good speeches. This illustrates the serious dilemma in which some of them find themselves. I respect that; I do not wish it to be felt—as was suggested at one point—that Ministers are being callous, or disregarding the voice of Merseyside. That is far from the truth. The fact is that the hon. Members from Liverpool, Glasgow and Cardiff who have spoken today have found themselves in a difficult position, and have been straightforward enough to say so. Many have no difficulty with the idea of a lottery, but they do have difficulty with the unemployment prospects that they fear. I say "fear" because I believe that the pools companies have a bright future.

Mr. Frank Field: The Minister is mistaken. What we fear is that the national lottery will be rigged in such a way that the football pools will be unable to survive. He has misinterpreted our objections.

Mr. Key: I am coming to that. I am trying to make progress; perhaps I am giving way too often. *[Interruption.]* I assure the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that I shall come to his point. It would be immensely helpful if he did not interrupt so much from a sedentary position.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Key: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Last Friday, I went to Holland to learn at first hand about the oldest national lottery in the world. I met the Finance Minister, the director and staff of the lottery, a retail newsagent, who makes a handsome living for himself and his family by selling tickets, and the cheerful and satisfied customers of the Dutch national lottery system. The Dutch national lottery is a normal and accepted part of national life. It is also, incidentally, accepted by most of the Dutch churches, which are noted for their puritanical orthodoxy. The Dutch national lottery is specifically designed not to encourage compulsive or addictive gambling and it co-exists with football pools. Thus it has much in common with our proposals.

There are, however, big differences. These differences are much envied by the Dutch. For example, there is to be a clear distinction between the body raising the revenue and the body that spends it. The same applies to competitive tendering for the operation and computerisation from the start, thus ensuring that the largest possible amount of money is raised for good causes. We shall also use existing organisations to distribute money direct to beneficiaries at local as well as national level. The Dutch also envy the flexibility that we propose to build into our national lottery in order to react to changing circumstances. They also envy our ability to offer new games to meet the needs of niche marketing.

In the past, I have not done the football pools, though not for any particular reason; nor have I betted on greyhounds, horses and so on. However, I have—and so, I guess, have most other hon. Members—bought raffle tickets endlessly in support of my party at its ward meetings. I have also bought raffle tickets in aid of churches and charities throughout my constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) made a crucial point when he called for our national lottery to be the best national lottery in the world. Of course that must be right.

The pools companies have distributed to right hon. and hon. Members a package that is full of tendentious assertions and, in my view, a partial interpretation of the facts. The pools companies quote from their own Coopers and Lybrand report and from their prediction that they will have to cut over 4,000 jobs. The tables provided by the pools companies were, I found, fascinating. I wonder, though, whether they have less to do with the lottery and more to do with the pools companies' aspirations to cut the work force and whether that is why they have been seeking voluntary redundancies for some time and have cut their work force drastically over the past few years.

Selective quotations are given from the Department's report.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Key: I will give way, but I wish to reach the end of this point.

The pools companies know that what they say can never be refuted because, as we have said time and time again, the report was compiled with the co-operation of lottery operators world wide, on the basis that it would never be published. I am not going to break commercial promises just to disprove the narrow assertions of the pools companies. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington interrupts from a sedentary position and says, "Ask them." We have no intention of going back to those companies. It is unnecessary to do so because they made it clear when writing to us that under no circumstances would they give us any information if it was to be published.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: The Minister has gone on record as saying that he does not wish the football pool companies

to be disadvantaged in their competition with the national lottery. Can he explain how that would be brought about, for it seems to me that they are disadvantaged all the way?

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State dealt with that point in his speech. We have said all along that we see no need for concessions. We have not so far been convinced by the arguments for concessions. If I were working for the pools companies, I would say to the management that most people want a lottery, that many people play the pools and that instead of entering into an extremely expensive campaign against the whole principle of the lottery—pretending that this is not in some way self interest—it ought to take on the competition of the national lottery and say that no concessions, in order to take on that competition, are needed.

Mr. Graham: The Minister has referred to the pools companies. He also said that all the newsagents will make a fortune and do well out of the national lottery. What will happen, however, to the 70,000 part-time collectors whom the pools companies already pay? Those people will end up with less money in their pockets. That, in turn, will ensure that shops and everybody else lose out.

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman made a forceful and notable speech this afternoon, to which I listened with much care. One of the dilemmas that I face in deciding whether to accept the concessions that are being pressed by the pools industry is that if, for example, the pools industry were to gain a concession on retail outlets the 70,000 collectors would be the first on to the dole queues. That is a serious problem, and I am not convinced that the balance of the argument is in favour of the hon. Gentleman's proposition.

I understand that the two consultants who were engaged on the GAH report have a long and unique track record and that the new consultancy was formed at that point. There is nothing more to be said on the matter. It is a matter of great regret that the Labour party should seek to disparage the expertise of that company, which won the competition fairly and openly.

It would help the House if I reiterated the message of the GAH report. It is nothing sinister. It considered what the Department of National Heritage should be looking for in establishing a national lottery. It produced a touchstone against which we could measure the likely effectiveness of our legislation. It told us that the lottery spend throughout the world comes not from gambling spend but from general expenditure. In other words, the national lottery will not principally divert funds away from the pools. The report concluded that only if the pools did nothing would employment in the pools industry suffer. Salvation lies in the hands of the pools companies.

In an attempt to persuade the hon. Member for Preston to join us in the Lobby and not to vote against the principle, I say that we always made it clear that this was not a question of a money factory turning out new money and that there would be displaced expenditure. Research shows that that displaced expenditure would be consumer spending in, for example, high street shops on sweets, magazines or soft drinks. It is the last pennies that people have when they go shopping and decide that they have enough to spend on such products. There is nothing secret in that.

It is a pity that the Opposition have been taken in by the power of lobbying. The Opposition amendment is not a runner. Of course a Bill to establish a national lottery cannot contain any measures specifically to protect employment in Merseyside or the other places mentioned in the amendment. How could the Bill constrain the employment practices of highly profitable private companies? I repeat that the action of the pools companies is more likely to lead to job losses than the coming of the national lottery. They have shown that by changing their rules they can offer a better chance of winning large jackpots. They can set their own house in order, and that they have done so is a promising sign of realism.

The pools companies ask for equal tax levels. That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but the pools are taxed at a higher rate because their profits before tax would otherwise be 45 per cent. of turnover. They are a very profitable business, but let us be quite clear that there is nothing wrong with that. The pools companies are responsible employers and they contribute to the arts and sport, and in particular to football, because the Chancellor gave them a tax concession, but their primary purpose, which is legitimate and which they achieve highly successfully, is to make private profits for the private sector. In the Bill we are promoting the wider public good.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) made great play of additionality. I repeat the commitment given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the proceeds of the national lottery should not substitute for that provided in other ways. The proceeds will not be brought within the control total, and the Government will not make any case-by-case reduction in conventional expenditure programmes to take account of lottery proceeds. The Government will continue to provide the finance necessary from within public expenditure programmes to enable their policy objectives to be achieved.

My right hon. Friend alluded to partnership funding, an issue raised by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley in relation to Conservative party briefings. We have always said that there would be partnership funding. It is entirely sensible and acceptable, and it is gaining ground in many aspects of public spending.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley asked what guidelines there would be for Oflot on the selection of an operator. The main concern will be to ensure the probity of the company chosen to undertake the operation. The director general will be under a general duty to ensure that the lottery is operated in a way that will guarantee propriety and protect the consumer and, subject to those considerations, will raise the maximum amount of money for good causes. He will operate a selection criterion which will reflect that general duty and, in line with that duty, the company chosen will also need to prove that it has the ability to establish the machinery to run the lottery quickly and to market it effectively.

Within those overall objectives, it will be for the companies which wish to bid to produce their proposals —for example, for prize levels and administration—in order to maximise the return for good causes, and the bidding process will be fully competitive.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley also said that we should consult widely, including the pools and charities. I have sought to deal with her point. The White Paper invited comments and more than 200 individuals and organisations responded—only 17 were against the scheme. We have worked closely with the National

[Mr. Key]

Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Association of Charitable Foundations, and an official from my Department sat in as observer at their respective working parties. We have taken on board many of the concerns of the charitable and voluntary sectors in producing our proposals. We have also held a series of meetings with the pools organisations. First, we held a series at official level and then with the Ministers on 9 December last.

We have carefully included in the Bill a clause that admits further amendment in respect of the pools on which we are prepared to listen to rational arguments. I cannot say fairer than that. There will be an opportunity to debate that issue in Committee. The opportunity to convince us of the need for further concessions is available, and it will no doubt be taken up.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) asked me specifically about fettering the discretion of prospective lottery operators by telling them how to design the lottery. We do not believe that instant games of the national lottery, including scratch cards, will compete directly with small charitable lotteries. We have done much to improve the climate for them.

The hon. Members for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) have a real problem. The hon. Member for Bassetlaw said that the Government would not publish the GAH report because it showed that the lottery was a con for the operator. However, his hon. Friend said that Coopers and Lybrand had said that 5,000 jobs would be lost whereas GAH claims—it is alleged—that there would be 1,100 job losses but that that report is not available to him. On the basis of the case of 1,100 losses, it would clearly be in the Government's interests to publish the report versus the Coopers and Lybrand forecast, but the hon. Member for Bassetlaw said that we dare not. They cannot both be right. Nor can the hon. Gentleman say that the scheme will be a financial flop so we should not let it get off the ground and, at the same time, say that it will be such a huge success that the whole pools industry will be put at risk.

Someone who seems to understand the national lottery is the Labour party's Front Bench spokesman on the citizens charter and women, the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey). Almost exactly a year ago, she told the House:

"Last night at a Labour party ward meeting I spent £2 on a raffle ticket. I did not win—I never do. I do not believe that buying a . . . raffle ticket is gambling. Nor do I believe that the average member of the British public believes that it is.

. . . It is patronising to the poor to imply that they do not have the free will to make a choice about whether to buy a lottery ticket."—[*Official Report*, 17 January 1992; Vol. 201, c. 1261-2.]

There is not a single hon. Member whose constituents will not benefit from the measure. If right hon. and hon. Members vote against the Bill tonight, will they promise to forgo all future benefits to their constituents? I urge all right hon. and hon. Members to vote to give the Bill a Second Reading. That will prove to our constituents that we listen to what they say, that we can look to the broader horizon and that we are not prepared to sacrifice the creation of a new industry with far-reaching beneficial consequences on the altar of narrow self-interest.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 269, Noes 310.

Division No. 122] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie

Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*

Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 339, Noes 203.

Division No. 123] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Home Robertson, John
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman

Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stott, Roger
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tipping, Paddy
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.

Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Ms Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Robinson, Peter (Belfast E)
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. (Strgfd)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gerald Bermingham and Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Business of the House

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motions relating to the National Lottery etc. Bill and to the Housing and Urban Development Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

National Lottery etc. Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the National Lottery etc. Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(a) of any expenses of the Secretary of State or the National Debt Commissioners attributable to the Act;

(b) of remuneration and allowances to the Director General of the National Lottery, of expenses incurred by him and of other payments to or in respect of a person who holds or has held office as Director General of the National Lottery;

(c) of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other enactment.——*[Mr. Chapman.]*

10.28 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): This money resolution should not go by without comment. Two money resolutions from Bills passed on previous occasions are on the Order Paper and the House has passed money resolutions in a cursory manner. I am not in favour of that. Ministers should be called to account.

On page v, under the heading, "Financial effects of the Bill"—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I would be much obliged if the House would come to order and if those hon. Members leaving the Chamber would do so quietly so that we can hear the hon. Member who has the floor—*[Interruption.]* Order. Will those hon. Members who are talking beyond the Bar remain silent or leave the Chamber?

Mr. Cryer: It is important for the House to scrutinise money as there are two money resolutions on the Order Paper. That is because the Government failed to achieve comprehensive money resolutions on two previous occasions: for the Housing and Urban Development Bill and the Education Bill. Therefore, it behoves Parliament to consider such matters.

The first paragraph of "Financial effects of the Bill" states:

"On Parts I and II, the only costs falling to be met from public funds will be the additional costs of the Secretary of State in implementing the Bill during 1993-94 (£0·5 million) and the initial costs during 1993-94 of the Director General of the National Lottery (£1·5 million)."

That makes a total of £2 million. I can think of better uses for that £2 million than establishing a national lottery.

The money resolution does not provide for any limit on the expenditure. It is open-ended and does not state that the expenditure should be limited to one year. Why is that? Do the Government anticipate that expenditure will be spread over more than one year even though the paragraph on the Bill's financial effects specifically relates to 1993-94?

The money resolution includes the costs of the expenses of the Secretary of State in relation to the organisations listed in clause 21. I shall not list the organisations in that clause, but how much of the costs of administration are likely to be borne by such organisations as the Arts Council and the Sports Council? That may be a significant amount and result in a reduction in the anticipated revenue from the national lottery.

The money resolution also involves expenditure on a number of additional posts in the public sector. The explanation of part IV suggests an additional 130 people

will be employed among the public sector staff. The wages of some of those people will be borne out of public funds. What proportion of the money authorised by the money resolution is it anticipated will be borne out of public funds? Those extra staff would be better utilised at the disability living allowance unit at Blackpool ensuring the smooth passage of mobility allowance and attendance allowance than establishing a national lottery. How much of the cost of employing additional public sector staff will come from public sector funds?

The Bill's explanation states, somewhat cosily:

"It is not expected that there will be any significant additional manpower requirements by local authorities."

The Bill provides for additional fees to cover additional costs. Will the Minister assure us that, if local authorities meet any additional costs that are not covered by additional fee revenue, the money authorised in the money resolution will be sufficient to cover payments to local authorities if there is a clear demand for money to meet those additional costs? I am sure that the Minister will agree that he would not like to see any additional charges on local authorities, which are already stretched to the utmost in providing education, care in the community and a range of services. We certainly do not want traditional local authority services diminished because of additional pressure as a result of a national lottery. I hope that the Minister can assure me that the money resolution covers any contingency that might arise from the increased cost to local authorities.

10.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): The expenses of the National Debt Commissioners will be dependent on the number and size of transactions handled for investment, and might be about £100,000. The costs of Oflot will be £1·5 million in 1993-94. They are likely to be about £2 million thereafter. Incidentally, that compares with the costs of Ofgas of £2 million, Ofwat at £6·5 million and Offer at £11 million. The costs of the Department will be £500,000 in 1993-94 and are likely to be at similar levels thereafter.

The Millennium Commission and the National Lottery Charities Board costs—there is provision for the Secretary of State to bear initial administrative costs in 1994-95 before lottery moneys flow into the system—will be repaid when funds flow into the national lottery distribution fund. Experience with other charitable bodies that distribute large sums shows that 4 per cent. is a typical figure for the expenses of a charitable distribution body. The other distribution bodies would be likely to have administration costs at similar levels. All costs from 1994-95 onwards will be repaid from the national lottery.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) asked about staffing levels. The director general will have a small permanent staff of about 45. The Millennium Commission's support unit will be quite small. The administrative secretary will be paid at the rate of a grade 7 officer of the home civil service. There will be a small staff of fewer than 10, with expert advice being brought in as necessary. Staffing for other bodies will be determined by those bodies themselves. Much of it will be brought in as necessary rather than involving many extra staff. These bodies will report on their levels of administrative expenditure on the lottery. The reports will be laid before Parliament.

The costs of administering and regulating the lottery when it is established will be met through lottery proceeds. The only costs falling on public expenditure will be during 1993-94, when Oflot is set up and the first licence is granted. These are estimated to be £1·5 million. The Department of National Heritage will incur additional costs on the implementation of the national lottery of about £500,000 in the same year for administration, legal advice and other matters involving the granting of the first licence.

The total effect on public sector manpower is expected to be an increase of 130, which includes all the distribution bodies and additional staff administering the fund in the Department of National Heritage. From 1994-95, these staff costs will be met entirely from national lottery proceeds. I hope that that answers the questions of the hon. Member for Bradford, South.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the National Lottery etc. Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(a) of any expenses of the Secretary of State or the National Debt Commissioners attributable to the Act;

(b) of remuneration and allowances to the Director General of the Natioanl Lottery, of expenses incurred by him and of other payments to or in respect of a person who holds or has held office as Director General of the National Lottery;

(c) of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other enactment.

Point of Order

10.37 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a matter for the consideration of Madam Speaker overnight and before 3.30 pm tomorrow.

You will see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is an unusual procedure—a notice of motion for an unopposed return—on the Order Paper at 2.35 pm tomorrow. It relates to Lothian police and my constituency. My locus in the matter is known to the Clerks and Madam Speaker.

My point of order is succinct and valid. Is it right and proper, especially in the light of all that you said last week, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the parliamentary manners, to put it at its best, of the Scottish Office, that there should be released to the press, before hon. Members have had any chance to ask questions, both the Government's statement and what was clearly in Scotland today a massive briefing for a particular point of view on a delicate and sensitive issue?

I ask not that you come to any judgment immediately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that you draw the matter to the attention of Madam Speaker so that she can reflect on the behaviour of the Scottish Office tomorrow afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I am grateful to the hon. Member for the manner in which he introduced his point of order. I am sure that I speak for Madam Speaker when I say that she would deplore any document being improperly issued to other parties—to the press or others—before it was issued to the House. The matter should be dealt with tomorrow, as the hon. Member has suggested.

NATIONAL LOTTERY, ETC. BILL
[WAYS AND MEANS]

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the National Lottery, etc. Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the charging of fees under the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 as amended by the Act resulting from the Bill;

(b) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Education Bill *[Money]* (No. 2)

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State for making—

(a) grants in respect of aided or special agreement schools;

(b) loans to the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools or grant-maintained special schools;

(c) payments in respect of expenses incurred in connection with any maintained special school becoming a grant-maintained special school; and

(d) grants to the governing bodies of grant-maintained special schools, including governing bodies in liquidation.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10.39 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): The Minister has chosen to move the money resolution formally. That is not only a great shame, because a great deal of explanation is needed, but is a gross discourtesy to the House. I regret the Minister's decision. I hope that he will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if he wishes to speak in the debate later.

The fact that we are discussing an additional money resolution this evening is further proof of the Government's disarray on the Education Bill. Their disarray is not surprising, especially to those of us who warned them that they should not embark on a Bill of such magnitude without proper and full consultation. The Government may well face further difficulties. The Bill has been guillotined and debate on significant and important matters is now severely restricted, which could lead to difficulties later.

Time is limited in this sort of debate, so I shall try to be brief. That is difficult, not least because the money resolution is yet another example of the abuse of power by a Government who have been in power for too long.

We do not even have details on two of the key items covered by the money resolution. It is a contempt of the House to ask it to vote on the resolution when hon. Members have not yet seen the details on which we are voting. For example, we have no details of paragraph (a)—

"grants in respect of aided or special agreement schools",

although we were told last week that we would be given them within a few days. We have no details on paragraph (b)—

"loans to the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools or grant-maintained special schools";

and we have been told that we will not have them until we reach Report. Nevertheless, the House is being asked to vote on the money resolution this evening. Would the Minister care to tell us why there is such a delay? If it is because Ministers have been consulting on those issues, that is proof that they should have done what we suggested at the beginning and consulted and listened before they introduced the Bill.

I hope that the Minister will answer some of the detailed questions that I want to put to him, some of which might not have been necessary had we been given the details that we should have been given by this stage. For example, on paragraph (a), will the changes proposed allow, as some have suggested, a school to change from one local education authority to another? If so, it could lead to some interesting situations.

I want to concentrate on paragraph (b). The Education Reform Act 1988 prevented grant-maintained schools from borrowing money under section 57. The Education Bill, when it was presented to the House, followed that procedure and clause 60 includes a similar restriction. The first question is why this change is proposed now and what consequences it will have for other parts of the Bill, especially clause 60(7) on the granting of mortgages. It is important that the Minister tells us why that change is proposed. It could be that the Government are beginning to realise that some grant-maintained schools are already in financial trouble. The case of Woodruffe school, in Lyme Regis, has hit the headlines, and we wonder whether the measure is designed to bail out schools that are in financial difficulties. If so, we have several questions to ask about the proper control and accountability of taxpayers' money.

The provision, of which we have no details, raises several important questions that grant-maintained schools and their governors will want answered. How much will schools be allowed to borrow, and what will be the security? From whom will the schools be able to borrow —the private sector or the Treasury? If it is the Treasury, on what basis will bids be judged? Will the Treasury make the final decision after assessing the merits of one school as against another, or will the Secretary of State have some say in approving bids? Will the total amount be cash limited?

I hope that the Minister will place this provision—and he may know more of its details—in the context of the funding agency, and say where it stands in all of this. In Committee, we spent considerable time debating the funding authority for schools—we might say not enough time, but we tried to investigate the detail of how that system would operate in practice.

Throughout those debates, there was no mention by Ministers of loans for grant-maintained schools. Why was that? Was it because Ministers have only just thought of this measure, or were they keeping quiet until the guillotine was in place? During our debate on the funding authority, Ministers made it clear that the authority could not borrow from the Treasury because it was a non-departmental public body. Will the loans mechanism be a means by which grant-maintained schools can bypass the funding agency?

We need to know also what will be the criteria for a loan and who will be able to borrow. Will the 400-plus grant-maintained schools that account for the two thirds majority of such schools which did not get any part of the capital allocation today be eligible to apply for loans that will in effect bypass the funding authority in future? Those important details should have been brought before the House before right hon. and hon. Members were asked to sanction the resolution.

Crucially for the governors of grant-maintained schools, how will loans be repaid? If there is a problem with repayment, who will be liable—the governors in office at the time that the school defaulted on its loan repayment, or the governors who took out the loan on behalf of the school? Is it significant that paragraph (d) covers the liquidation of a grant-maintained school?

It is incumbent on the Minister to say how there is to be proper accountability of the fund. The funding authority for schools will not be subject to the Audit Commission. The resolution seems like another move away from public accountability.

Paragraph (c) of the resolution deals with payments for the establishment of grant-maintained special schools. Let me ask the Minister two specific questions. First, will he confirm that it is still Government policy to integrate children with special needs into mainstream provision whenever possible? The Minister nods. If that is so, will he acknowledge that the move to grant-maintained special schools could freeze the move towards integration—or, indeed, set it back—if those special schools followed other grant-maintained schools and measured success in terms of school rolls, trying to attract more pupils?

There is a real danger that giving special schools grant-maintained status could militate against integration. Few people involved in special education seem to see this as a way forward. We shall, of course, have time to debate the matter in Committee, but I hope that, if it is still Government policy to promote integration, the Minister will think again.

Secondly, where does the pressure come from for grant-maintained status for special schools? The discussions that we have had suggest that there is little support for it; indeed, I am told that there has been only one specific source of pressure. The head of a special school in Waltham Forest is keen to push for such status, with the support of Lord Tebbit. I should not be surprised to learn that that was the only source of pressure, and the Ministers felt that they should respond to the person concerned. I ask the Minister to think again, and to listen to those with experience in special education.

It is wrong for Ministers to table a resolution such as this without giving details of how the money will be spent. We do not know enough about the provisions to which the resolution refers; what we do know worries us considerably. Yet again, the Government's priorities are wrong. When Ministers start providing money to tackle the real problems in education—the lack of books, oversized classes and so forth—they will show that they understand the problems faced by so many people in education today.

The resolution is not relevant to the main problems that we face, and we will vote against it.

10.52 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has raised some important questions. It is vital that, before we vote on the motion, we are given detailed answers to those questions. However, it would not serve the House well if I delayed the vote by repeating what she said, or referring to it directly. I shall therefore take up just one issue, which concerns the whole Bill and is highlighted by the existence of the motion. I refer to the problem created by the lack of consultation on all aspects of the Bill.

On Second Reading, I said that the Bill had been

"proudly hailed by the Secretary of State as the largest ever piece of educational legislation"—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The debate is very circumscribed. The hon. Gentleman must speak to the motion; he cannot refer to general debates about consultation, or to points made on Second Reading.

Mr. Foster: I am raising the issue of consultation because it highlights the difficulty that surrounds the motion. The motion was tabled because of a failure to engage in adequate consultation about the four issues covered by the motion, and I fear that there has been the

[Mr. Foster]

same lack of consultation about all the other aspects of the Bill. I hope, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will accept that I am in order in that respect.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So long as the hon. Gentleman continues to develop his argument in relation to the money resolution, he is in order, but if he goes wider than that he is not in order.

Mr. Foster: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The point that I was making, which I believe is relevant, is that during the Second Reading debate I said that this was the largest ever piece of education legislation that there had ever been and that there had been what I understood to be almost the shortest consultation period. I went on to say:

"If what we hear is true, the shortness of that period has caught out even Department of Education officials. It is almost certain"—

I said at that time—

"that the Bill will receive as many amendments from them as it will from Opposition Members."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 671.]

The money resolution is designed to enable the Government to introduce a very large number of additional amendments that were not considered when the Bill was drafted. What should concern all hon. Members is that a number of the amendments that the Government intend to table relating to the four issues referred to in the money resolution will not be debated in Committee. The Minister has accepted that the Standing Committee has already considered the clauses that refer specifically to the issues raised in the money resolution.

I shall be unable to support the money resolution because the Government have provided us with no details of the four issues with which it deals. That, sadly, is a reflection on the way in which the Government treat the Standing Committee that is considering the Bill, the whole House and the rest of the country. I hope that detailed answers will be given to the questions raised by the hon. Member for Dewsbury. Apart from that, I am very concerned about the lack of information as a result of detailed consultations not having taken place.

10.57 pm

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): A number of points need to be made, to which the Minister ought to respond in some detail.

By voting for the money resolution we would, in effect, give a blank cheque to the Government. So much is left unsaid and unprovided for in the money resolution. Many hon. Members need further details to be provided before they will be prepared even to consider supporting the Government.

I intend to refer to two aspects of the money resolution. Paragraph (b) refers to loans being made available to grant-maintained schools. Section 57 of the Education Reform Act 1988 specifically excludes grant-maintained schools from borrowing money or receiving loans. Can the Minister tell us why, in the light of experience, it is now believed to be essential that such a power should be given to grant-maintained schools? Many of us feel that it is simply because the present grants, which effectively are gifts from central Government to grant-maintained schools, will no longer be made available.

Under the present capital spending system, central Government give to individual grant-maintained schools a sum of money. No debt charges are incurred by those schools. Therefore, they can proceed with their capital spending in the knowledge that there will be no additional charge on revenue. The Government now realise that the result of continuing that financial regime could lead to a real financial burden. It is interesting that the applications made by many grant-maintained schools for capital spending this year will be bitterly disappointed by the miserly capital approvals that the Department has made. We had a flavour of that in the summer when the Department sent a letter to every grant-maintained school stating that it was not worth bidding for important capital projects such as a new sixth form block, library provision, sports facilities or drama and play facilities. They would no longer be accepted by the Department for capital grants. What a change we have seen in the past 18 months or two years.

Is the money resolution a way of circumventing that regime, knowing that the cap will be placed on capital grants? If grant-maintained schools now want capital, they will have to get a loan from the relevant Government Department. Is the purpose of the resolution to cover the day-to-day running costs of grant-maintained schools? A number of grant-maintained schools are experiencing great financial difficulties and are trading at a loss, to use the market phraseology of which the Government are so fond. Will the Government give a subsidy to those schools?

It is all part of the deceit that the Government have played on parents. The attractions of grant-maintained status were presented as "additional resources for your school and greater freedom" but the reality is quite different.

The purpose of the money resolution is to offer the Government an opportunity to give additional resources to grant-maintained schools. We must note that those resources will be loans, and there are some important questions that the Minister must answer about the nature of those loans. For instance, what terms will be attached to them? Will they be at a rate of interest? If so, will it be a fixed rate or a variable rate tied to the market? Does it have to be repaid over a fixed term? Indeed, what will be the repayment period for a loan? What will be the security on the loan if the grant-maintained school defaults? Will it be secured on the buildings, plant and equipment of a school, or will the liability fall on the school governors? What will be the relevant body? Will the loan come from the Department for Education, and if so what part will the funding agency play? Will it express a view on whether such an application should be agreed? Will the Department have an annual budget, stated in the accounts, from which loans will be made, or will it be an uncapped amount that can increase and decrease depending on demand from individual schools? Will there be a limit on how much loan a school can get each year from the Department? These questions need to be answered by the Minister because there is not a word in the money resolution to deal with those facts.

Finally, what about the audit arrangements? The Minister will be aware that the National Audit Office has conducted an investigation into the auditing procedures of grant-maintained schools. Its report is due to be published within weeks. Will the Minister give an undertaking that the Government will adopt the recommendations of the

report in the Committee considering the Education Bill? Does the Minister agree that the Audit Commission can play a valuable role in the process and that what is good enough for health service trusts is good enough for grant-maintained schools? Auditors for health service trusts are appointed by the Audit Commission; auditors for the grant-maintained sector are not. In view of the fact that grant-maintained schools now receive loans, does the Minister agree that they should be subject to the same auditing process as the national health service trusts? They are important questions because we may be considering potentially large sums of public money.

Paragraph (c) of the resolution covers the payment of expenses for local authority-maintained special schools to become grant-maintained schools. Will the Minister confirm that such special schools can achieve grant-maintained status without a vote by parents? The Government have already conceded that the funding agency will have the power to set up mainstream—if I can call them that—grant-maintained schools without a parental vote. Will the same apply to special schools? The Minister needs to make that clear. As I understand it, it will be a possibility, and the Minister needs to explain why parental views and democracy will no longer extend to the grant-maintained sector. We know that they no longer extend to mainstream schools because the change can occur without a parental ballot, but will the same happen in special schools?

The money resolution proves how bankrupt Government thinking is on education. It does nothing to improve standards, raise the quality of education or extend parental choice. For those reasons, we shall vote against it.

11.5 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I am extremely concerned about paragraph (b). The cat was let out of the bag in Committee by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). I said that schools would go bankrupt and he replied that colleges of further and higher education went millions of pounds into the red but that it did not matter. That comes from a leading education spokesman for his party, so it is clearly a method of avoiding bankruptcy.

Voluntary aided schools are undoubtedly playing roulette by promising and pledging their buildings which belong to them. They are pledging them against borrowing money—that is not only roulette but Russian roulette.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will the hon. Gentleman refresh my memory with the column number in *Hansard* and the date when I am alleged to have made that statement? He and I enjoy ourselves in Committee, but may I say gently that I am a little surprised that he did not tell me that he was going to refer to me.

Mr. Enright: I apologise unreservedly to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, but, as the money order did not appear in my post until this afternoon and I have not seen hide nor hair of the hon. Gentleman since then, I was unable to do so. If he cares to go to the Library, he will find that it has the most excellent facilities for pointing out to him the column in which he made his allegations.

I return to the warning I gave to voluntary aided schools—"Do not risk giving this shabby lot your goods and chattels."

Mr. Pawsey: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the hon. Gentleman referred to me by name, as it were, I asked him to provide the column reference and date of the statement that I am alleged to have made. He has not replied. Do you not think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the obvious conclusion to be drawn from the hon. Gentleman's lack of information is that the reference should be withdrawn as he is unable to substantiate it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a matter for debate. I remind hon. Members that there is a courtesy and a convention in the House that hon. Members, if they intend to mention another hon. Member, should do their very best to inform him or her. A message board is available for that purpose.

Mr. Enright: I did my very best, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even latterly, by signalling to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth from a sedentary position, but he was too busy talking to his hon. Friends.

11.9 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is gratifying to get a debate such as this on a money resolution. If there were more such debates, it might prevent the Government from tabling sloppy money resolutions in the first place and from turning Parliament into a sausage machine for legislation.

It was as recently as 10 November that the previous money resolution was tabled. If the Government had any idea about what the legislation would cover, they would surely have made adequate provision in the original resolution. They did not. They excluded loans and special schools.

In the previous money resolution, the item in respect of expenses in connection with a maintained school becoming a grant-maintained school applied specifically to balloting. There was a brief debate which, the House may be surprised to learn, I instituted. In a rather bland and effortless reply, the Minister said that the item applied to balloting. Does paragraph (c) relate to balloting or not? Apart from the word "special", the terms are identical to those in the money resolution of 10 November.

I want to give the Minister time to reply adequately, although, if he does, it will be the first time for many months that a Minister has replied adequately on a money resolution. Most Ministers regard a two-minute speech and no information as an adequate reply.

I am pleased to see, once again, the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) here after 10.30 pm. I hope that she will keep her attendance in the Chamber consistent and that she will not disappear and slope off before 10.30 pm as was suggested to me previously.

The question of loans is important and a number of issues have been raised. Under paragraph (b), can loans be made without interest payments? Will there be no terms on repayment? Could there be open-ended repayment terms? What rules will be laid down? Where can we see them? Will they be placed in the Library for reference so that we know that, wherever and to whoever the loans are made, the terms will be standard?

Grant-maintained schools are a stage on the journey to the private sector. Why do the Government seek to

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

support them with taxpayers' money by further subventions? Under the terms of the money resolution, there are no clear limitations on the terms.

I have asked an important question. The Government were not thinking about the point when they tabled the original resolution on 10 November. That was only two and a half months ago. Surely the Government should achieve a better standard of competence in dealing with Parliament rather than expecting money resolutions to go through on the nod time after time whether hon. Members want them or not. That will not happen. I am pleased that a debate has taken place tonight as a warning to the Government that they must attain a degree of competence in dealing with Parliament.

11.13 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): It is clear from what hon. Members have said that the sound that we hear is that of chickens coming home to roost. All the things that were said about the financial side of the Education Bill on Second Reading, which we must not talk about again, are becoming apparent in the money resolution. The Government are desperately trying to fill the gaps. Indeed, those points were made on Second Reading. The strange thing about the money resolution, particularly in respect of the provision about loans, is that it appears that the Government are simply making it up as they go along—not least because the Government, in something of a hurry, issued a document on the funding arrangements for grant-maintained schools only just before Christmas.

Once again, that document asked more questions than it answered. That has been the pattern as the Bill has progressed through the House. One would have thought that the Government could have found a way of explaining in that document why they wanted to make new financial provisions. If there were to be loan arrangements for grant-maintained schools, the Government could have informed the House about that in that document.

However, there was no mention of loans in the "Dear John" letter that accompanied the document. There was no mention of the requirements now being asked of the House in the money resolution. We have the desperate sight of a Bill that is full of holes that are having to be filled as the Bill makes progress. One wonders how many more such resolutions will be necessary.

My second point relates to school governors. It is already clear that governors of all schools, and particularly governors of schools that have the prospect of grant-maintained status and those that already have G[illegible] status, are extremely anxious about their responsibilities. In addition to their existing anxieties about their obligations, they are to be asked to undertake loans on unspecified terms and in respect of which the liabilities are not identified.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will spell out clearly and directly to the governors of grant-maintained schools, as they now face the prospect of taking out loans for the first time, on what terms the loans are to be taken out and what liabilities they carry. Nothing else will be satisfactory.

11.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell) *rose*——

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the Minister has finally presented himself in Parliament, he might at least have the courage to address the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Connarty: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I said the Minister, I meant the Secretary of State.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may not be aware of the fact that a point of order is a matter for the Chair. He should not make a party-political point.

Mr. Boswell: Before I was interrupted, I was going to say that half a dozen Opposition Members put up a fine show of synthetic indignation and asked a battery of questions. I will cut out the indignation in my response and concentrate on some of the questions.

I want first to establish that I have no apologies to make to the House for the handling of this matter. We consulted the interested parties in the greatest detail on these extremely important matters. As soon as our consultations were complete and our preparations were laid, we were able to present the amendments. We notified the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and her hon. Friends as soon as possible in the inter[illegible]s of the fullest debate. That debate will take place next week, in the debate on new clauses or at the appropriate stage on Report.

I want to answer the questions that have been raised. If I fail to answer any of them in the short time left to me, I hope to respond at Question Time or in our subsequent debates in Committee.

I want to deal first with what I believe is the most substantial part of the money resolution—although this view was not shared by some hon. Members—and that is the part relating to grant-maintained special schools in respect of which the amendments have now been tabled by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools.

I confirm to the hon. Member for Dewsbury that integration—which all hon. Members welcome—of special needs children is enshrined in clause 143 and there is no question of freezing the integration process. That is not our intention. I confirm also that it would be possible for the funding agency for schools to establish a grant-maintained special school. It would hardly be possible to consult the parents of a school which did not exist at that time.

Dealing with the perhaps technical but minor provision on which the hon. Member for Dewsbury barely touched, the first part of the money resolution reflects a tidying-up of the long history—all the way back to the Butler Act, with all its subsequent accretions—of the rules covering advances made and grants made to aided schools. That brings the matter into a modern form; it has been substantially agreed with the churches. Indeed, that is why the time has been required.

The second part of the resolution has most concerned the House. It relates to loans. A fine body of indignation and confusion was weaved around the matter. Certain

hon. Members decided to play it as if it were intended either to bail out grant-maintained schools or to provide them with massive extra funding.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Which is it?

Mr. Boswell: I will deal with the point if the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) will allow me the three and a half minutes left to respond to it.

As for the capital side, we are proposing under this head, exactly as for aided schools—or as near as possible—that if promoters bring forward a grant-maintained school proposal and it is agreed, 85 per cent. of the cost can and will be met by grant from my right hon. Friend. The balance can be borrowed just as it can be by the promoters of an aided school. That is the purpose.

There is a more general point in relation to recurrent funding. It has nothing whatever to do with long-term capital expenditure. The provisions in the resolution try to replicate as nearly as possible the arrangements under the local management of schools where it is possible for a school under LMS to be more favourably placed than under GM because it can carry forward a deficit until a subsequent year—a deficit which might, for example, arise because of a change in the numbers on roll.

I refer to the specific case that was mentioned by the hon. Member for Dewsbury—Woodruffe school in Dorset. That school came into the grant-maintained sector with a £70,000 inherited deficit from the Dorset LEA. That arose under the existing LEA's LMS scheme. As a grant-maintained school hitherto, it is being denied the flexibility which it enjoyed under LMS and that is clearly unfair. The proposal will rectify that for other grant-maintained schools. There will be no proposal under these terms for long-term funding. The money will have to be repaid, normally in the subsequent year.

Several hon. Members asked for further details of the terms and conditions. They will be set out in the published regulations, including the payment period and rates of interest. No school will be allowed a loan if it is likely to default. If it did, individual governors would not be liable. We shall abide by Treasury rules.

As for the point on mortgages, there is no question of our seeking to change the bar on mortgages set out in clause 60(7), nor is there any intention of permitting loans to the private sector.

Those are sensible, realisitic changes which facilitate improvements in the Bill and the fair treatment of grant-maintained schools and voluntary schools alongside those in the maintained sector. I commend the resolution to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 236, Noes 152.

Division No. 124] **[11.23 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*

Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Arbuthnot and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ruddock, Joan
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State for making—

(a) grants in respect of aided or special agreement schools;

(b) loans to the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools or grant-maintained special schools;

(c) payments in respect of expenses incurred in connection with any maintained special school becoming a grant-maintained special school; and

(d) grants to the governing bodies of grant-maintained special schools, including governing bodies in liquidation.

Housing and Urban Development Bill *[Money]* (No. 2)

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Housing and Urban Development Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required to be paid by the Secretary of State by way of adjustment of any levies paid to him under the Act. *—[Mr. Wood.]*

11.35 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): We are faced tonight with another classic example of the Government making up their housing policy from day to day, and tacking a shift in direction on to the end of the Housing and Urban Development Bill because the previous direction proved to be blocked.

The Government are technically clearing the way for a change in the rules covering the voluntary transfer of local authority housing stocks and, interestingly, they are doing so in a money resolution. The irony is that the Government seem to be more concerned with cutting back money on housing than dealing with housing need and conditions. It is becoming clear that the Government have no coherent housing policy—it seems to be a part of the chaos theory governing their present policy.

The resolution and the Bill do not deal with the housing problems facing nearly all our constituents—the drastic shortage of housing to rent, and the affordability of housing in relation to people's real incomes. It is not the time and place to discuss in detail the Government new clauses, which will be brought before the Housing and Urban Development Bill Committee tomorrow morning. Obviously we shall debate them there

In *The Guardian* this morning, Mr. Will Hutton commented:

"success requires root and branch reform.

This extends to the housing market with its capacity to destabilise the economic cycle and pre-empt colossal savings flows. The imperative is now reviving the rented sector—and a first move would be to permit further council house sales, only if accompanied by a matching commitment to build new rentable housing to replace what has been lost."

At least that shows a clear appreciation of the need for rented housing. Not surprisingly, that is what we said about housing in our general election manifesto, and it remains our policy. Everyone except the Government seems to realise that there is a desperate need for rented housing.

The resolution makes financial adjustments to the parameters of the Housing and Urban Development Bill. Basically, the Government have got themselves into a mess over their housing policy, and especially over the large-scale transfer of local authority properties, precisely because of the problems of housing benefit which they have not faced up to in the past.

About a year ago—before the general election—Ministers were boldly declaring that after the election about 200 local authorities would willingly and speedily transfer their housing stock, lock, stock and barrel. That did not happen—it could not happen—and the Government now realise that they cannot afford to let it happen, which is what the resolution is all about. It has eventually dawned on the Government—especially on Ministers at the Department of Social Security and the Treasury—that large-scale voluntary transfer carries with it a huge potential housing benefit bill for the Treasury. It is an expensive policy option, which is why the Treasury cannot sanction it. Too many transfers from local authorities would cost too much Government money, which is why the Government are tonight trying to put an instant stop to the policy. They are introducing a short-term measure, designed to ensure that large-scale voluntary transfer does not become the drain that the Treasury believes that it might.

The Treasury has drawn the line. That was clear from the introductory letter that the Minister sent to hon. Members when the large-scale voluntary transfer consultation exercise was launched on 18 November 1992. In it, the Minister for Housing and Planning said:

"We much regret the delay in publishing this paper, but I think it is generally realised that, because of the issues it raises"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I am having some difficulty in relating the hon. Gentleman's remarks to money.

Mr. Battle: The very next line of the letter states:

"I think it is generally realised that, because of the issues it raises, it has been caught up in the discussions of the PES round."

That relates precisely to money. Among other matters, the paper sets out the expected proposals to limit the number of properties transferred in a single batch.

The letter also states:

"as you know, a financial imbalance has arisen in the past between central and local Government as a result of the additional Housing Benefit costs of transfers to the Exchequer. The paper proposes redressing these by means of a levy on an authority's transfer receipts after deducting the authority's notional HRA debt . . . The most suitable means of doing this will be amendments during the Commons stages of the Housing and Urban Development Bill."

The key problem for the housing Minister was that the proposals for large scale transfer, set out by the Government during the general election, have proved to be —as it is now termed—subject to the Exchequer costs of disposal. The housing Minister is now up against the barrier of the public expenditure implications of the transfer.

The real problem lies with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which introduced the subsidy of rent rebates within the housing revenue account. Under that provision, better-off tenants who are not entitled to rebate are expected to subsidise those who are. The better-off council tenants have to pay for the poorer ones. The previous hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen, who is not now a Member of Parliament, was the then Minister responsible for housing. He vehemently denied, both in the House and in Committee, that ring-fencing the housing revenue account would produce that effect.

The levy proposed in both resolutions before us is intended to level the public expenditure playing field between the transfer and retention of stock. The same objective could be achieved by ending the requirement for local authority tenants to contribute towards the rent rebate subsidy. Why should other tenants who are slightly better off and not on housing benefit have to subsidise the housing benefit of others?

Inside the ring fence set up by the Government under the 1989 Act, council tenants subsidise the rent rebates of others. However, outside that ring fence, the new housing organisation that could take over the transferred local authority stock will lose out on the cross subsidy, which is

[Mr. Battle]

what the Government have now realised. That is why they have to come to the House late at night to change the rules by tagging new clauses on to the Housing and Urban Development Bill.

I shall focus for a few moments on the housing revenue account ring fence and the system. An increasing proportion of the rents paid by tenants who are not on benefit is used to meet the rent rebate costs of others. Therefore, the public expenditure consequences to which the Government have at last woken up—despite our warnings throughout 1988—are simply the result of the way that the Government designed the subsidy system.

If the Government want to level the public expenditure playing field between transfer and stock retention, they could start by introducing measures to end local authorities' requirement to contribute towards the rent rebate subsidy, not by imposing—as the resolutions suggest—a levy on transfer receipts.

The subsidy regime is the problem, and it has been for about 60 years. The council house subsidy regime is complex and the Government are finding it too difficult to transfer it to large-scale voluntary transfer bodies. In 1919, large-scale investment in council housing took place on the basis of a deficit subsidy system. In 1923, there was a switch to an investment subsidy system, which was for new building. In 1935, legislation introduced local authority housing revenue accounts. From 1923 to 1972, local authorities could remove deficits by raising rents or making a rate fund contribution.

What happened then? Under the Housing Finance Act 1972, introduced by a Conservative Government, there was a return to deficit subsidy and rent rebates were introduced. It was from 1955 to 1972, however, that local authorities used general housing subsidies and redistribution methods through income-related benefit.

The origins of housing benefit lie in the argument about the best way to distribute housing revenue subsidies. I think that it was Eleanor Rathbone who said in the House in 1930 that a decent rent rebate scheme would have to be devised. A key argument that was not settled then still dogs the Government, and that was whether a subsidy should reduce the standard rent for all houses irrespective of the income of tenants—a form of universal benefit system—or whether it should be restricted to tenants who qualify on the ground of low income—in other words, a means-tested system.

In Leeds, the Rev. Charles Jenkinson, the housing reformer, made a brave attempt to introduce a rent differential scheme. It was a classic attempt to have a rent rebate pool combined with full economic rents for all houses. It failed because tenants saw a basic rent increase of between 70 and 100 per cent., even before the calculation of rebates according to family income needs. Some tenants received a 100 per cent. rebate, some had to make a contribution, and others had to pay the full rent. It was——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been very tolerant. The hon. Member must get to 1993.

Mr. Battle: I shall bring the House somewhat closer to 1993, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In 1982, the Government shifted housing benefit from the Department of the Environment——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not return to the speech which he has written. He must relate his remarks to the levy in 1993 and not go back to 1982.

Mr. Battle: We would not be in the position that we now occupy if the Government had not made such a mess——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The fact is that we are in this position, a position that the hon. Member must address.

Mr. Battle: That is precisely what I am attempting to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When the Government discovered that they were paying rent rebate subsidy to more than 100 authorities where the housing revenue account was in surplus while another group of authorities were regarded by the Government as indiscriminately subsidising council housing through rate fund contributions, they realised that there was a conflict. In 1989, the ring fence round the HRA that was introduced——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is beginning to tax my patience. Before us are paving measures that relate to new clauses that are yet to be moved in Committee. He must address that issue and not take up the history that has created the present situation.

Mr. Battle: The Government have come here tonight to tell the House that they did not provide enough money for the Bill when it was first introduced, so it is incumbent upon them to explain why they introduced it without making full financial arrangements. The reason for that, in terms of the Government's need, is that the incorporation of rebate subsidy into the new housing revenue account system gave them renewed leverage on rents. When that is challenged by the need to provide for housing benefit, the Government find themselves in difficulty. Consequently, they have had to table a money resolution to ensure that there is enough money to change the system. They know that they cannot go ahead with a large-scale voluntary transfer under the terms that they promised the electorate at the general election. The Treasury has told the Government that it is far too expensive.

The practical effect of the Government's action is that council tenants—and this relates directly to the resolution—are paying an average of £3·85 a week towards other people's housing benefit. Councils will receive £792 million a year less in housing subsidy in 1993-94 than if benefit had been paid in full by the Government—in other words, 20 per cent. of the cost of rent rebates. Almost two thirds of council tenants now receive some help with their rents. That is equivalent to almost 1·5 million households, many of which could be affected by the new clauses for which the Government are paving the way in the resolution. The 5 per cent. real increases in rents proposed by the Government this year will push more council tenants on to housing benefit. That means that the Government will have to come back to the House because they cannot finance that proposal.

In the 260 local authorities that the Bill could affect, better-off tenants are now contributing to their neighbours' housing benefit. Fifteen councils receive no housing subsidy, not even for housing benefit. As unemployment inevitably escalates, that number is likely to rise in the months and years ahead. Following the

voluntary transfer in Bromley, new tenants now face a rent of about £80 a week, which is double the level for their neighbours. Many families cannot possibly afford that rent without resorting to housing benefit. That is why the Government need to pave the way for the new clauses in the resolution.

Council rents have quadrupled from £6·41 in 1979 to £27·28 in 1991, according to Government figures. It is little wonder that the cost of housing benefit has tripled to £5·9 billion during the same period. I argue that the Treasury should meet housing benefit costs, irrespective of tenure. That is what was promised when the housing benefit system was introduced in 1982. Council tenants have been uniquely discriminated against by the system. Income support should be separated out rather than passed across to ensure that some council tenants subsidise their neighbours.

The idea of rent rebates is to assist those on low incomes to pay their rents. Since 1989, the Government have blurred the crucial distinction between housing subsidy and income maintenance, with better-off tenants subsidising their poorer neighbours, precisely because the provision for housing rebates was subsumed within the new housing revenue account subsidy system. In practice, the Government are trying to match high rents with low wages. Seven out of 10 housing association tenants are on housing benefit. Six out of 10——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is taking the matter very wide. Those examples are not relevant to the levy in the resolution. It is a tightly drawn motion, and it is in the interests of the House that hon. Members restrict themselves to it.

Mr. Battle: As I understand it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the motion is about transfer and the introduction of a levy to reduce the level of housing benefit. The Government cannot afford to carry out the transfer of local authority properties, to which the resolution refers, without putting in a subsidy. The Government decided to impose a levy rather than tackle the issue of the ring fencing of housing benefit. I thought that that was very pertinent to the resolution.

Whether one is talking of local authorities or housing associations, if a person on full benefit takes a part-time job that pulls him up a little way through the housing taper, and then discovers that he cannot pay the rent, he is in real danger, as he moves off housing benefit, of falling behind with his rent and of losing his home. When he gets a job, he loses his home, having lost access to housing benefit. That is the fundamental inconsistency at the heart of the Government's policy, and at the heart of the measure that will tackle the issue of imposing a levy.

Like the Bill itself, tonight's resolutions are far removed from addressing the real issues of housing benefit that the Government should and could be tackling—the need for housing to rent and for assuring real affordability.

The Government are presenting no clear way forward for housing associations or local authorities. They have nothing to offer people desperate for housing to rent. There is no clear vision of housing reform or of tackling the cost of escalating housing benefit as unemployment rises and rises. Tonight's tinkering addresses a problem that is entirely of the Government's own making. It is an attempt, late in the day, to adjust an ill-thought-out policy.

The Institute of Housing, commenting on the large-scale voluntary transfer consultation document, stated:

"The Government's"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Does this relate specifically to the levy? If not, it is not in order for the hon. Gentleman to give the quotation.

Mr. Battle: The institute specifically commented:

"The Government's first priority with the review should have been to maximise investment"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman comes to the House with a prepared speech, which is perfectly fair, but if any part of it does not relate specifically to the resolution, it is out of order. It is no use the hon. Gentleman just carrying on, as if he will not be deterred. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman may not give that quotation because it is not relevant to the levy.

Mr. Battle: If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rule that referring to large-scale voluntary transfer receipts is out of order, I am somewhat surprised, because that is precisely what the measure is about. The Institute of Housing was consulted on that matter and on the levy, and it clearly comments:

"The large-scale voluntary transfer"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is failing to show the relevance and the linkage. If he will demonstrate the linkage, he may be in order. He has consistently carried on without showing any linkage.

Mr. Battle: I gained the impression that, every time I tried to make the linkage, I was ruled out of order. Although you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have given the impression that I am simply reading a prepared speech, if you check *Hansard*, you and other right hon. and hon. Members may find that I spelt out clearly that the levy is precisely about large-scale voluntary transfer receipts.

The Government say that they need the money, but our case is that it should not be used in this way; the Government should not use the money to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement. Rather, it should be used specifically for housing investment. That is why we respond to the measure in the terms that we do.

A total of £130 billion is locked in to English local authority housing stock. It should be used for general investment in new homes and to repairing and renovating existing housing stock. The money should not be used to bail out the Government's failed policies on large-scale voluntary transfers.

The question of affordability will not go away. Despite the rather bland report on the subject produced by the Housing Corporation, and quietly placed in the Library before Christmas, the real debate on affordability, from which the Government are now trying to slide away, is only just beginning. We will ensure that the House returns to these issues time and again.

11.59 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) rightly emphasised the strange way in which the provisions that we are debating were introduced. Following a long gestation period, a consultation paper that had been anticipated since mid-summer finally emerged in November, with a date for submissions early in January this year. On the

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

basis of the Government's response to those submissions —they have not had much time to consider them—we are now presented with proposed amendments to a Bill that would otherwise have completed its Committee stage before tonight.

A number of questions have not been answered. It is possible that Ministers will answer them in Committee tomorrow, but it is only fair to the House to expect them to answer some tonight. First, what is the expected yield of the levy that is to be introduced in the coming financial year—1993-94—and in any full financial year thereafter?

Secondly, what circumstances will involve adjustment of any levies provided for under the motion, which refers to

"any sums required to be paid for the Secretary of State by way of adjustment of any levies",

and what sums will be involved in any such adjustment?

Thirdly, how many transfers of stock are expected to be approved in any one year—in 1993-94 and in any financial year thereafter?

Fourthly, will the transfer quota be set by reference to the number of applications received by the Department, the number of dwellings involved, the capital sums expected to be received by local authorities for the transfers, or any expected adjustment to housing benefit clawback which the Government may expect to lose as a result of the transfer of properties from local authorities to housing associations or other landlords?

Finally, where does the long title of the Bill make provision to cover the levy?

12.2 am

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) dealt with the way in which the levy would be used. Let me remind the House of the comments made by John Parry, director of the Institute of Housing: he said that the first priority for any Government, in relation to housing policy, should be to maximise investment. I hope that the Minister will not only respond to the points made by my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, West and for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), but deal with the way in which the levy from capital receipts and the voluntary transfer of assets impedes investment in housing stock and repairs.

Those of us who represent inner-city constituencies are well aware of the current housing burden, and the problems that it creates for so many of our constituents. Representing Leeds as I do, I see the waiting list increase daily; I see the problems that that causes my constituents, especially young families. I also see the problems created by our housing department, although it is well managed. The Minister was in Leeds on Friday: he understands those problems. Indeed, he visited the Halton Moor estate in my constituency. We have a well-managed housing department but it has real difficulty in funding repairs.

The important point about the money resolution, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you will notice, is that the levy will take away capital and revenue receipts that could otherwise be used for crucial tasks in my constituency. The Under-Secretary made a fleeting visit to my constituency last Friday, accompanied by a press officer and a press release, and used that visit as a photo-opportunity, but he does not understand the deep problems that face estates such as the Halton Moor estate in my constituency. It would have been useful if, after having spoken to his friends in the Home Office, he had been able to announce that the local authority would be able to borrow money in order to pay for capital projects. Had he done so——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): That has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister should not try to chair the proceedings.

Had he done so, he would have been able to appreciate the problems of the estate as a whole and recognise that the money that has been made available by the Home Office —money that has been well received—to deal with urban crime needs to be seen as part of an overall package which involves investment in housing. A Minister who was sensitive towards housing needs would not just fly in and out of an estate. He would take the opportunity——

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): What has that to do with the money resolution?

Mr. Fatchett: I will explain what it has to do with the money resolution. This levy will take money away from capital receipts and capital investment for estates such as the one that I have mentioned. I want that money to be provided for my constituency. I do not want it to be used to prop up a failed Government policy. If the hon. Gentleman had read the money resolution, or had looked at the proceedings in Standing Committee, or at the failed policies of his own Government, he would not have made such an inane intervention. He would know more about what is going on with this legislation.

Those hon. Members who represent inner city constituencies and understand housing problems will be reluctant to support the money resolution. They know what the Government intend to do: they intend to penalise tenants. That has been their policy throughout their 13 years in office. As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich said, it is a transfer from the poor to the very poor. The transfer is unjust. There should be a broader housing revenue perspective. My hon. Friend also said that the transfer will make it impossible to deliver the quality and quantity of housing stock that is needed in the inner cities.

The Minister for Housing and Planning shakes his head, but he is in no position to do that if he considers the Government's housing record. Instead of sending his junior Minister, I suggest that he should come to Leeds. I will take him to the Halton Moor estate where he can talk to the appropriate tenants. He would then be in a position to appreciate the housing problems. I shall even offer to the Minister for Housing and Planning—something that is totally in line with the money resolution and the transfer of assets—the opportunity to come to one of my constituency advice surgeries. He would then realise how large the burden of housing problems is in inner city constituencies. It is no use for the Minister for Housing and Planning, given his background, to pretend that these policies are sensitive to the needs of my constituents. They are not. For that reason, I hope that we shall oppose the money resolution. It will have damaging effects because of the way in which it reallocates resources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich has raised a number of important points. I know that the Under-Secretary of State is anxious to address the House

and that only a few minutes are left for debate. I hope that he will be able to address those points. I hope, too, that he will be able to address the point that I put to him now, which is this: how will the money resolution affect a city such as Leeds? My view is that it will take money away from the city and that it will damage tenants, investment and repairs. The Minister must answer that point.

12.9 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The only thing on which Conservative Members and the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) would agree is that to get to 1993 one must go through 1982. The hon. Member did not enlighten the House, although we shall study his comments with considerable care. I wonder whether he cleared his speech with the shadow Treasury team, given the impact that it might have on the public sector borrowing requirement.

The speech by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) showed Opposition Members' lamentable lack of understanding of large-scale transfers. When I visited the hon. Gentleman's constituency last week, I announced a considerable commitment, running into millions of pounds, for the Halton Moor estate, for which the leader of Leeds council and residents and tenants thanked the Government. Every hon. Member should visit that estate because they would see millions of pounds being invested by the Government in refurbishing properties, with new central heating and new windows being installed, electrical rewiring and new social housing being built costing millions of pounds. What the hon. Member does not appreciate——

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: I shall not give way because the hon. Gentleman left me little time to respond to the points that he made.

The hon. Gentleman does not understand that large-scale transfers will take place only if a local authority so decides and if tenants vote for it. It must be shown to be in the interests of the majority of the tenants—[*Interruption.*] That is what is known as democracy. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central seems to have difficulty——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We cannot have a conversation between——

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister will not give way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Minister does not have to give way and the same applies to any other hon. Member. We cannot have seated interventions becoming part of the record.

Mr. Baldry: It is quite clear——

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: No, I am not going to give way. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central has not the slightest understanding of what large-scale transfers are all about.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: I do not intend to give way.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already made the position very clear. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central must resume his seat.

Mr. Baldry: I do not intend to give way. The hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand what large-scale transfers are all about.

Let me make it clear to the hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members what large-scale transfers are about. It is about the 19——

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister give away?

Mr. Baldry: Nineteen large-scale transfers have been completed so far——

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not expect to have to mention the hon. Gentleman by name again.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister has mentioned me a few times by name; it is quite disgraceful.

Mr. Baldry: It is not surprising that I have mentioned an hon. Member who has made a speech. If I had ignored the hon. Gentleman, I am sure that he would have rather regretted that.

Nineteen large-scale transfers have been completed so far. The most recent, to the newly formed Surrey Heath housing association, took place only last week. A further three are due to take place before the new arrangements that we will discuss tomorrow come into effect. In each of the transfers, the local authority concerned has disposed of all its housing to a newly established housing association because it has decided that it is in the best interests of its tenants and a majority have voted in support of the position taken by their local authority. These transfers have been very successful. The 19 authorities are freed from management obligations to concentrate on their enabling role. Up to 25 per cent. of the capital receipts from these transfers, which totalled more than £850 million, are freely usable and have given the authorities a head start in facilitating new housing investment in their areas. The transfers have brought more than £1·3 billion of private sector investment into social housing. Not only does this help to improve the state of the housing concerned, but it frees resources for allocation to other authorities where the need may be greater. The tenants of the 100,000 properties that are now in housing association ownership continue to benefit from enhanced repair and improvement packages, from more efficient management and from a new approach to running their housing. They are real benefits: tenants, local authorities and, in some cases, community charge payers all gain from the transfer.

As those who have considered the consultation paper on transfers which we issued last November will recognise, transfers generate significant Exchequer costs, mainly in the form of housing benefit payments which follow transfer and which fall to be met by the Exchequer rather than by local authorities. That is the primary reason for the current proposals.

We are committed to a continuing programme of transfers but we cannot afford to leave transfers wholly unregulated. The number of transfers allowed to proceed must be controlled in a programme which takes into account the cost to the Exchequer of individual transfers.

[Mr. Baldry]

Authorities should be expected to contribute to the additional costs, which is why we intend to apply a levy on receipts.

The responses to the consultation paper showed that authorities which responded accepted the case for changing some of the arrangements which had developed in the past few years. I have absolutely no doubt that, in considering whether they wish to apply for a large scale voluntary transfer and in consulting their tenants on whether to proceed with such a transfer and whether tenants vote for one, local authorities will of course wish to consider the levy and its impact on a particular local authority and its tenants.

It has been generally recognised that there should be a change in some of the arrangements which have developed, and that is now a priority. It is what we set out to achieve in implementing the measures covered in the resolution. The Government are committed to a continuing programme of voluntary transfers. We want them to succeed and to bring about the benefits that I have mentioned. Our proposals enable that to happen while, at the same time, they should bring into better balance the financial effects which transfers have on the Exchequer and on transferring authorities. I commend the resolution to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Housing and Urban Development Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required to be paid by the Secretary of State by way of adjustment of any levies paid to him under the Act.

Housing and Urban Development Bill [Ways and Means] (No. 2)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Housing and Urban Development Bill, it is expedient to authorise the making of provision requiring the payment by local authorities of a levy in respect of certain disposals of dwelling-houses.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

12.16 am

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): We had not intended to speak to this motion until the Government chose to deal with the previous item of business in the way that they did.

On Second Reading, the Government make their case for the ways and means and money resolutions in the general debate. We have debated a money resolution and are about to debate a ways and means resolution because, after having consulted, the Government have decided to table new clauses to the Bill. As a result of the changes, the Government must introduce a further ways and means resolution and a further money resolution to take note of the changes.

The Government tabled the new clauses on Friday last week, at a very late stage. They have allowed no time for the Opposition to table amendments to those new clauses. The usual procedure is that, when new clauses or amendments are tabled, we can table amendments to them, but if we did so in this case they would be starred and might not necessarily be selected. The Government have acted disgracefully throughout, especially with regard to tabling the new clauses.

My hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) and for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) have raised many issues. If, at the start of the debate, the Minister had given the reasons for the money resolution and stated what the new clauses meant, we should have had a better understanding of what the Government were trying to achieve. As they have done throughout the passage of the Bill, the Government have acted disgracefully. That is in line——

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): My hon. Friend is making some interesting and strong criticisms of the Government's handling of the Bill and especially of the fact that they moved the ways and means resolution this evening. For the benefit of those of us who have not followed the proceedings on the Bill as closely as others have—that will include many Conservative Members—will my hon. Friend draw to the attention of the House the significant new clauses which were tabled on Friday? Will he point out the way in which they will alter the Bill and the way in which they relate to the motion? My hon. Friend would do the House and democracy a great service if he drew the new clauses to the attention of hon. Members before they are discussed in Committee.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) continues, I remind him of the relatively narrow scope of the motion.

Mr. Pike: I understand what you say, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not intend to go into the detail of the new clauses. The point is that the House should understand that the new clauses are extremely long and technical. The

money formula for the levy, which is dealt with in this motion and in the money resolution, is extremely difficult to understand.

If the Government want to ensure that legislation is debated constructively and positively, they should assist the House at all stages. The Opposition have approached the legislation positively in Committee. The Government have several consultations under way and they will table further amendments to the Bill.

I will not follow the line suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), although there may be some justification for doing so. The Opposition feel strongly that the way in which the Government have gone about things in the money resolution and in the ways and means resolution has been wrong. Any fault lies with the Government.

12.21 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The comments by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) were somewhat bizarre. It was known for a long time in Committee that these matters would be debated tomorrow. The new clauses were tabled on Thursday, which gave ample time for the Opposition to table amendments on Friday, if they wished to do so. I have no doubt that a number of hon. Members were here on Friday to vote on the Shops (Amendment) Bill. On reflection, the hon. Gentleman will recognise that his point was not a good one.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Housing and Urban Development Bill, it is expedient to authorise the making of provision requiring the payment by local authorities of a levy in respect of certain disposals of dwelling-houses.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft District Electoral Areas (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

FOOTWEAR LABELLING

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5248/92, relating to the labelling of materials used in the main components of footwear, and endorses the Government's view that the United Kingdom should support a uniform system of labelling for footwear provided that text can be used instead of pictograms.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

TRANSPORT

Ordered,

That Mr. David Marshall be discharged from the Transport Committee and Mr. Brian H. Donohoe be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Jon Owen Jones be discharged from the Welsh Affairs Committee and Mr. Nick Ainger be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Convalescent Care (Ilkley)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

12.23 am

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Convalescence as a specialist field of medicine within the national health service has been in decline for many years. However, I hope to show tonight that in many areas, that decline is being reversed as the clinical and economic case for convalescent care becomes ever more obvious.

I address my remarks specifically to the Grove convalescent hospital in Ilkley in my constituency with its 54 beds, of which 44 are currently convalescent. It now represents one of the last bastions of convalescence in this country. It is somewhat ironic that just when the tide of convalescent care might be turning, the Airedale NHS trust is preparing to close that hospital. The development of the internal market in the NHS can give such units an opportunity to demonstrate the value for money that they offer, if they are given that opportunity, and also show that they satisfy a need that is not easily met elsewhere.

As the demand for hospital services increases, fed by a more elderly population and rising expectations, throughput in the health service has become faster. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), is aware, the trend is towards short stays and day surgery wherever possible for good clinical as well as economic reasons.

Getting people up and on their feet speeds their recovery, but many of them will continue to need nursing care for some time following an operation or illness. Community care is the answer in many cases, but not in all. If an elderly person lives alone, a consultant may often see no alternative to a situation where the patient continues to occupy an acute hospital bed, preventing waiting lists from falling and preventing the expensive time of surgeons from being efficiently utilised. In money terms, convalescent units often represent good value. Purchasing authorities are currently charged only £49 per night for patients cared for at the Grove, compared with well over £200 per night in a typical acute unit.

Financial criteria, however, tell only half the story. Many medical practitioners believe that stressful and busy acute wards are far from an ideal environment in which patients can recuperate well. Quoted in the *Health Service Journal*, Professor Peter Millard of the geriatrics department at St. George's hospital in London sees a need for "healing halfway houses" where patients, particularly the elderly, can go between hospital and home to recover strength and independence. Keeping someone in hospital when that person no longer needs full medical care is expensive and inappropriate, but in Professor Millard's experience, discharging patients straight back home, even with intensive after care services, is rarely a solution.

There is, perhaps, no single model of convalescent care that is suitable for every patient. A number of different ones are developing, not only in this country but abroad. In Sweden, the concept of the patient hotel has rapidly gained ground, with units at Lund and Malmö, and spreading to Copenhagen in Denmark. Patients are treated very much as customers or hotel guests, with priority accorded to their own preferences, in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Relatives who wish to stay with patients may do so, paying a reasonable fee to cover costs and overheads. That is also permitted at the Grove when beds are available.

Although the Swedish patient hotel model is based on single rooms, the costs are only a half or a third of those in acute hospitals. Patients like it and they prosper, but the health service also secures benefits as a whole. As one practitioner put it:

"The patient hotel helps prevent institutional hospitalisation and saves money which can be transferred to patients needing more intensive treatment. Our experience of a patient hotel in Lund is an overwhelmingly positive one."

In the United States, convalescent units have been developing from Connecticut, where a 93-bed medical hotel opened in January last year, to California, where Recovery Inns, charging an all-inclusive fee of $700 per day, demonstrate the diversity of the concept, if not a model that we would necessarily wish to emulate within the NHS.

The Kingston hospital NHS trust has created its own hospital hotel whose first objective is defined as being

"to achieve a more efficient use of acute inpatient beds to reduce waiting lists and waiting time."

An encouraging leaflet issued to patients on admission welcomes them and explains that becoming a guest in the patient hotel when a return home is not feasible is regarded as a way of releasing an acute bed for further admission. In Worthing, Oxford, Peterborough, Lambeth and south Derbyshire, too, different organisational patterns of convalescent care have come into being in recent times. I am sorry that I do not have time to refer to them in detail.

Having considered some fairly recent developments pointing perhaps towards the need for a diversity of responses to the need for convalescent care, I refer again to the Grove convalescent hospital in the town of Ilkley in my own constituency. In Victorian times, Ilkley was a spa to which many people came to take the waters and perhaps to convalesce at one of its hydropathic establishments. Today, they still come, not to take the waters but nevertheless to convalesce at the Grove following major surgery or intensive medical treatment in an acute hospital. An attractive folder about the hospital tells us that it was established in 1829 as the Ilkley Charity, that it overlooks the town centre, and is surrounded by attractive landscaped gardens.

"Patients", we are informed,

"normally come to the Grove for two to three weeks following a wide range of hospital procedures; from heart by-pass and major cardiac operations to orthopaedic work, kidney and liver transplants and ophthalmic operations. Others are cared for following treatment for leukaemia or the effects of a stroke. All forms of post-operative care are available, as is specialist insulin control for diabetic patients. Treatment is carefully planned for each individual patient according to their own individual needs and includes the provision where appropriate of skilled rehabilitation therapy."

It can be seen that the level of nursing care provided at the Grove is considerably higher than in most of the other models of convalescent units to which I have referred. It is true that patients do not have the total privacy of individual rooms which are commonly found in patient hotels, but efforts have been made to ensure that we are a long way from the rows of beds offering no privacy at all in traditional Nightingale-style wards. Everyone agrees that the staff and the excellent hospital manager, Mrs Sheila Wormold, have done a remarkable job.

Although the building may be more than 150 years old, nevertheless the ethos has much in common with that of

the more recently invented patient hotel. It is clear from the comments of patients that they feel that they are treated as guests, with comfortable lounges on both the ground and first floors, a licensed bar and a wide choice of menus available. As patients start to feel better they can walk in the gardens, take a five-minute stroll down to take tea at Betty's or even venture as far as the famous Ilkley moor.

Letters received from patients following their stay are revealing. Mrs. Saxton of Bakewell, Derbyshire wrote:

"It frightens me when I think of my condition on arrival at The Grove. I couldn't possibly have looked after myself at home. If places such as The Grove close, what will happen to future patients"?

Mrs. Norris of Carnforth, which is a considerable distance away, wrote:

"It was a truly wonderful fortnight in every way, and I returned home . . . looking and feeling so different to when I left the Royal Lancaster Infirmary . . . I was refreshed and strengthened in body, mind and spirit. That The Grove Convalescent Hospital should remain open for years to come is vitally essential, so that others may continue to benefit as I did (and, indeed, the Government should make it possible for similar establishments to be built throughout the country)."

Audrey Scriven, an Ilkley resident, wrote:

"I don't think any other community has such a suitable convalescent hospital in such a wonderful situation as Ilkley . . . Open more homes like The Grove Convalescent Hospital, don't close down the gem that is here."

Taking patient records almost at random, it is apparent that the Grove meets a need which could not otherwise easily be satisfied for patients not only from the immediate area but from many parts of the north.

The staff of the Grove spend much time talking to, listening to and reassuring patients. That is the kind of personal attention which the staff of an excellent convalescent hospital such as the Grove can give but which is far more difficult to provide in a busy general hospital ward.

Many consultants from many parts of the country—Lancashire, Yorkshire, the west and south—have written to me. The tenor of their remarks was that if the Grove closed they would have to keep patients in acute wards for longer, waiting lists would grow and patient care would suffer.

This is not the first time that I have raised the future of the Grove hospital in the House. Just over five years ago, on 16 November 1987, I sought

"leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely, the proposed emergency closure of the Grove hospital."

The following day, the then Leeds Western health authority was considering a proposal to close the Grove within days as an emergency measure and as part of a package intended to deal with overspendng of £800,000 in that financial year. Statutory procedures were then in midstream. I said:

"everyone realises that if the hospital were to be closed now, before the statutory procedures are completed and before objectors have even had a chance to put forward alternatives, the involvement of Ministers would be a parody of what Parliament intended."—[*Official Report*, 16 November 1987; Vol. 122, c. 776.]

Time has moved on. At the eleventh hour the Grove was reprieved in 1987. With the encouragement of the Yorkshire regional health authority, it was taken over by Airedale health authority in whose area it was located. From April 1992, Airedale hospitals have been incorporated in an NHS trust and from 1 December that part of Airedale health authority with which we are concerned has merged to form a new Bradford and district health authority.

History has not only moved on; it is repeating itself. The Airedale NHS trust is now having difficulty in matching its income with its expenditure. A closure proposal has been announced, but it will undoubtedly take many months for the community health council to give its view, for the public and interested parties to be consulted and for my hon. Friend the Minister to make his decision. In the meantime, the NHS trust has stated that it intends to proceed with an emergency closure no later than the end of March.

Such an emergency closure is regarded by many as just as unacceptable now as it was before. A hospital is much more than just walls and a roof. If the Grove is closed, the consultation which has not yet begun will be pointless because many or most of the staff will have been made redundant.

When I submitted a paper to the regional health authority in March 1988 I commented:

"The majority of convalescent patients are elderly, live alone and have nobody at home to provide the care which is essential to effect recovery. The difficulties of providing alternative cover are immense. The arguments point . . . towards the provision of convalescent care by nursing staff who are specialists in this sector and can meet the need more effectively and more economically for those patients who require it."

I pointed out that the Grove suffered because there was no internal market in the NHS at that time. Well before the issue of a White Paper on the NHS, I urged that districts should be charged against their budgets in proportion to the usage which they make of the hospital so that they could offset those charges against savings made elsewhere by taking advantage of the Grove's facilities.

When I spoke earlier of convalescent facilities developing in the United Kingdom, it will perhaps have been noted that there is a major gap in the north of England. I regret the fact that, because of the pressure currently applied to it, Airedale NHS trust proposes to close the Grove without positively or adequately exploring alternative strategies. Money needs to be spent on the Grove. The trust says that it is required to spend £1 million over five years. Only some £100,000, or perhaps a little more, needs to be spent urgently to satisfy fire and environmental health regulations.

I am particularly attracted to the concept of a mixed unit serving both NHS and private patients. At present, the hospital takes private patients from BUPA, but clearly requires some modernisation and expansion of its facilities to develop that side of its work. As it happens, there is land to the rear of the hospital where it should be possible to obtain planning permission to build a new block, creating not only rooms for private patients on the patient hotel model but improved common facilities for the hospital patients as a whole. There are companies with a good track record in the health sector which could be interested in working with the Airedale NHS trust along those lines.

Some health authorities have indicated that they do not intend to send patients to the Grove in the future. However, I believe that judicious marketing would reveal that many health authorities and purchasers of services in Yorkshire and the north of England would benefit from sending some of their patients to the Grove.

I have already referred to the internal market. Every health authority is paying for patients to remain in acute

[Mr. Gary Waller]

hospital beds when they need not be there, simply because they have not considered the alternative of convalescent care, the cost of which could be a great deal less.

Finally, I shall refer to the important issue of GP beds in the hospital. Since late last year, the Grove has accommodated 10 GP beds which were formerly provided at the Coronation hospital in Ilkley. My hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), who preceded my hon. Friend the Minister in his present post, wrote to me on 8 August 1991 to uphold the decision of the former Airedale health authority to end in-patient services at Coronation hospital. In his letter he said:

"The health authority have been able to assure me that they can provide 10 beds to meet the GPs' needs at the Grove Hospital in Ilkley. Airedale have invested some £80,000 in improving this facility since taking over the management in 1989, and I am satisfied that the Grove will provide a good setting for the continuation of this important local service."

So 18 months ago the Grove was seen as a good setting for GP beds. My hon. Friend also saw a move to the Grove as consistent with the wish

"to ensure that the best standards of modern medicine are available for [patients'] care."

But now there is uncertainty about where the 10 GP beds which rightly concerned my hon. Friend should be located. As yet no solution has been found and the uncertainty remains. There has been talk about using a local nursing home. But many doubt whether that solution, appropriate as it might be for some patients, would provide the standard of nursing care available at present.

Taxpayers are also entitled to ask about the £80,000 which has been spent improving the Grove since 1989 and the additional amount spent since 1991 on providing the GP beds. Taxpayers are entitled to ask that, after such expenditure, decisions are not taken for short-term and perhaps short-sighted reasons.

There is good will on the part of the trust chairman, Mr. Peter Bell, to move towards a solution to the problems posed so soon after the creation of the Airedale NHS trust. The NHS management executive and the Yorkshire regional health authority have a responsibility in the matter because the Grove is essentially a regional facility. The regional health authority should work with Airedale to ascertain whether an alternative course can be followed. It needs to be a course which would provide clinical benefits for patients while enabling the hospital to pay its way in the internal market.

Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to meet me at an early date to consider whether any possible way forward can be found. Obviously, I can ask him to make no commitment except that he consider the matter in a careful and thoughtful way, as I know that he will. But that is no less than the dedicated staff and the patients who have benefited from staying at the Grove deserve.

12.41 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I have listened with great interest to the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) in his well researched speech. I recognise the wealth of local knowledge that underlies his remarks. He shares with Mr. Peter Bell, the chairman of the Airedale NHS trust, a passionate concern that Keighley people should get the best available care from the NHS. The Airedale trust is striving to improve the health care of all Airedale residents: that is well understood and recognised.

The proposal at issue here is that the Airedale NHS trust wishes to close the Grove convalescent hospital in Ilkley. The trust is a second wave NHS trust which came into being in April of this year. The Grove is one of seven hospital sites which comprise the trust. It was built in 1829 as a hospital and convalescent home, and was taken over by Airedale health authority in April 1989 from Leeds Western health authority. It became part of the trust in April this year. The hospital was in a rundown condition when Airedale district health authority took it over and the facilities have been improved, upgraded and refurbished over the past three and a half years.

The Grove is a 54-bed convalescent hospital currently providing convalescent care to eight district health authorities in Yorkshire and Lancashire and accepting substantial numbers of extra-contractual referrals, particularly from the Greater Manchester area.

The hospital currently has 10 nursing care beds which are used by general practitioners in Ilkley—a service provided as a result of the closure of the in-patient beds at Ilkley Coronation hospital in 1991. Occupancy of the 44 convalescent beds has remained stable over the last 18 months: on average, 38 beds out of the available 44 are occupied representing an average occupancy of 86 per cent.

The GP beds have maintained an occupancy rate of approximately 50 per cent. since being transferred from Ilkley Coronation hospital in September 1991. Patients staying at the Grove will have an average length of stay of about two weeks, with the maximum being three weeks.

The position of patients housed in the Grove from other health authorities is as follows. The figures are from 1 April to 30 November, 1992 and are: Leeds 114; Harrogate 21; Burnley 102; Lancaster 58; Calderdale 52; Airedale 123; GP beds 86; private patients, 16; other extra contractual referrals 209. The House will note that only 15 per cent. of patients treated at the hospital are from the Airedale area.

I stress that quality care is undeniably being provided by a very devoted group of staff. However, it has become increasingly difficult to provide modern care for the elderly and pre-convalescent patients in facilities dating back to the early part of the 19th century.

The hospital urgently needs considerable capital expenditure to meet statutory safety requirements—for instance, upgraded and additional toilet and washing facilities, separation of beds and improved access to patients on upper floors. That would require an investment of £1 million or more, on a building that does not easily lend itself to adaptation.

In 1992-93, the Grove convalescent hospital will suffer a loss of about £77,000 in contract income, and in 1993-94, as purchasing authorities withdraw and redraw contracts for convalescent care, the deficit is likely to reach approximately £250,000. Two of the main reasons given by purchasing authorities for discontinuing their contracts are that the quality of accommodation at the Grove is no longer acceptable, and that the purchasing authorities wish to use their budgets on convalescent care within their own districts. As my hon. Friend will be aware, there is a growing trend within health authorities to provide

convalescent care locally, using local provider units. That has advantages to patients, in making it easier for friends and relatives to visit.

Although demand is relatively high, the trust has already received indications that Calderdale and Burnley health authorities will no longer be contracting with Airedale NHS trust for that type of care in 1993-94. It is also likely that Leeds health authority will reduce the size of its contract, as it has not been able to utilise its present contract fully. Furthermore, Bradford health authority can no longer contract for its patients.

The change in the attitude of purchasing authorities will mean a reduction of about 20 per cent. in income, and the price of £49 per night would have to be raised to £68 to balance such a loss. There is also a need to account for inflation, pay charges on capital expenditure to meet safety regulations, and—as I have mentioned—for considerable upgrading.

I understand that the length of stay of patients in the Grove hospital is falling below the historic average of two weeks. That is likely to continue in 1993-94, with a consequent loss of income. As my hon. Friend will agree, that trend will lead to the Grove becoming less attractive to the few health authorities that continue to purchase its services. The increase in price would also threaten the current level of extra contractual referrals. They represent 35 per cent. of income, which would be vulnerable as the price per patient per night increased.

I emphasise, on behalf of the trust, that the closure of the Grove is not designed to release capital for other trust purposes. While its sale would eliminate the need for the trust to pay capital charges of £112,000 per annum, by the nature of the capital charging system, there would be a resulting loss of income. Hence the sale of the Grove would have a neutral effect, in terms of capital charges, on the trust's finances.

The trust has always been prepared to consider any collaborative proposal to develop the site of the Grove for hospital/hotel type accommodation or any other suitable health care provision. However, the capital and revenue implications of such schemes must not be such as to damage the overall finances of the trust. In its review of that and other options, the trust has indicated that any such developments should be based on a new-build approach on the site rather than endeavouring to make provision within the constraints of a building dating from 1829.

The care and interest of patients has been the most important factor in the Airedale trust's deliberations. There are, as I have identified, a number of factors involved in the proposal to close the hospital: first, a decrease in the number of referrals and the number of contracts from the purchasing authorities; secondly, the fact that the cost per patient per night is likely to increase; thirdly, an ever-increasing drain on the trust's financial resources; fourthly, the need for considerable capital investment to bring the hospital up to modern standards; and fifthly, a decreasing need for convalescent beds as clinical procedures make more and more use of non-invasive therapy techniques and day surgery.

A trust can only provide the services which purchasing authorities will buy. It cannot, as I am sure my hon. Friend will agree, continue to run an increasingly uneconomic hospital for a decreasing number of patients. The trust will continue to meet the requirements for GP beds, contract referrals and extra contractual referrals by using other hospital sites in the area. The planned closure date is 31 March 1993, with possible emergency closure before that date.

My hon. Friend may prefer there to be a longer consultation period on the closure or more widespread discussion on the matter. However, the economics and the purchaser wishes will not change. The trust is best placed to make decisions on how to meet its contracts with purchasing authorities and how to continue to provide the excellent patient care found at the Grove convalescent hospital. If the trust decides that it is in the best interests of patients and the trust to close the Grove convalescent hospital, it should—I fear—be allowed to do so.

Let me reassure my hon. Friend that the Government wish to invest in the Airedale NHS trust and the care of patients in Ilkley. There are plans for a new eight-theatre block, including dedicated day-care facilities at the Airedale general hospital. Those plans are being formulated by the trust with the NHS management executive. The trust has also invested £250,000 on the upgrading of the out-patient services at the Coronation hospital in Ilkley. That is another example of how the trust is investing in local care. I understand that my hon. Friend has kindly offered his services to open that unit in the new year.

I listened with interest to my hon. Friend's remarks about convalescence. All such decisions must be made by purchasers on a local basis. Purchasers must take the decisions on how best to provide care in the most economic and efficient way for all their patients.

I hope that my hon. Friend will bear in mind what I have said today. I assure him that I am firmly committed to the best interests of patients in the NHS, both in Ilkley and elsewhere. I will ensure that the Airedale NHS trust continues to have the best interests of its patients to the fore.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NIMMO SMITH/FRIEL REPORT

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, That she will be graciously pleased to give directions that there be laid before the House a Return of the Report of the Inquiry by Mr. W. A. Nimmo Smith QC and Mr. J. D. Friel, into an allegation of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice in Scotland, instructed by the Lord Advocate.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Madam Speaker: Question 1.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I object to the extraordinary and unusual procedure involving the notice of motion——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me help the hon. Gentleman. There is no Question for me to put to the House in regard to the motion. The return is unopposed by the Minister who will have to make it, and under our procedure no objection can be made. We must now move on to Question 1.

Bronchitis

1. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new proposals she intends to introduce to reduce the numbers of deaths caused by bronchitis.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): It is estimated that 80 per cent. of deaths each year from bronchitis and chronic obstructive airways diseases are associated with smoking. The "Health of the Nation" White Paper commits us to ambitious targets to reduce smoking, and sets out a comprehensive strategy to achieve these targets, including action on price, health education, ensuring effective controls on advertising, and a great national health service role in reducing smoking.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister recall giving a different figure when he told my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that nine out of 10 deaths from bronchitis and emphysema—22,000 deaths per year—were caused by smoking? Does he also recall that during the general election campaign the marketing manager of Imperial Tobacco Limited said that his company had given the Conservative party 2,000 poster sites because it wanted the party to do its bidding when in government? Why do the Conservatives always surrender to the tobacco lobby, ignoring all the weight of scientific evidence? Are they stupid, or are they corrupt?

Mr. Sackville: If the hon. Gentleman seriously thinks that there is any improper connection between the Government and the tobacco industry, he may ask why we have operated a pricing policy which has increased the real price of cigarettes by 43 per cent. in the past 10 years.

Mr. Sykes: Is my hon. Friend aware that, owing to the Government's policy on cigarette prices, the percentage of the adult population who smoke has fallen from 45 per cent. in 1974 to 30 per cent. today?

Mr. Sackville: Indeed—and we intend to meet our target of 20 per cent. by the year 2000.

Mr. McCartney: As usual, the Minister has completely missed the point. He has an opportunity today to do something about the 17,000 children who need hospital treatment each year because of passive smoking. He could also do something about the hundreds of children who take up smoking every day: he could announce a ban on tobacco advertising. The Government and the tobacco industry are alone in Britain, Europe and the world in opposing the banning of tobacco advertising. Is it not about time that the Government stood up for the interests of the 17,000 children who are affected by smoking, rather than standing up for the interests of the tobacco industry?

Mr. Sackville: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that other countries in Europe have better policies on smoking than ours, he may wish to consider why it is possible to buy international brands of cigarettes and import them into this country at prices 20 per cent. lower than ours in Italy, 35 per cent. lower in France, 40 per cent. lower in Spain and 45 per cent. lower in Greece. He may also wish to ask the socialist brothers in Europe why they approve of a policy which subsidises tobacco growers to the tune of £1 billion per year.

Mr. Rathbone: Does my hon. Friend accept that Great Britain, where there is viable and energetic marketing of cigarettes, has a higher incidence of low-tar cigarette consumption than almost any other country? Does he also accept that, contrary to the Select Committee report, there is no link whatever between advertising and the incidence of smoking among young people?

Mr. Sackville: My hon. Friend is right to say that there is no proven link, but we shall continue our programme of education to deter young people from taking up smoking.

Tomlinson Report

2. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the capital sums required by London FHSAs for upgrading general practitioner facilities to implement Tomlinson report proposals.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The Government are considering ways in which health care in London can be improved, especially primary health care. I shall make a full statement shortly.

Mr. Gerrard: Does the Minister accept that substantial investment is needed to bring GP surgeries up to standard, especially in areas of London such as my constituency,

which has the highest proportion of single-practitioner GP practices in the country? Why will not she give the House the estimated cost per surgery? I assume that she must know the figures. Does she not understand that people in London want to know when their primary health care will be improved and what it will cost, and to be assured that the money will not come from cutting other health service facilities?

Mrs. Bottomley: I accept that the people of London want to know what is going to happen and to bring the uncertainty to an end. They rightly want to be confident that changes will be based on improvements in primary health care. Significant further advances in primary health care have been made. Capital investment, for example, has doubled in the past two years, but very much more needs to be done. We are having detailed discussions before making announcements.

Mr. Carrington: Does my right hon. Friend accept that Londoners are keen to see greater investment in primary health care, but that they also need investment in hospitals? Will she join me in welcoming the opening of the Chelsea and Westminster hospital, at a cost of £204 million, which is the most advanced, state-of-the-art hospital in Europe and will provide magnificent health care to west London? Does she agree that that represents a marvellous achievement for London's health service and is a testimony to the investment that the Government are making in health care in London? Will she also——

Hon. Members: No.

Madam, Speaker: Order. This is Question Time, not the time when Members make statements. The hon. Gentleman must have had three bites of the cherry already. I am sure that the Secretary of State is more than capable of answering.

Mrs. Bottomley: I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend on his fluency in advocating the excellence of the new hospital. London will indeed remain a centre of excellence in hospital care, in research and in education. But we must look forward and make changes. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) is also right that that must be balanced with proper recognition of the role of primary care. These are difficult decisions, but they are decisions which we shall take.

Ms. Primarolo: In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), the Secretary of State referred to the improved investment in primary care. She must surely be aware that the Tomlinson report showed that 46 per cent. of GPs are performing below the national average, which is only 7 per cent. She is probably also aware that the Acheson report of 1981 stated that only 15 per cent. of GPs were performing under the national average in London. Since 1981, 5,000 beds have been closed to pay for improved primary care in London. There has been a threefold deterioration in the service. When will the Secretary of State take some action instead of lecturing us and offering platitudes?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady clearly fails to understand that significant improvements have been made in London, mainly as a result of the new GP contracts, which the Labour party voted against. The deprivation payments, the targets payments for immunisation and cancer screening have at last led to improvements in inner-city areas, but more needs to be done. I welcome the hon. Lady's appreciation of many of the valuable points that are made in the Tomlinson report. She also referred to the Acheson report. Many of its recommendations have been implemented, the most important being the new GP contract which has set the tone for family doctor services across the country. The Labour party voted against that.

Social Services

3. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to develop independent inspection of social services provision in line with the citizens charter.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): We shall build on the work of local authority inspection units and the Department's social services inspectorate by increasing independence, accountability and the involvement of lay people. Our plans are set out in the consultation document "Inspecting Social Services" published last October. These will be implemented once we have considered the responses now being received.

Mr. Ottaway: Does my hon. Friend agree that anyone who needs a lesson on the need for independent inspection and regulation need only look across the river to the borough of Lambeth? If that is an example of Labour local government at work, is it not better that we introduce Conservative community care reforms as soon as possible?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend is right. The example of Lambeth borough council—a uniquely disastrous blend of socialist dogma and managerial incompetence—is a timely warning of the need for rigorous inspection, not so much of the independent providers, who are already accountable through the registration process and the market, but of the local authorities' own activities, which have only recently become subject to inspection as a result of our legislation and where our proposals will further tighten scrutiny.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: The Secretary of State will be aware that, as a result of the implementation of Government community care policy with Government funding, existing services for mentally handicapped people are to be closed in Coventry. How on earth will he inspect and ensure that people have their rights under the citizens charter when the facilities no longer exist?

Mr. Yeo: By far the best safeguard of high standards is the mixed economy of care that we are using as the bedrock of our new community care policies. Coupled with the extraordinarily generous resourcing of the new policy, which next year makes available about 15 per cent. more money for personal social services expenditure throughout the country, it will mean that there is no reason for services to be reduced in Coventry or anywhere else. I hope, however, that the hon. Gentleman will urge his councillors to ensure that the council makes the fullest possible use of the independent sector. For some reason, some Labour authorities have been so reluctant even to consult the independent providers that we have today had to issue a direction requiring them to do so.

Mr. Rowe: When talking about the inspection of social services, will my hon. Friend remember that one of the best and cheapest ways to ensure that standards are maintained

is to encourage a much wider use of volunteers in a variety of ways within the social services, not only to extend the reach of professionals but to bring into a range of what might have remained murky corners the bright light of public interest?

Mr. Yeo: Again, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. We want all local authorities to make the fullest possible use of all types of independent provision, most notably the voluntary organisations which have a distinguished role not only in residential or nursing homes but in domiciliary and day care services. Organisations such as Age Concern are already making full use of volunteers, and local authorities that have adopted an outward-looking policy are contracting with voluntary organisations to improve the delivery of services, especially domiciliary services.

Community Care

5. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last met the Association of Directors of Social Services to discuss the implementation of the changes in community care.

Mr. Yeo: I last met the president and secretary of the Association of Directors of Social Services on Monday 21 December.

Mr. Steinberg: The Minister will be aware that Durham county council has already had to close eight old people's homes because of Government policies. Is he also aware that, due to those policies, it is now possible that it will have to close even more and that homes in the private sector might have to be closed? Bearing in mind the fact that the Government argue for choice for elderly people, will the Minister explain how the closure of all those homes will provide choice for elderly people in my constituency?

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman could not be further from the mark. Frankly, I am astonished that he even raises the point. In his county of Durham, the personal social services standard spending assessment for next year is £54 million, which is more than 18 per cent. above what the county is spending this year. Unless the Labour council in Durham calls in Lambeth borough council for advice, there is no conceivable possibility of any cuts in Durham having anything to do with the resourcing of the policy or with the Government's attitude.

The Government are giving all social services clients the right, backed by a statutory direction, to choose where they want to go. In the light of what the hon. Gentleman says, I am not surprised that people may not be choosing Durham county council homes. The fact is that Durham could spend a further £8 million and still be within its SSA. On top of that, it is getting a special transitional grant of £7·4 million to fund community care.

Mrs. Roe: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have fully honoured their commitment to funding community care? Is it not now up to the local authorities, which will give the lead in these services, to establish their priorities, accept the challenge and make the decision to use those resources effectively and efficiently?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend is right. In many areas, local authorities already recognise the wisdom of the concept of the policy and the fact that they have been resourced most generously to deliver it. I am confident that a high standard of community care will be available to people, especially in the areas in which there is good co-operation between the social services department and the health authority.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Bearing in mind that we are now a mere nine weeks to the day from the April community care changes, is it not totally unacceptable that disabled people and local authorities still do not know how the successor to the independent living fund will operate? Is the Minister aware that within the past week I have received two totally contradictory parliamentary answers, one from him and one from the Department of Social Security, as to whether there will be a ceiling after April on the cost of help towards independent living? Will the Minister tell me straight whether there is to be a care cost cap?

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman presumably knows that we have included in the ring-fenced money for community care a further £26 million to enable local authorities to make their contribution to the successor arrangements for the independent living fund. I am happy to make it clear that there will be no ceiling on the amount that local authorities can use to provide services for clients, whether they would formerly have been clients of the independent living fund or not. It will be for the local authority to decide how much local authority money is to be used to provide services.

Sir John Hannam: Now that the independent living fund will no longer make cash payments in cases of severe handicap, will my hon. Friend adopt the Disabled Persons (Services) Bill, promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), which is also called for by the Association of Directors of Social Services and by all the local authority associations, and which seeks to reintroduce the practice whereby local authorities could make direct cash payments in deserving cases to severely disabled people.

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point. I am aware that there is a lot of support in a number of quarters outside the House for giving local authorities the power to make cash payments which could then be used by individuals to purchase services on their own behalf. The Government are not ready at this stage to take that on board. We believe that it is the function of the social security system to make cash payments to individuals.

The cornerstone of our community care reforms is the empowerment of the individual. Instead of the present arrangement whereby people automatically claim income support payments from the Department of Social Security, there will be individual assessment of people's needs, taking into account their wishes, the wishes of their families and of their carers—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition are not interested in the policy, but my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) is interested, and he is a well-known authority on the subject —[HON. MEMBERS: "Address the Chair."] I believe——

Madam Speaker: Order. I say to the entire House, Back-Bench Members as well as Ministers, that I want to have direct questions and very speedy answers to them so that we may move down the Order Paper and so that I may call other hon. Members who have substantive questions.

Mr. Yeo: The policy that we shall implement in April will incorporate a number of features that will be of great advantage to individuals.

Hospital Treatment

6. **Mr. Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she is issuing to provider units concerning preferential access to hospital treatment for patients from GP fund-holding practices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Guidance agreed with the joint consultants committee was issued to hospital consultants in June 1991. It precluded contracts for general practitioner fund holder patients that disadvantaged other patients.

Mr. Garrett: In Essex and Hertfordshire, and soon in Norfolk, patients of GP fund holders are being admitted to hospital while other patients will have to wait until April or beyond. What is that if not a two-tier health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: I will make the position exactly clear. The GP fund holders are funded on the same basis per head as the district health authorities. It is for each of them to spend that money through the year as they think best. In some areas the districts have placed their contracts and the hospitals have more than met those contracts and are delivering fast, effective patient care. In some circumstances, the fund holders have not yet spent all their funds and can set priorities in a different way. Instead of begrudging it, the hon. Gentleman should see how fund holders have spent their resources to show how better the district could set its priorities for the year ahead.

In the hon. Gentleman's constituency the trust hospital has treated 4,000 more patients than last year. His constituency also has a new renal unit, a new third orthopaedic theatre and a new £1 million accident and emergency department. If we are learning from the fund holders, we should welcome the example and innovation that they set.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that GP fund holding has been a tremendous success? It has improved patient care and choice for patients and it is popular with practitioners—14 per cent. of the population is now covered by GP fundholders. Does she also agree that clear guidelines have been issued by her Department against fast tracking and that they should be obeyed?

Mrs. Bottomley: There are clear guidelines and it is important that we continue to observe them. GP fund holding has been a major source of innovation. For those who profess to support the patients, there is no better way of doing so than to give power to general practitioners. GP fund holding enhances the ability of the GP to act as an advocate on behalf of the patient. A recent survey in *Doctor* magazine showed yet again the way in which fund holders have been able to provide more efficient and effective care, integrating primary and secondary care in ways from which others can learn.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the Secretary of State tell us, then, why GPs—including fund holders—throughout the country, consultants in the consultants and specialists committee of the British Medical Association, and all who work in and are aware of the health service are up in arms about a two-tier service, the existence of which the Secretary of State refuses to accept? Is she aware of the case spelt out in *The Guardian* this morning by David Brindle? In view of her statement this afternoon, what action is she prepared to take to stop minor treatment taking precedence over major surgery and to prevent a two-tier health service in Britain?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman simply fails and refuses to understand the way in which the system works. At long last, we have a health service in which we can focus resources on the priorities set by the districts and GPs through the freedom that is given to GP fund holders. It is the job of the district to talk to local GPs about the priorities that they want set year on year as they place contracts. For 20 per cent. of the work, the GP fund holders have the freedom to allocate their priorities in a different way.

The reason why I could never support the Labour party is that it believes—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. These interruptions are a complete waste of precious question time.

Mrs. Bottomley: I could never support the Labour party because it believes in a system of levelling down, whereas we believe in a system of levelling up.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Are not the facts of the case as given by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) further proof that the fund-holding practices in his area obtain better value for patients than the district health authority does? Is not that further proof that we should extend the fund-holding practices further for the benefit of patients?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. We want to extend the benefits of fund holding to all general practitioners, whether they apply, as do 20 per cent. of GPs, to become fund holders by this April, or find other ways of working more effectively with the district. The aim is to reverse the balance of power so that general practitioners, acting on behalf of patients, can have some leverage in the system.

Elderly People (Deaths)

7. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the relative number of deaths of those aged 75 years and over in *(a)* the summer and *(b)* the winter; what comparable figures she has for other European nations; and what assessment has been made of the causes of any difference in the figures.

Mr. Yeo: Figures from 1988 to 1992 for England and Wales in respect of people aged 75 and over indicate that, on average, some 55 per cent. of all deaths have occurred in the winter period—October to March. There are no readily available comparable figures for other European nations. Evidence suggests, however, that there are significant variations in winter mortality across Europe, although the reasons for these discrepancies are not yet fully understood.

Mr. Wicks: Is the Minister not aware that facts published in his Department's journal "Health Trends" provide European and international comparisons? Is it not the case that, sadly, these reveal that we are top of the

European winter deaths league? These facts are well known. Will the Minister take action to end the annual cold war on Britain's pensioners?

Mr. Yeo: To the extent that the published figures mean anything at all—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—they show that Portugal is at the top of the European league, substantially higher than Britain. Given his background, the hon. Gentleman ought to know that the pattern of a higher death rate in winter is a long-established trend. The excess of winter deaths over summer deaths was higher in the winter of 1978-79 than it was in the winter of 1991-92. Therefore, it is difficult to lay blame at the Government's door.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great advantages of being old in Britain is free access to our national health service? Does he further agree that a great many of the thousands of extra patients who have been treated since the Government's health reforms were implemented are elderly? That is why the vast majority of our pensioners support the NHS and think that it provides a wonderful service.

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The results can be seen in the substantial fall in the number of deaths from hypothermia. Our older people benefit not only from the national health service but from advice under our "Keep warm, keep well" campaign which tells them about a wide range of matters, including benefits and insulation. A relevant factor in our success in helping old people in winter is that 67 per cent. of households containing older people have central heating. That is three times the percentage of 20 years ago.

Hospital Admissions

8. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the impact of budgetary restrictions on hospital admissions in the current financial year.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The amount of money made available to the health service in England in 1992-93 was in real terms a massive 5·4 per cent. more than in 1991-92 which, together with the benefit of cash-releasing efficiency savings, has enabled over 200,000 more patients to be treated in the first six months of 1992-93 compared with the same period in 1991-92.

Dr. Wright: Is the Minister aware that the Secretary of State's earlier denial of a crisis in the admission of patients to hospital is denied by the experience of patients up and down the country? What does the Secretary of State say to the general practitioner who wrote to me in the first week of January to tell me that he had just been told that, as a non-fund-holding general practitioner in south-east Staffordshire, he would not be able to admit patients to his major referral hospitals in Sutton Coldfield and Walsall until next April? What does the Minister and the Secretary of State say to my constituents who are now being denied hospital treatment? More importantly, what do they intend to do about it?

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman what he should say to his constituent. He should tell him that this year there was a 5·5 per cent. real-terms increase in the resources made available to the Mid-Staffordshire district health authority and that next year there will be a 1 per cent. real-terms increase. He should tell him that there has been a 35 per cent. increase in the number of in-patients and a 100 per cent. increase in the number of out-patients treated by the Mid-Staffordshire DHA, and that there has been a 380 per cent. increase in the number of day cases. The GP should speak to the DHA about structuring the contracts next year so that those figures may be improved even more. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's constituents will be sad that he is not pleased about the great improvement in health care that has been made available to them.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that the country is glad that so many more people are being treated in hospital? Will he confirm that when doctors say that cases are urgent it is rare for treatment not to be made available quickly?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is worth pointing out that in this present year we are spending £629 per person on health care. In equivalent terms, the last figure under the Labour Government was £417. By next year, that will mean a massive 61 per cent. real-terms increase in resources.

Ms. Lynne: Does the Minister accept that budgetary restrictions have led to a number of bed closures and is he aware that Rochdale health care trust has closed three wards? What does he suggest that I say to young patients, aged five and nine respectively, who now have to move to another hospital? It is traumatic enough for a child to be in hospital and they are very upset by a move.

Dr. Mawhinney: I do not accept for one moment that there have been budgetary restrictions that have led to the results that the hon. Lady has just set forward. What I do accept is that the contracts, which have produced more resources this year and resulted in more patients being treated than ever before, need to be managed properly. They will be managed better if local managers involve local hospital doctors and consultants in the management process. They will be managed even better if GPs locally are brought into the process of determing how the contracting process should be carried forward. This is precisely the time of year when GPs who are not fund holders ought to be talking to the district health authorities about the shaping of contracts for next year.

"Health of the Nation"

9. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans the Government have formulated to carry out the strategy outlined in the White Paper "Health of the Nation".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The "Health of the Nation" strategy has been described by the World Health Organisation as a model for other countries to follow. There is a commitment to the strategy across government at the highest level, Action is now in hand to implement it in full. I have placed a summary of current action and initiatives in the Library.

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for her reply. Does she remember the speech she gave last year to the Conservative party conference? *[Interruption.]* Everyone appears to remember it. She referred then to

aspects and elements of "Health of the Nation" and to her personal commitment to mental illness and the strategy relating to it. Will she therefore accept the grateful thanks of many of my constituents who are extremely concerned about this issue? Would she also agree that, because of the surge of interest in mental illness recently, what she said then has been completely vindicated?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend. Mental illness is three times as common as cancer and is a source of major disability and loss of time from work and must be a priority for us in the health service. It is a key area in the health of the nation and is vital in the implementation of community care. It is a question of resources. We are spending £1·7 billion on our mental health services, £43 million with the local authorities, but it is also a question of the delivery of those services. It is an area where I think that we must work together to secure better and more effective results.

Mr. Wigley: May I question the Secretary of State further on the full utilisation of the capacity of hospitals to give treatment? Notwithstanding the increase to which her Minister referred for the first nine months of this year, does she accept what a consultant said on the radio last week—that he is unable, in the last quarter of this financial year, to undertake as much work as he could because of the shortage of resources? Surely this cannot be in line with her objectives for the health service. Can she try and get something done about it?

Mrs. Bottomley: The House will well understand that it is a question of the way in which resources are used and the way in which we balance priorities. That will always be difficult, but much can be done from the centre and much has to be done locally. The key targets in the "Health of the Nation"—heart disease, cancer, accident, sexual health and mental illness—all have areas where we want to pioneer and innovate. All have areas where one has to balance between acute and community care. It is a question of taking people with us as we develop a strategy that the NHS reforms have made possible and which we have to deliver by the turn of the century.

NHS (Efficiency Improvements)

10. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates she has made of the total savings to the NHS from efficiency improvements.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since 1978-79, hospital and community health services activity has grown by 29 per cent. compared with an increase in current spending—adjusted for hospital and community health services pay and prices—of 9 per cent. This means efficiency has grown by 19 per cent. over 12 years. This includes cash-releasing savings, now running at a cumulative £1·7 billion per annum, and also other efficiency gains from using resources more productively. Total efficiency gains of 2 per cent. are planned for both this year and next.

Mr. Riddick: Are not those figures highly impressive? Will my hon. Friend give the House an assurance that the savings achieved through greater efficiency will not be squandered by retaining excess capacity for hospital provision in London? Does he agree that if the Tomlinson recommendations are not implemented, there will be fewer resources for hospitals outside London and the losers will be NHS patients in the regions, in constituencies such as mine?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right; it is a very good record and it is to the credit of those who work in the NHS throughout the country that it has been achieved. I can confirm that the savings that have resulted have been used for other patient care. With regard to the latter point made by my hon. Friend, it is certainly one of the issues that are in the forefront of our minds as we contemplate the recommendations made by Sir Bernard Tomlinson.

Mr. Enright: Is the Minister aware that it is the practice of several trusts, and I am thinking of Bassetlaw in particular, to buy expensive cars such as BMWs for their administrators, to take out car insurance for them all, and to spend NHS money in that way? Will he undertake to investigate that practice and find out how much it costs, because rip-offs such as those make Lambeth look like Snow White?

Dr. Mawhinney: We on the Government side understand how embarrassed hon. Gentlemen are about Lambeth, but it will not go away and it will certainly not go away under the guise of pathetic—[HON MEMBERS: "Answer".] I am trying to answer the question; the hon. Gentleman mentioned Lambeth. Secondly, I should have been more impressed by his question if he had bothered to take up the matter with me in a considered fashion by letter, but he has not done that. No doubt, if he does, we shall be able to respond. Trusts are treating more patients, using their resources more effectively and delivering better quality service, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not welcome that.

Mr. Enright: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is aware that I cannot take points of order in the middle of questions.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Opposition seem to think that one can buy a better service simply by calling for more money, whereas we like to spend the money effectively? Compulsory competitive tendering has already saved £140 million. Does this not prove that our policies work?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and puts the case very well.

I just want to add with reference to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) that apparently he has written to me, but I have not seen the letter yet. If that is indeed the case, I should clarify that.

Hospital Administration Costs

11. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the total hospital administration costs in the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: In 1990-91 expenditure on administration specifically in hospitals in England totalled £454 million. A strictly comparable figure for 1991-92 is not available, as information is now collected on a provider unit basis, which includes functions previously performed at district level. However, it is clear that the cost of

administration has increased: the national health service needs better management and administration to ensure the success of the NHS reforms for the ultimate benefit of patients.

Mr. Chisholm: I am quite surprised at that answer, because comparable figures for Scotland were given a few weeks ago, and indicated a 75 per cent. increase in hospital administration costs. Is it not likely to be far worse in England, given the greater number of trusts? Is that not borne out by an answer in *Hansard* on 23 November, which indicated that the health reforms so far had cost £1·179 billion? Will it not get worse as we have more and more GP fund holders and more and more trusts, especially as so many senior managers in trusts are paying themselves grotesquely large salaries?

Mr. Sackville: The success of the reforms is clear from the activity figures, which show more patients being treated quicker and better. That takes first-class management and investment in information technology. The hon. Gentleman should visit his local hospitals, talk to doctors and management and see how they are using that information technology for the benefit of patients.

Mr. Nicholls: Does the Minister agree that those hospital administration charges are only part of a budget which makes it possible to spend £100 million a day on the national health service? Will he remind Labour Members of the promise they made at the last election to spend an extra £1 billion and the fact that that would have represented only 10 days' running costs? That puts the matter in perspective.

Mr. Sackville: An organisation that seeks to spend £100 million a day on health care must be properly managed. We are moving from a system under which nothing was costed to a system under which everything is costed precisely, for the better management of health care for patients.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is making official visits to India and Oman.

Mr. Battle: Is the Secretary of State for Employment telling the truth when she says that the President of the Board of Trade did not consult her about pit closures?

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that my right hon. Friend was not consulted, would he like to tell me how it was possible for her to announce on the same day a wide-ranging package of measures directed at employment?

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend will be aware that as our trade with the European mainland constantly increases, a large proportion of it must pass through the county of Kent. Is he aware that the county of Kent and all the district councils in Kent are desperate to have a considerable portion of that freight transferred to the railways? Will he ensure that when Ministers are considering the present proposals for the railways and the channel tunnel rail link, they do everything in their power to ensure that it is made possible for freight to be carried on the railway rather than on the cluttered roads of Kent?

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend knows, it is precisely to improve the efficiency and attractiveness of rail freight that many of our proposals in the context of the future of the railways are directed.

Mr. John Smith: Given that the crisis in the coal mining industry arises directly from the Government's rigging of the electricity market, why will the Government not accept that reform of the market to allow coal to compete fairly is the crucial and overriding issue?

Mr. Newton: I do not accept for a moment the right hon. and learned Gentleman's suggestion. The problems in the coal industry arise from a long-term decline in the demand for coal which is being seen throughout the western world. The Government's policies are directed to addressing that and to securing the best possible future for the coal industry.

Mr. John Smith: It is little short of astonishing that, even now, Ministers do not understand that the crisis arises from the botched privatisation of the electricity industry and not from any weakness in the British mining industry. Are the Government not aware that what the industry and the nation need is not some short-term fix to save the Government's face but a reform of the electricity market to allow British miners to compete fairly?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will shortly bring forward proposals directed at the outcome of his review of the coal industry. Meanwhile, if I find anything astonishing, it is that on a day when interest rates have fallen to their lowest level for 15 years, the right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot even congratulate the Government.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Has my right hon. Friend had time to read the Confederation of British Industry's latest poll, which shows the biggest increase in business confidence for five years? Does he agree that low inflation, low interest rates and a very competitive exchange rate give British producers a real edge in world markets?

Mr. Newton: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. We now have inflation at its lowest level for six years, interest rates, as I said, at their lowest level for 15 years, mortgage rates likely to be at their lowest level for nearly a quarter of a century and a marked increase in business confidence. We need Opposition Front-Bench Members to stop talking that confidence down.

Q2. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Rev. Martin Smyth: In the light of press reports confirming the "Timewatch" programme and—as some of us have known for a long time—that the Dublin Government supported the growth of the provisional IRA

in 1970, will the Leader of the House join the defence correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph* this morning in urging the Foreign Office and the Northern Ireland Office to engage in a diplomatic offensive against the Dublin Government to defeat terrorism and thus release 10 batallions of the Army to engage in international peacekeeping?

Mr. Newton: While I understand why the hon. Gentleman thought it right to raise that point, I have no intention of commenting on allegations relating to events nearly a quarter of a century ago. What matters now is the shared determination of the British and Irish Governments to resist terrorism from whatever quarter, and I know that we have the hon. Gentleman's support in that.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend reflect that had we not so fortunately come out of the exchange rate mechanism on 16 September we might now have interest rates at something between 10 and 15 per cent. imposed upon us by the Bundesbank and against the interests of the British economy? Will my right hon. Friend be good enough to suggest to the Prime Minister that the best thing that he could do to revive confidence in the British economy would be to say that we shall never return to the ERM and that we want nothing whatever to do with a single currency in Europe?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that, however enticing it is, I shall follow my hon. Friend into speculation about what would have happened if something that already has happened had not happened. He will know what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said about the ERM and I do not propose to elaborate on it now.

Q3. **Dr. Berry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Berry: Taking a more serious perspective on the economy than previous comments from Conservative Members, will the Leader of the House explain to the 4,637 unemployed people in my constituency of Kingswood and the 5,000 in his constituency of Braintree how it is that they are "a price worth paying" for the worst economic record of any post-war British Government?

Mr. Newton: What I would say to those for whom concern is mutual on both sides of the House is that the policies that we have been pursuing and which have produced the results to which I adverted a few moments ago are providing the best basis for overcoming those concerns.

Q4. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bottomley: May I suggest to my right hon. Friend the point that he has made which will get the greatest echo from all political parties? The boost to jobs, the reduction in mortgage payments and the boost to capital investments from low interest rates will make people ask whether it is possible for the Leader of the Opposition to join with the Government in helping to attract more foreign capital investment into this country—and more jobs—so that fewer people will be out of work.

Mr. Newton: It would certainly be very welcome far beyond the confines of the House if the right hon. and learned Gentleman would give any sign whatsoever that he sees what would be required. Instead, he promises payroll taxes, excessive profit taxes, social chapters and the rest of it, which would keep foreign investment out for good.

Q5. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lloyd: Continuing with the bipartisan interest in unemployment, may I tell the Leader of the House that in my constituency mass unemployment during the 14 years of Conservative government has resulted in high crime rates, the sale of drugs and its associated violence and individual family tragedies? My constituents are now incredibly angry at the inaction of the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues. Rather than asking my right hon. and learned Friend to help them out, will the Leader of the House tell us what the Government plan to do about these problems, when will they do it and when can we see some results?

Mr. Newton: I find that a strange question, especially against the background of our exchanges so far and on the very day that interest rates have fallen to their lowest level for 15 years. What is more, the hon. Gentleman might at least have acknowledged that unemployment in his constituency last month was 16 per cent. lower than in 1987.

Mr. Butcher: Did my right hon. Friend notice the very welcome announcement by Jaguar in Coventry that it is to invest £700 million in developing three new models for the market? When our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister returns to the House, could he pass to him an invitation to visit Coventry so that he can show his support for the engineering profession and the engineering industry which will spearhead our recovery?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request, which I shall draw to our right hon. Friend's attention when he returns. One of the encouraging signs in our economy during recent months has been the renewed strength of the car industry, in part as a result of the very overseas investment to which I referred earlier and which certainly would not have come here had the Opposition had their way.

Q6. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gerrard: Does the Leader of the House recall that in March 1991 the Government tried to buy their way out of their troubles with the poll tax by reducing it by £140 a head? They found the money to do that by raising VAT

from 15 to 17·5 per cent. Now that the poll tax is finally about to disappear, can we expect VAT to be cut by 2·5 per cent? If not, why not?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman can expect the introduction of a system of council tax that will be a great deal better than what his right hon. and hon. Friends are offering with a return to the rates.

Mr. Tracey: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the fullest possible investigation is being undertaken into the behaviour of Lambeth borough council, where one of the greatest frauds ever perpetrated in local government appears to have taken place?

Mr. Newton: I think—I hope—that I can speak for both sides of the House in expressing concern about the allegations of a breakdown in financial control in the London borough of Lambeth. The proper authorities—the Audit Commission and the police—will be investigating the matter. As my hon. Friend says, if the allegations prove to be true, it will be a good illustration of some of the problems in Labour local authorities. I hope that the Opposition Front Bench will join us in condemning them.

Q7. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hoyle: Does the Leader of the House agree that when considering energy policy, we should look not at short-term market forces but at long-term needs? That applies especially to collieries threatened with closure, such as Parkside. It has always been highly profitable and it has reserves for 70 years. Should not the future of such collieries be based on the future demand for coal, which will become increasingly competitive as other fuels become more expensive?

Mr. Newton: By now, it must be clear to all in the House that the review is very thorough and is not looking simply at the short term. It is taking account of the reports by Committees of the House and a wide range of independent consultants. The results will be made known in due course, as appropriate.

Mr. Milligan: My right hon. Friend has just explained the position in Lambeth, but is not Lambeth only one of many similar Labour local authorities throughout the country? For example, Monklands and Sheffield have been misusing taxpayers' funds, yet they have some of the poorest taxpayers in the country. Has not the time come to have a full public inquiry to discover whether there is a common thread?

Mr. Newton: As I have already indicated, in the first instance inquiries into allegations of the sort that have been made against a number of authorities—by and large, Labour authorities, as my hon. Friend has said—are matters for the Audit Commission and the police. Were a common strand to emerge, I should expect the concern to be reflected on the Opposition Front Bench, and not just on the Government Front Bench.

Q8. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mandelson: What does the right hon. Gentleman think the behaviour of British Airways towards Virgin Atlantic says about the business ethics of British Airways, and what does he think the failure of anyone at the top of British Airways to resign says about the integrity of that airline's management?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that these matters have been the subject of legal action between Virgin and British Airways. That being the case, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

Nimmo Smith/Friel Report

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, I should like to read to the House a statement being made today by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate in another place. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order, as the Secretary of State is about to make an important statement. Those hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber should do so quietly, and conversations should be conducted outside the Chamber so that we may make some progress. The House must settle down so that we may hear the Secretary of State.

Mr. Lang: My noble and learned Friend's statement reads as follows:

"In September of last year I asked Mr. William Nimmo Smith, QC and Mr. James Friel, Regional Procurator Fiscal of North Strathclyde, to inquire into certain allegations suggesting that there had been a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice in Scotland. The report of their inquiry has today been published as a Return to an Address of another place.

The inquiry was set up following the leaking to the Press of an internal police report about allegations that decisions in relation to five criminal cases had been taken for improper reasons, namely, to prevent disclosure of information said to identify certain individuals in the legal profession as homosexuals. The allegations relating to the decisions were therefore allegations of possible criminal conduct. Mr. Friel and Mr. Nimmo Smith were asked to report to me. When I received their report, it was my duty to consider whether there was any basis for criminal proceedings."

My noble and learned Friend's statement continues:

"I have now studied their full and detailed report. It concludes that the decisions in each of the five cases were taken on a proper basis. In particular, it finds that there is no evidence of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, or that the course of justice has been perverted or that the alleged motive for such a conspiracy has ever existed. On the basis of the report I have decided that no criminal proceedings fall to be instructed. Further, the report makes it clear that there is no evidence of irregularity in the conduct of business in the Crown office or procurator fiscal service.

On a wider front, in order to allay public anxiety it was my intention when I established the inquiry that, subject to any restriction necessary for the purposes of possible criminal proceedings, the report would be published in full. Since no question of criminal proceedings arises, the report has been published in full.

The allegations in the police report appear to have been more readily believed because of certain rumours which were circulating among police officers and others about members of the Scottish legal profession. Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel have investigated these rumours and have concluded that they are without foundation.

To appreciate the force of its conclusions, the report requires to be read as a whole. Those who wish to form a considered view on the matters covered by the report will therefore wish to study and reflect upon the whole text."

My noble and learned Friend's statement concludes:

"The report contains criticisms of certain officers in the Lothian and Borders police force. These are matters for the chief constable and not for me. There are, however, two matters emerging from the report which relate to the police and which I wish to discuss. The first is the failure of certain officers to understand the role of the independent prosecution authorities in Scotland. The second is that officers may misunderstand the decisions properly taken by those prosecution authorities in particular cases. I intend therefore to pursue with the chief constable what can be done, having regard to the principles which guide the relationship between the police and prosecution authorities in Scotland, to prevent such misunderstandings in future."

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In view of the interest taken in these matters by a number of my hon. Friends, particularly by my Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who has pursued the subject diligently, will the Secretary of State, in the context of his statement, explain to the House why he felt it necessary to support the motion for an unopposed return? May I join the Secretary of State in thanking the Lord Advocate for agreeing to set up an inquiry, certainly on the suggestions of my hon. Friends the Members' for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) and for Linlithgow?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, although many had called for a judicial inquiry, Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel have conducted a thorough and exhaustive inquiry of unprecedented depth? Can he tell the House what precise action the chief constable of Lothian and Borders has taken in respect of the authors of the report and other matters within his remit and for which he is responsible to the Secretary of State? Is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied with the chief constable's response? Above all, what steps has the Lord Advocate taken to ensure that communication between the police and the Crown office is improved, to avoid what appears to have been a major breakdown of understanding of their separate and distinct roles?

Does the Secretary of State agree that, unless anyone has evidence to the contrary, the report should be accepted and that nothing is served by continued speculation in the absence of any such fresh evidence?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. May I begin by welcoming him back to the House fully restored, we all hope, to health?

The hon. Gentleman referred to the statement that I made, but I should emphasise that it was my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate's statement which I have repeated in the House. It is important to establish that. It was my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate who set up the inquiry.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the basis on which the report is laid before the House. It is published as a return to an address of the House and thus affords absolute privilege for those who publish it in accordance with the Parliamentary Papers Act 1840. This procedure is well precedented and has survived for 150 years; it is a sensible way to ensure that there is no need to contemplate any reduction of the content of the report as published.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments about Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel, both of whom enjoy a high reputation in legal circles in Scotland for their ability, for their independence of mind and for their rigorous approach to the handling of evidence. It is, as the hon. Gentleman said, a thorough and exhaustive report, and I commend it to hon. Members to be read in great detail and thoroughly before firm views are reached about its conclusions.

The chief constable is responsible for actions in the police force, and he has taken a number of actions as a result of the consequences of this matter. He initiated a review of various areas of police operation, and an action plan was drawn up. There has been a redefinition of the responsibilities allocated to the three assistant chief constables, and a new chief of the CID has been appointed.

There have also been a number of reassignments of CID officers to uniformed duties. The aim is to ensure that officers do not remain overlong in specialist posts. The chief constable has demonstrated a firm resolve in dealing with the matter. He continues to enjoy the confidence of the police authority, as he does of myself.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of the relationship between the police and the Crown office, and that is a matter, as my noble and learned Friend's statement said, to which attention is to be given. My noble and learned Friend intends to meet the chief constable shortly to discuss how both the relationship between the police force and the Crown office and the understanding among the police force of the Crown office's responsibilities can be improved.

I hope that that covers all the points raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I thank my right hon. Friend for his welcome back to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, whom we are delighted to see with us and well.

May I raise three matters that arise out of the report? The first is the wisdom of writing expensive reports on an inquiry into rumour. The second is the wisdom of appointing corporals to investigate whether the generals have been interfering with the privates. Should we not have had much more senior people, such as retired judges or people of significance, to pass judgment on the judiciary? The third matter is whether the report is sound when its principal author gave an interview to a crook who pretended to be a journalist and who told him what it was going to contain, having attempted to steal the evidence against himself being a known homosexual. That seems to me to raise matters of grave impropriety which taint the report. I ask for my right hon. Friend's views.

Mr. Lang: Before my hon. and learned Friend uses such words as "taint", I urge him to read the report.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I have done so.

Mr. Lang: I think that he will be impressed, as I have been, by the thorough and rigorous approach brought to bear on these difficult matters by Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel.

My hon. Friend raised three matters with me. First, he questioned the wisdom of carrying out a report into rumour. I think that the House will agree that the rumour and speculation had become so established and was so festering in the Scottish scene that it was becoming a matter of serious public concern and one that rightly had to be dealt with, and dealt with directly and thoroughly. That, I believe, and any reasonable person reading the report would believe, has been achieved by Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel.

My hon. and learned Friend suggests that the matter should have been handled by someone more senior, suggesting perhaps a retired judge. As criminal charges might have been brought, it would have been inappropriate to have the inquiry carried out by a serving judge. I think that my hon. and learned Friend will agree that that would have been inappropriate.

The report, which, once studied, will confirm this, is so thorough and so detailed that the need to appoint two individuals of the rigorous and competent qualifications of Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel is fully justified.

Thirdly, on the question of interviews, I draw my hon. and learned Friend's attention to paragraphs 1.9 and 1.10 where he will find listed the persons interviewed by Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel. I think that the list runs to some 90 persons. Clearly, it was their purpose to obtain as much information as possible, to establish evidence and to seek corroboration of it, from some people of a rather unreliable nature whose evidence could not necessarily be taken on trust.

Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel have carried out a difficult task thoroughly and effectively and the report's overall effect is to justify the clear conclusions that they reach.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Was the report completed before the publication of an interview obtained from Mr. Nimmo Smith by someone masquerading as a journalist? Does the Secretary of State accept that, while it is right that we should consider the report as a whole, we must have regard to the fact that a number of other inquiries at the hand of the chief constable have not yet been completed? Will he undertake that the results of those inquiries will also be published so that we may have the opportunity to form a complete judgment?

Finally, if, notwithstanding the publication of the report, some people still believe that they have evidence to support the allegations, is it not their duty to present it to the proper authorities? If they are unwilling to do that, is it not about time that this speculation was brought to an end?

Mr. Lang: I understand that the report had been completed before the outcome of Mr. Nimmo Smith's interview with Mr. Donaldson was published. Indeed, Mr. Donaldson's report does not feature in the report of the inquiry. As for the question of other inquiries, internal matters affecting the police force are for the chief constable. I do not think that it would be appropriate to publish those decisions, but that is a matter for the chief constable. No doubt he will read of the hon. and learned Gentleman's concern.

The question of possible criminal charges arising from other inquiries is a matter for the procurator fiscal, not for me. As for the hon. and learned Gentleman's final point, certainly it is the duty of anyone who has further evidence that he considers relevant, or who wishes to make further allegations—notwithstanding the fact that the report has now been completed—to bring those matters to the attention of the authorities.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Does the Secretary of State accept that, notwithstanding what was said by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), there is no reason to doubt the integrity of this far-reaching and in-depth report? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that anyone who believes that the report is anything other than a true and accurate account of what happened can do so for only one of two reasons: either such a person has a vested interest in undermining public confidence in the Scottish judicial system, or he insists on peddling his prejudices about gay people in society as a whole as well as gay people who may hold judicial office?

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

If there is no evidence to cast doubt on the report, is it not time that it was accepted at face value, and all unwarranted speculation ended?

Mr. Lang: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's views about the credibility and accuracy of the report; I certainly accept its conclusions. The House will have noted the hon. Gentleman's speculations on the motives of those responsible for spreading the rumours.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Was this, in substance, a criminal inquiry?

Mr. Lang: I think that the hon. Gentleman should read the terms of reference, which are set out in detail in the report. The report could have given rise to criminal charges, because it examined the possibility that there might have been a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice in Scotland. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that that would be a very serious charge.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Does the Secretary of State accept that all this has been going on for quite a few years? Hon. Members on both sides of the House will have been hearing the rumours for quite some time. Does it not come down to the fact that the police service mistrusts the judiciary to some extent, and will the publication of the report help to heal that? Will there be an investigation of what is influencing the suspicions within the police service and what is at the root of the problem?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman has identified a problem established and clarified by the report. Some members of the police force—a limited number, I suspect—misunderstand the precise role of the prosecuting authorities. There may also be a need for the prosecuting authorities, on some occasions, to explain more clearly their reasons for proceeding, or not proceeding, with charges.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Secretary of State mentioned transfers from the CID to uniformed branches. Will he give the House an assurance that officers who seem to suffer from a certain degree of misunderstanding have not been punished severely within the service?

Mr. Lang: The degree of punishment and the actions of the chief constable within Lothian and Borders are matters for the chief constable. Ultimately, any police officer who feels that he has been wrongfully treated in connection with a disciplinary matter has the right of appeal to me; but it is, in the first instance, a matter for the chief constable.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Mr. Nimmo Smith is a Queen's Counsel. He was educated at Eton, Balliol and Edinburgh university. He is very much a part of the legal establishment in Edinburgh. Indeed, he depends for his career advancement on that legal establishment. Does the Secretary of State accept that the report would have been strengthened if it had been conducted by someone outwith the legal establishment in Edinburgh?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's view is very much a minority one. The appointments of Mr. Nimmo Smith and Mr. Friel were widely welcomed. When the hon. Gentleman has read the report—I quite understand why he has not yet had a chance to do so—he will realise, from the quality and texture of its detailed analysis of the issues, that it could probably have been compiled only by people with close experience of legal matters and legal procedure.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): Is the Secretary of State really saying that we must accept this carte blanche? He seems to have failed to convince Conservative Back Benchers, such as the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). It seems that Mr. Nimmo Smith was hoodwinked, very naive, or both. I know that morale among the constabulary in Lothian and Borders is very low. They see scapegoats being so-called retired prematurely and demoted to the uniform branch. I can assure you that when one of them——

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman speak through the Chair, please?

Mr. Clarke: I can assure the Minister that when one of them had his retirement farewell it was a pack-out—a show of solidarity by his fellow officers that he was wrongfully retired.

Mr. Lang: I advise the hon. Gentleman to read the report, and once he has read it in its entirety he will probably find it persuasive overall, as I did. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has accepted the conclusions of the report, which are clear cut.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I welcome the publication of the report, but does the Secretary of State accept that the effective prosecution of justice in Scotland is an inalienable right to each and every citizen, must be beyond question and must have the confidence of the population? The Lord Advocate has asked that we read the report in full and reach a considered view. Does that mean that the Secretary of State is considering allocating parliamentary time to considering the legal system in Scotland, in which we could not only explore the results of this inquiry but consider other aspects that are causing concern such as legal aid, the amount of time that policemen must spend hanging around courts, the need to appoint further procurators fiscal and so on? Parliamentary time is desperately needed, and there is consensus on the need for such a discussion.

Mr. Lang: I share the hon. Lady's sentiment about the importance of maintaining confidence in our prosecution service, which is kept distinct and separate from the actions of the legislature. The allocation of parliamentary time to consider the legal matters that she described is not directly a matter for me but is for the usual channels. I am sure that her thoughts will have been noted.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): I should like to associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), but might not it be helpful in future if the Crown office were to give some indication of why charges are not being brought rather than using the catch-all phrase, "not in the interests of justice"? Might not it be illuminating in other cases where charges are not brought, such as in cases of domestic violence?

Mr. Lang: It is important that the Crown office should preserve its independence and should not be held to account for every decision that it takes, and thus have to

enter into the debate at all times. Having said that, and subject to that qualification, as a result of the report a need has been identified for the chief constable of Lothian and Borders to speak to my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and to consider what can be done to improve the understanding of each other's positions between the police and prosecution authorities.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I have no reason to believe that the report is anything other than thorough and was carried out objectively, but, having no legal expertise, it seems to me to leave us with a problem. As I understood what the Secretary of State said, the basis of the reports, which have persisted for a considerable number of years and with considerable strength, was apparently a figment of the imagination of a small number of unspecified policemen who are apparently not only prejudiced but do not understand the workings of the legal system in Scotland and have a terrible propensity to gossip. I find that extremely difficult to believe as an explanation for the continuation and strength of the rumours.

However, if it is true, is not the Secretary of State asking us to believe that something drifted on for all these years without a conspiracy by the same police officers? In apparently clearing up one accusation of conspiracy, has he not implied that there was a conspiracy to undermine the legal system but one which came from police officers?

Mr. Lang: No, I am not drawing that conclusion, nor do I think that the House should. I urge the hon. Gentleman to read the report in detail. It is severely critical of certain officers, and it is true that some saw a conspiracy; but I expect that they will also want to read the report thoroughly and may reach different conclusions as a result. Certainly the report reaches a clear verdict, and I urge the House to consider it carefully before commenting further on these issues.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Whether the smoke has been generated without fire, and following the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), will the Secretary of State take it from me that people from the Lothian and Borders area have the highest regard for the leadership of their police force? Does he agree that we are lucky to have the services of a chief constable and deputy chief constable of such a high calibre in the Lothian and Borders police?

Mr. Lang: Yes.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): It is clear from the comments that the rumours and this case generate a concern that goes beyond the cases mentioned. I hope that the report will allay that concern, but I am curious about what the Secretary of State said about the reasons for making the report in this form, as a return to an address. Am I right in thinking that it was made in that way because parts of the report require the protection of the privilege of the House and would give rise to legal proceedings if it were published in the usual way? Does that not imply that parts of the report are therefore a little dubious or uncertain, and point to the need for a full, thorough judicial inquiry perhaps, as has been suggested, by someone from outside, finally to put the matter to rest?

Mr. Lang: I do not think that there is a case for starting another inquiry and going over the same evidence and background again in the absence of any new evidence. As for the publication of the report as a return to an address, it is a well established procedure which has been in place for more than 150 years. Its use does not imply any value judgment as to liabilities that might arise on particular individuals from the report, but it protects against that possibility, sets aside any uncertainty and enables all aspects of the report to be laid fully and clearly before the House.

Points of Order

3.58 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that during the Second Reading of the National Lottery etc. Bill yesterday I raised with you a point of order, as reported in columns 716-17 of *Hansard*.

My point of order was about the GAH group, which was commissioned by the Government to produce a report on the establishment and operation of a lottery and its impact on other industries. At the time, you said that you would look into the matter. I was especially concerned about an exchange that took place between the hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton) and the Secretary of State for National Heritage which seemed to confirm that the hon. Member for Crosby was quoting from an article in *The Guardian*, which itself quoted from the GAH report. In addition, in confirming that, the Secretary of State was in effect quoting from that report.

It is worth mentioning that the GAH group was apparently formed on 8 June 1992——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is not relevant to the point of order.

Mr. Howarth: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage, in replying to the debate, referred at column 803 to the GAH group report and gave some detail of what is in it. I feel strongly that, in effect, Ministers were quoting, if not directly—we do not know whether they were quoting directly without seeing the report—from the report.

Although I am sure that I do not need to, I draw your attention, Madam Speaker, to page 382 of "Erskine May". Under the heading:

"Citing documents not before the House",

it says:

"A Minister of the Crown may not read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House, unless he is prepared to lay it upon the Table. Similarly, it has been accepted that a document which has been cited by a Minister ought to be laid upon the Table of the House, if it can be done without injury to the public interests."

The concealment of the report is in itself injurious to the public interest. It is now time that the Government were made to reveal the contents of the report which has clearly formed a great part of their thinking. I maintain that the report was quoted during the debate last night.

Madam Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the matter and for giving me an opportunity to respond. I have taken the opportunity to examine yesterday's *Official Report*. The Secretary of State for National Heritage responded to an intervention from the hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton).

I make it clear to the House that the rule that a document that has been referred to should be laid upon the Table in its entirety applies only when part of it has been read to the House or when quotations have been read from it. Summarising or confirming—the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) made a point about confirming—the accuracy of other people's summaries does not bring the rule into operation. The Secretary of State did not give a direct quotation from the document in question, nor did any other Minister. There is no obligation to lay the document before the House.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I accept your ruling unreservedly, but, I suggest that when you used the word "confirming" you opened the door to a Minister asking a sympathetic Back-Bench Member to quote from a document and then confirming it from the Dispatch Box as a means of partly introducing to our proceedings something that should be made totally available.

Madam Speaker: The words I used were

"Summarising or confirming . . . the accuracy of other people's summaries".

I do not want to go further than that. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North made the point that the intervention concerned a summary from *The Guardian*.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your advice. If a report is the subject of a ministerial statement, would it be possible for hon. Members to be given access to such a report some 30 minutes before the statement? Statements give ministerial interpretations of reports and their findings. It would be useful for hon. Members to be given access to such reports 30 minutes before statements are made.

Madam Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the matter, although I do not necessarily support his point of view. He may wish to pursue the matter with the Leader of the House on another occasion.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. At Question Time, in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) in which he quoted Government statistics, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), referring to the statistics, said:

"To the extent that the . . . figures mean anything".

A Minister has thrown doubt on the accuracy of Government statistics. It is difficult for us to understand how we can have a sensible debate in the House if Ministers do not believe the figures they are giving. That is especially important in light of the fact that we are about to have a debate on health matters. Ministers should make it clear when they speak in which statistics they believe and in which they do not believe.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman wants to make that point, he must do so directly to a Minister through the debate. Perhaps if he catches my eye during the debate he can make that point to a Minister then.

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), Madam Speaker. May I seek your guidance? There is a philosophical question of what is a summary and what is a quotation. I have before me column 716 of the *Hansard* report for 25 January. The hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton) quoted the statistics of 17·5 per cent. and 1,100. The Secretary of State referred to those statistics as quotations from the GAH report. Figures such as those which my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North quoted were obviously quotations from the report. I seek your guidance on whether that might be regarded as a quotation and not a mere summary.

Madam Speaker: The answer is that it is not a direct quotation; it is a summary. I have gone as far into that matter as I am able. I have dealt with three points of order on the matter today. Indeed, I dealt with points of order on it yesterday evening. I have made it clear that summarising or confirming the accuracy of other people's summaries does not bring the rule into operation. I have tried to be as helpful as I can to the House on the matter.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

PUBLIC PATH ORDERS

That the draft Local Authorities (Recovery of Costs for Public Path Orders) Regulations 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

Newly Qualified Drivers

4.5 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make it compulsory for newly qualified drivers to display plates indicating that they are recently qualified; to limit the engine size of the vehicles that they may drive; and for connected purposes.

As clarification, may I explain that newly qualified drivers are not exclusively drivers under the age of 25. Although the vast majority of newly qualified drivers are under that age, other newly qualified drivers are aged from 25 upwards, in some cases even to over 60.

As I said when I moved a similar Bill almost three years ago to the day, in the past 25 years there has been a revolution in motoring. Improved living standards have ensured that there is far wider car ownership. Instead of a norm of one car per family, it is now often the case, and indeed likely, that members of the same family own two or even three cars.

Furthermore, advances in technology, design and engine power ensure that cars are more sophisticated and powerful than 25 years ago. More than 29 million people have licences to drive a motor car. In 1988, 1,039,000 people passed their driving test. Of those, 73 per cent. were aged between 17 and 25; 21 per cent. were aged between 26 and 40; 5 per cent. were aged between 41 and 60; and, perhaps surprisingly, 0·3 per cent. were aged over 60.

It is abundantly clear from those statistics that the vast majority of newly qualified drivers are young people aged between 17 and 25. The accident, injury and death rates among that age group are unacceptably high. I fully recognise that in the past few years the Department of Transport and successive Ministers have made strenuous efforts to reduce road accidents and injuries. Their efforts are highly commendable and successful, with death rates declining noticeably.

However, there is still a serious problem that needs to be tackled and I suspect that hon. Members from all parties recognise that. The casualty rates for 1991 highlight the case. In that year, drivers killed at ages between 16 and 19 represented 4·6 per 100,000 of the population. Drivers killed at ages between 20 and 29 represented 4·5 per 100,000. of the population—almost as unacceptably high. For age groups above that, the average falls dramatically to 2·2 per 100,000.

A recent study carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory for the Department of Transport on attitudes, opinions and development of skills in the first two years of novice drivers reinforced those statistics. It showed that 28 per cent. of respondents to the study's questionnaire had been involved in at least one accident as a driver since passing the test. Of those, 25 per cent. had been driving for only 12 months; 27 per cent. for only 18 months; and 35 per cent. for up to 24 months. It also showed that some 33 per cent. of those who had been in an accident had been in one that resulted in an injury. From their own statistics and estimations, 34 per cent. felt that it was likely that they would be at least partly to blame if they had an accident in their first 12 months of driving.

The report goes on to highlight the fact that those who had been driving for two years had higher scores on confidence in decision making than those who had been driving for a shorter period. This group also reported more frequently failing to notice someone waiting at a crossing, failing to use the mirrors when they should, making

[Mr. Simon Burns]

misjudgments in driving, trying to beat others at getting away and doing things that they knew were dangerous. Interestingly, the report shows the proportion of new drivers who had been involved in an accident was greater between 18 and 24 months after passing the test than between 12 and 18 months. The report and the statistics clearly show that there is a serious problem regarding newly qualified drivers and road safety.

The Bill seeks to improve safety not only for newly qualified drivers, but for other drivers and innocent pedestrians. Part of the problem emanates from the fact that as soon as they pass the driving test inexperienced drivers are given the same privileges and rights as someone who passed the test more than 20 years ago and has gained experience and maturity for driving over that time. That is a mistake. My Bill would require all newly qualified drivers to display a P plate for up to 24 months after passing the test, indicating that they were probationers. The plate would be a constant reminder to such drivers that they are newly qualified and it would also advise other drivers of that fact.

It was interesting to see in the Transport Research Laboratory report that more than half the respondents felt that requiring newly qualified drivers to display a special plate to let others know that they were inexperienced would prevent many or a great many accidents. Some may say that such a proposal is unenforceable, but I do not share that view. I suspect that when L plates for learner drivers were introduced, people said that they were unenforceable, but experience since their introduction shows that the system seems to work well.

Secondly, I should like to see newly qualified drivers being restricted to driving cars of 1300 cc or less for 24 months after passing their tests. In theory at present, on his or her 17th birthday a person can pass the driving test, leave the test centre, and drive away in a Porsche, a series 7 BMW or any other high-performance car. If such a youth, who would clearly be inexperienced, got into difficulties he would not be able to handle the car properly. That is wrong and it is dangerous to allow it.

I am a realist and I appreciate that the Bill will not reach the statute book in this Session. However, the problems of newly qualified drivers and their safety are pressing matters which, I am sure, concern a great many people throughout the country. If the Bill draws further attention —especially the attention of the Department of Transport and its Ministers—to the problem, raises the level of discussion, improves the understanding of the problems and leads to a reduction in the number of tragic accidents and injuries on our roads, it will be worth while. I commend the measure to the House.

4.14 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The whole House will join my hon. Friend in his concern to reduce the casualties among young drivers just as much as among other groups. He is right to draw attention to the increased risk associated with the early years of driving. I caution the House, and I shall ask the House to reject the motion on the ground that there could be evidence about whether his proposal would work. He proposes that those who are recently qualified should have a plate that substitutes for the L for learner plate, when the driver has to be accompanied by a supervisor, a P plate for probationer or R for restricted. Many countries have these requirements. Within the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland has a similar requirement, but there is no evidence that I know of that it has much impact.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford in paying tribute to the Minister for Roads and Traffic who has done a great deal to push forward the continuing aim of reducing accidents set out in the "Health of the Nation" White Paper. In the age group to which my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford referred, road crashes are the primary cause of death for people recently qualified. I think that we need to ask for the evidence on whether his proposal would make a significant difference. I fear that we are facing what appears to be the common sense solution, similar to the one that we used to have with the calls for random breath testing for drink driving. Because something appears to have worked somewhere, it was obviously going to have great advantages here. In fact, in drink driving, which was the real problem, we have seen a continued reduction, especially among the groups to which my hon. Friend has referred.

I ask the House to reject the motion and to say that we look forward to hearing at some appropriate stage from the Minister whether research can be commissioned and to say to young drivers that they ought to follow the points that my hon. Friend is making and that it is unwise to drive in a way that involves extra risk, especially when there are others in the car. They should save their lives and those of others by following common sense driving solutions which I am sure most hon. Members follow, even though most of us are above the age of 19.

Madam Speaker: The Question is, That the hon. Member has leave to bring in his Bill. Those in favour say Aye, to the contrary No. The Ayes have it—*[Interruption.]*—Order. When an hon. Gentleman or, for that matter, an hon. Member has opposed a ten-minute Bill, his voice simply has to follow his rejection and that has happened in this case. Now we can proceed.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business), and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Simon Burns, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Alan Duncan, Mr. David Porter, Mr. Michael Brown, Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. James Cran, Mr. John Whittingdale, and Mr. Bob Dunn.

Newly Qualified Drivers

Mr. Simon Burns accordingly presented a Bill to make it compulsory for newly qualified drivers to display plates indicating that they are recently qualified; to limit the engine size of the vehicles that they drive; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 26 March, and to be printed. [Bill 120.]

Opposition Day

[9TH ALLOTTED DAY]

National Health Service

4.17 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I beg to move,

That this House regrets the growing crisis within the National Health Service; condemns the commercialisation of the health service and the development of two-tier health care; expresses concern at the total fragmentation of health care due to underfunding and the impact of the internal market, Trusts and GP fundholding; regrets the destruction of NHS dentistry and the uncertainty over the future of London's health care; deplores the lack of accountability now at the heart of the NHS; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to act immediately to tackle this crisis before the end of this current financial year and to begin a review of their so-called health reforms for 1993/94.

Madam Speaker: I have had to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 6 pm and 8 pm because of the demand by Members to participate in this debate. I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Blunkett: There is a crisis at the heart of the national health service. That is why I and my right hon. and hon. Friends are moving this motion. The NHS is under-funded. It is being undermined. Unfortunately, it is under the direction of a weak and indecisive Secretary of State. A sophisticated sophistry of statistics is invented by the PR Department who present her, albeit wonderfully, in the guise of mother superior of the NHS.

We have before us an amendment by Her Majesty's Government which has the cheek to welcome the NHS changes and to talk about the

"record numbers of patients being treated",

when waiting lists are increasing, operations are being cancelled and, as we all know, across the country there is a real crisis in our hospitals.

The amendment also mentions

"elimination of two-tier waiting lists in the regions".

Well, instead of two-tier waiting lists in the regions, the Government have created a two-tier health service across Britain. The amendment goes on to claim

"a substantial reduction in long waiting times generally".

We all know that the time taken to undertake serious elective surgery is rising in proportion to the number of minor ailments being treated in this two-tier service.

The NHS, far from being safe in the Government's hands, is gradually and regrettably beginning to fall apart. Instead of policies for caring, we have competition. Instead of service, we have commercialisation. The internal market and the two-tier service are undermining equal access, which is now being denied to patients throughout the country. Information sought by the Opposition and by Back Benchers of all parties is being denied increasingly by a Government frightened to tell the truth. In the words of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, statistics—what was the phrase?—if you can believe them, or for what they might mean.

Hospitals are no longer called that; they are called provider units. Patients are now described as episodes. Instead of a health service of which all of us can be proud, we have something that has turned into a commercial enterprise. Promises have been broken, and broken again, from small promises about drug and alcohol units being safeguarded and ring-fenced, to the promise that was made leading up to the general election that the Government would be spending billions of pounds more each year on our NHS. Instead, on 12 November, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that that promise, built into the public expenditure predictions on which the Conservatives fought a general election, has now been set aside, with a cut in England alone of £700 million in the projected budget for next year.

A promise is not worth a thing when it is in the hands of Conservative Ministers, and that promise has been substantially broken for one very clear reason: because of the total incompetence of Government Ministers in handling our economy. We have had the fiasco of black Wednesday; the £2 billion plus gold and currency reserves that were squandered; the inability to manage the health service, with £300,000 per bed being spent on the Chelsea and Westminster hospital; and an audit service that is not allowed to publish its results, not allowed to tell the truth to the people of the west midlands, Wessex and elsewhere about the mismanagement of the service that is supposed to be operated in their name.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): The hon. Gentleman spoke eloquently a moment ago about broken promises. Does he remember the promise that he made to the Blackpool Labour party conference on 30 September 1992, when he spoke about the Tories' own Frankenstein monster, meaning national health service trusts? He went on to say —I paraphrase—that the people of Britain had a right to know when, if ever, the Government would admit that their great trust experiment was not working and was in urgent need of reassessment. He has just broken that promise, has he not, because he has reversed his policy; he is not going to abolish trusts at all.

Mr. Blunkett: I am sorry to disillusion the hon. Gentleman. I presume that he must read *The Daily Telegraph*, which misreported me. Having not sent a journalist to the briefing meeting and therefore not being aware of the facts, *The Daily Telegraph* then declined to publish my letter setting out the truth. The Secretary of State said on "Question Time" about 10 days ago that she supports the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), which is coming forward next Friday, but unfortunately will not be voting for it. She should have a word with the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, because the right of reply is important if we are to have an honest and sensible debate.

As we are dealing with trusts, let us get something straight. Even the Secretary of State admits that trusts are non-accountable, that they are not working and that she will have to bring them to heel. There is the well-funded federation that represents their views, not forgetting the £60,000 spent on the salary of the new chief executive, recruited from Tory party central office. It will all be wasted because the Secretary of State knows that she will have to make trusts accountable.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Blunkett: I willingly give way.

Madam Speaker: Order. To whom is the hon. Member giving way? Several hon. Members wish to intervene.

Mr. Blunkett: I give way first to the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), on the ground that at least he knows in which direction he is going.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I am not sure what to read into that, but I thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving way.

In relation to NHS trusts, if the hon. Gentleman denies the report in *The Daily Telegraph* to which reference has been made, may I ask him to comment on the report in *The Times* on 14 January of this year, which quoted him as saying that he would not be in favour of abolishing NHS trusts, just

"integrating them into some future coherent NHS strategy"?

What did he mean by that?

Mr. Blunkett: I do not have any difficulty in saying that non-accountable, completely undemocratic, self-governing trusts will not exist under a Labour Government, because we believe in democracy and accountability, with the involvement of local people, by which I mean not just business people and Conservative party friends. I am not talking about the sort of nepotism that is now being practised in a remarkable way throughout the country.

The latter part of the Government amendment, which refers to the Opposition politicising the health service, takes the biscuit, considering what has been going on in Britain. South Glamorgan is only the tip of the iceberg —not so much a two-fingered handshake as the ability to shake hands with one's next door neighbour and promise that neighbour a job the following week. All have their snouts in the trough. That is happening in the health service in Britain.

In that context, let us consider the health service and the integration of community services with hospitals that made such a difference to planning the service. Let us then question community care, which the Government have ill planned and under-funded.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The hon. Gentleman talks about snouts in the trough. Is he referring to people such as Helen Hayman and Rabbi Julia Neuberger, who have agreed to become chairmen of NHS trusts?

Mr. Blunkett: The Minister need only talk to her hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) to get a picture of snouts in the trough and the facts about the transfer of the chairman of the Merseyside region, Sir Donald Wilson, to the west midlands, presumably to peddle the same nepotistic attitudes and policies. The fact that the Secretary of State can quote the names of Labour and Liberal Democrat members is indicative of how many people are being appointed—*[Interruption.]*—with Tory party cards in their pockets.

Accountability is non-existent for trusts and general practitioner fund holders. To whom are they accountable? Is it to the region? Is the region accountable to the Secretary of State? Is the Secretary of State accountable to this House, remembering that every time we raise questions about detailed matters we are given the platitude that the statistics for which we ask are not collected or held centrally? The politicised management executive is not accountable; nor are health authorities and family health services authorities.

It was the European Policy Forum, and not a left-wing think tank, which talked about the new, undemocratic, paternalistic way in which Government agencies and the Department of Health are now being operated. It said that we have a new magisterial epoch in which people get jobs not because they are elected or accountable but because they have friends in high places.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way yet again on the question of accountability. He complains that trusts are not accountable, yet his hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said in the House less than two years ago that the simple test for judging the trusts was whether they did more or less work for NHS patients. Does the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) confirm that test or does he repudiate it?

Mr. Blunkett: I do not confirm the test, the results or that trusts are working. Doctors, consultants and patients across the country, reading their local newspapers, watching their regional television programmes and listening to regional radio, will know what is happening to their health service.

Professor John Ward, director of medicine at the Royal Hallamshire hospital, said in the local paper last week:

"The service has reached breaking point."

Speaking about his meeting with Sir Duncan Nichol, the head of the management executive, two days later, he said:

"I shall be putting the boot in."

I do not think that we should blame the messenger; we should blame the Secretary of State and the Government who provide the message. The boot will go in from us and from the electorate up and down the country.

In that one hospital alone, six emergency admissions in one afternoon were sitting in the corridor waiting for a bed, not in a general ward but in the admissions ward. In the words of Professor Ward, 850 emergency admissions were dumped in the hospital between September and the end of December. All three emergency hospitals in the city of Sheffield have been on red alert for virtually all of 1993. That situation is repeated up and down the country, from Cambridge to Birmingham, across the length and breadth of the land. If it is not a red alert, it is a yellow alert.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blunkett: No, I want to make a little progress.

In the same report, Sister Milne said:

"Waiting times on trolleys can be five, six or seven hours."

The Secretary of State knows all about waiting times of five, six or seven hours, because that very reliable organ of Conservative party propaganda, edited by a minor public schoolboy, *The Sun*, reported that her mother had waited for seven hours in St. Mary's hospital before being seen to.

I did not know whether to believe the Secretary of State's family or *The Sun*. My instincts told me to believe the family. I believe that the Secretary of State's brother and family are honourable people, but if she does not stand up and contradict them, I shall have to believe that the minor public schoolboy who has frightened Conservative Members so much in the past few days was telling the truth after all.

Instead of taking action on behalf of patients, the Secretary of State bows to publicity stunts. We had one this morning; a new British Telecom health line. I do not know whether the health line will be available for people seeking emergency ambulance cover when they cannot get through on 999 or whether, BT style, the new health line

will simply say, "You are being held in a queue, this is normal for the NHS.". Whatever it is, I do not think that it is a particularly good gimmick.

I do not think that the doctors thought it a particularly good gimmick when on new year's eve the Secretary of State took herself off to plague them at her local hospital. I should be careful about quoting correctly because I think it was *The Daily Telegraph* that reported her striding down a corridor at the stroke of midnight having talked to doctors and nurses who were too busy dealing with casualties on new year's eve to take seriously her eulogies about the new NHS reforms.—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State seems to be saying that no one was with her. It must have been a phantom reporter who put out the news that Virginia Nightingale was ministering to the sick and the wounded on new year's eve. I hope that the right hon. Lady has a very happy new year. I hope that next year she will be able to drink a toast to a health service that has improved rather than deteriorated.

Perhaps the right hon. Lady will take notice of Dr. Ian Bogel, chairman of the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association. When describing the guidelines on access to the NHS, he said:

"Equal access to secondary care has been flouted by hospitals which cancel operations but continue to treat GP fund holders' patients."

That is repeated throughout the country.

A letter from the Plymouth health authority states:

"It is increasingly clear that GP fund-holding practices have the capability and are intent on encouraging the development of mini clinics in dermatology outside the hospital service. This has the effect of taking NHS money away from the acute unit to the detriment of that unit. We propose to set up a clinic with sessions at Greenbank hospital every Wednesday evening between 5 and 7 o'clock with the specific intention of seeking patients from GP fund-holding practices."

The letter then lists seven reasons why GP fund-holding practices should take up the work. It continues:

"While it is clear that this will create a two-tier system within the service, it will have no greater effect than that already commenced by several general practices employing their own dermatologists outside the hospital service."

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): For the sake of clarity, will the hon. gentleman tell us whether it is Labour party policy to abolish both NHS trusts and GP fund-holding practices?

Mr. Blunkett: I think that I have comprehensively dealt with trusts, so I shall comprehensively deal with GP fund holdings. I have made it unequivocally clear—it is on the record of every occasion on which I have spoken—that the Labour party and I, as its spokesman, are against GP fund-holding practices and a two-tier service.

The reason for our opposition is that given by Dr. Michael Jenner of Tonbridge. In a letter to me last week, he said:

"I know of a case in my practice where a patient had been on the waiting list for two years for a minor complaint and had to be admitted before a patient with a potentially malignant diagnosis because of the patients charter saying no one should wait more than two years . . . The NHS is rapidly becoming split in two and morale is at the lowest I have experienced in the 25 years I have worked in the service. My only advice to patients now is for them not to vote for the present Government."

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Only this week I received a letter from a doctor in north Manchester about the Booth Hall children's hospital and a child aged six who had been referred to it for an operation in January 1992. That child is still waiting and the earliest date for the operation is now May this year. He referred to the child's suffering and to the education that he had missed. It is a disgrace. If we were a third-world country, with a shortage of theatres and wards, we could understand the reason for long waiting lists—but that children's hospital has actually closed a theatre and a ward.

Mr. Blunkett: My hon. Friend is quite right. In 1987, when we last had a crisis in the health service—not the worst for 30 years, as the British Medical Association described this one, but so serious that the last Prime Minister had to decide to demolish the whole NHS so that it could be dealt with—there were 100,000 fewer people on waiting lists, and children such as the one to whom my hon. Friend has referred were being admitted and dealt with before minor cases.

The Government have simply devised a new, bizarre and irrational way of running out of money. The doctors are there, the nurses are there and the hospital wards are there, but the contracts have run out. Whatever increase there has been in productivity has been dissipated by the system that is currently being operated. A person with a serious but non-life-threatening ailment cannot get into hospital, but when a person from a GP fund-holding practice has a minor illness, care can be bought.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Can the hon. Gentleman name any Labour Government who left office with waiting lists lower than when they came to power? In fact, every Labour Government left office with waiting lists higher than when they came to power, whereas all Conservative Governments have seen waiting lists fall.

Mr. Blunkett: Had we managed to get rid of the Conservative Government on 9 April we should have had a startling and outstanding example of a Government leaving office with waiting lists much higher than those they had inherited. The Government have to hark back to 1978 for the lowest interest rates, and to 1968 for the lowest level of inflation. People ought to be reminded that many of the great records are held by Labour Governments. And we shall hold them again.

The NHS reforms are making matters worse. Waiting lists have increased since 9 April, and they are continuing to increase. The money does not follow the patients; the patients follow the money—if they are lucky. That is the truth of the matter. But what do the Government do about it? They talk to doctors about slowing down, about pacing themselves, about spreading the money over 12 months instead of nine months, about preventing embarrassment for the Government when the NHS has run out of money after nine months of the financial year.

The Government seek not to help hospitals to treat more people or to treat more serious cases, but to hide the truth from the British people—slow down, put down, perhaps lay off. That is the logic. If there are consultants who cannot work to full capacity, who cannot take on serious cases, are they to be laid off? Are nurses to be laid off? Are more contract works simply to be taken on so that they can be laid off at the drop of a hat? Hospitals still have to be heated, the beds are still there, even if they are not made up, and the on-costs still have to be met. But the cosmetic surgery of the so-called waiting list initiative takes priority over the real needs of patients and of care in the health service.

[Mr. Blunkett]

Let us not have the fiddled figures paraded as though the Government were doing better. Waiting lists have lengthened, but there is a new technique—people are not put on waiting lists at all. People are now being told that they cannot be given a definite date for a hospital bed. Therefore, they do not appear in the statistics. This is gross distortion worthy of George Orwell, and the Government are getting away with it.

What is more, as the patients charter and the waiting list initiative take effect, the Government deliberately skew the figures so that one can no longer find out nationally how long it takes to get a first appointment with a consultant. The first appointment is the most important of all, as it is at that point that an illness is diagnosed as being serious or minor. And that is critical to the saving of life. Yet, having tabled a parliamentary question a few weeks ago, I was told that the Department saw no need for national collection of statistics on waiting list times.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is my hon. Friend aware that in the very recent past an epileptic young woman of 19 in my constituency was taken into hospital and discharged, was taken into hospital again, and discharged, and was taken in a third time and died? Surely that indicates the nature of the problem in the national health service.

Mr. Blunkett: My hon. Friend, as ever, speaks from the heart about the truth that emerges from our postbags day in and day out, week in and week out. Consultants, other doctors and patients write to us about the stark reality that Conservative Members are unable to face.

What about activity levels, about which the Secretary of State spoke at Question Time today? As John Chawner, the chairman of the committee of consultants and specialists, pointed out to the Secretary of State in a letter of 22 December, more day cases—minor cases—are being dealt with, while more serious cases are being made to wait. In addition, research shows that 28 per cent. of so-called episodes of activity levels turned out to be fraudulent. A patient was moved from one ward to another—and was counted as a new episode. The whole thing is a farce and a fiddle. One can no longer believe anything.

What are these changes costing us? Longer waiting lists, more suffering, greater worry and £1,180 million. This is a scandalous waste of money that could have been spent on patient care, on improved quality and on equal access. And all this is happening during a winter when there has been no major epidemic. There has been no major outbreak of flu, except in my own case.

Mr. Pickles: Given that 90 per cent. of doctors have now reached the immunisation target, why does the hon. Gentleman object to fund holders? Is not this an example of success?

Mr. Blunkett: I have never criticised immunisation. The hon. Gentleman needs an injection of common sense, decency and care to stop his blithering—the blithering in which he used to engage when he was leader of Bradford city council.

Instead of care and action, we have public relations offensives. In newspaper and television interviews the Secretary of State tells us how wonderful things are. Journalists become star-struck the minute she smiles beguilingly and gives her enchanging, "mother superior" view of the world. But the record speaks for itself. In July we had her announcement about dentistry, which created such chaos that, since then, 250,000 people have been removed from the NHS dental lists. Of these, 13,000 live in Surrey, the county of the Secretary of State. And in the Prime Minister's constituency 99 per cent. of dentists are refusing to register adult patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I urge the hon. Gentleman to look again at his information. There are 1 million more people registered with dentists than there were last July, and there are 7 million more courses of adult treatment than there were in 1979. Finally, Bloomfield has said that dentists' earnings are now at a record high. The hon. Gentleman might like to consult the record to see what happened to dentists' earnings in real terms when his party was in power. They fell by more than £3,000.

Mr. Blunkett: The Secretary of State, as I suggested at the beginning of my speech, is a sophistry of statistics, but the reality is different. The deregistration of patients, the refusal of dentists to take on patients, the increase in private dental practice encouraged by the Government, the steer given to the Bloomfield inquiry, which has all sorts of suggestions about a new, privatised service, cannot disguise the truth. The registrations were encouraged by the Government on the grounds that unless dentists found their records and registered those who had not been to visit them in the past two years, they would not "benefit" from the new system. When the Secretary of State eventually comes to the House, as she is so often reluctant to do, to make a statement on what she will do about dentistry in the national health service, we will deal with this matter comprehensively.

In September the London ambulance service staggered, as it had done for months, from crisis to crisis. What action was there from the Secretary of State? None. There was a resistance to action, a resistance to getting rid of the people running the service, a resistance to doing anything to safeguard life and limb—until she was forced to come to the House when the whole system collapsed in October.

Right through the summer and autumn, the West Midlands regional health authority was nothing less than a fiasco—millions of pounds wasted on privatisation and consultancies, audit reports, National Audit Office reports, but no action, a refusal to take any steps to deal with the chairman or with the authority's incompetence until the Secretary of State was forced to take action when Sir Roy Griffiths said that it could not carry on any longer. When the chairman went, whom did she appoint? Sir Donald Wilson, the 70-year-old chairman of the Merseyside region. She really has a sense of humour. The only thing I can say for her is that she is not ageist. If the Secretary of State listens to her hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield, she will know just what the west midlands is in for in the months ahead.

What else in October? The Secretary of State announced with a fanfare of trumpets that she would consult on the Tomlinson report. There was to be a major review of London's health care.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere) *rose*——

Mr. Blunkett: I am not giving way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have given way more than most hon. Members on the Front Bench.

The Tomlinson report, and the consultation on it, was to be the great step forward for London's health care. A major announcement was to be made after the Minister of State had toddled around the hospitals, not consulting the people of London or the local communities, the patients, the people who mattered. Then a message came round from Downing street to the Secretary of State. It said that she must forget about the frontal attack, about the comprehensive approach, because the Government were running scared. She was to announce that Bart's would be saved. We are all grateful for that; the campaign run by the *Daily Mirror* and the *Evening Standard* and by my right hon. and hon. Friends in London has done a superb job, and I am pleased about it.

But what sort of a Secretary of State announces one week, at the beginning of January, that it is full steam ahead and no change, and the next week is called into No. 10, and it is all overturned? Or perhaps it is not quite all overturned, as we will hear if we can get the Secretary of State to make a statement to the House about what she intends to do—because what they were not prepared to do in a full frontal attack they are determined to do by stealth. That is the truth of the matter on Tomlinson.

What about January? What about Ben Silcock being mauled by a lion at London zoo? I pay tribute to the Secretary of State's commitment to mental health issues. I even accept her sincerity in the media blitz that she launched in the aftermath of that accident. But what happened to her promise that action would be taken? The *Daily Mail* splashed it across the front page. She appeared on television, metaphorically with her arm around a number of her friends, telling everybody how much she cared and that steps would be taken immediately. What has happened? Precisely nothing. Once again, it is all wind and no action, and the same will be true for future announcements on what is to happen to the regions.

The Secretary of State has not even made an announcement about what is happening to health authorities. Their number is being reduced from 190 to 85 without an announcement to the House and without giving us the opportunity to debate such issues sensibly on the Floor of the House. We have the withdrawal of information that I have spoken about, and the Touche Ross report which the Secretary of State will presumably leak out on Friday afternoon, telling us again that nothing will be done.

We had tobacco and the Smee report: no action. The Secretary of State eventually chaired the first meeting on 13 November in that ill-fated six months when the Government had the presidency of the European Community. There was no action by way of banning tobacco advertising or joining forces with our colleagues in Europe to take decisive steps.

What about prescription charges? We expect increases in them to be announced in the next few weeks. Will the new cost be £4 or £4·25?

What about the Bloomfield report on dental services which the Secretary of State referred to? Will nursing mothers and pregnant women be denied free treatment, which is what the Bloomfield report threatens? Or will the Secretary of State take the advice of someone who once wrote about families cutting down on visits to the doctor because they could not afford the prescription charges, who wrote about mothers who could not afford the then small prescription charge not visiting the doctor for a cure for minor ailments?

The author wrote that people looked around for other cures. When they could not afford a cure for their toothache, some of them, said the author, used to bite on a clove. Adult members of these families would not go to the dentist because of the charges and consequent problems. They could not afford it with children to look after, or, as one family said, they would not go unless they were in absolute agony.

Who was the caring, decent person who talked about frightful housing, who talked about being unable to afford prescription charges, who talked about the problem of access to the dentist? It was the Secretary of State for Health, in an earlier, caring period when she worked with the Child Poverty Action Group and wrote pamphlet No. 8.

Is the right hon. Lady now the caring young woman who got down to the realities of what was happening in family life or is she the Secretary of State beholden to a Cabinet, to colleagues such as the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) who appears still to run health policy from the back seat?

Our health service is in a mess, and this expensive mess has been created by the Government. I pay tribute to those in the health service who have fought to keep it going over the years. I pay tribute to those who have been telling the truth about our health service despite the risks and problems that they face. I pay tribute to those who are working to improve the quality of patient care, and I pledge that we will continue to fight for a comprehensive health service, tackling prevention, investing in primary and community care, intent on early intervention and, above all, linking health with housing, unemployment, poverty and inequity, a health service that provides equal access for all, a health service that is accountable and a health service of which all of us can be proud.

4.58 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its reforms to the National Health Service which have led to record numbers of patients being treated, the elimination of two year waiting lists in the regions, a substantial reduction in long waiting times generally and significant improvements in the quality of care; looks forward to more general practitioner fundholders and National Health Service trusts and the further improvements they will bring; and believes that in the modern health service the focus should be on patients and prevention and not on politicisation, which remains the dominant concern of Her Majesty's Opposition.".

The Opposition motion refers to a crisis in the health service, but in reality the debate is more about a crisis in the Labour party and the particular crisis facing the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). The dilemma for Labour health spokesmen is that they are condemned to pass as an unread chapter unless they can generate a crisis. The hon. Gentleman has deepened his troubles today. His speech was wanting in substance, it was wide of the mark and none of my hon. Friends is any the wiser about Labour party policy on health than he was at the start. Labour party policy on health is a policy-free zone. Hundreds of thousands of staff and millions of

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patients and their families and friends will have found it difficult to recognise their national health service from the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Throughout the country, millions each year rely on the care that they receive from the health service. Time and again, the Opposition take individual cases, exploit them out of all recognition and paw upon personal detail to try to create a crisis in the service.

I will tell the hon. Gentleman about one of the individuals that he mentioned in his speech. I do not want to intrude on the privacy of all the many other individual cases in which his party trades. I will tell him about my mother who, like many others, could not speak more highly of the care that she received not only at Queen Mary's but also at Guy's, where she had been extremely ill beforehand. My mother spoke, as so many others do, with respect, affection and admiration for all that is achieved by NHS staff, and she was not best pleased by the way in which her privacy was intruded upon at a moment of considerable illness.

Ms. Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Will the Secretary of State tell the House when any Labour Member has criticised an individual member of staff working in our NHS hospitals? They are the people who are coping with the mess that she has created.

Mrs. Bottomley: Those with memories which go back as far as the general election will know that the Opposition trade in individual cases taken out of context. *[Interruption.]* One of my hon. Friends mentions the case of Jennifer's ear; I need say no more.

This is the first time for nearly two years that the Labour party has chosen to debate health in its own time. For a party which is so arrogant about its supposed special claim to the NHS, it is remarkably reluctant to debate the matter in this place—and from the hon. Gentleman's speech, it is all too clear why.

During the general election Labour turned our children's wards into a political battlefield. The voters rightly punished it for its repugnant tactics, but it is clear that it has learnt nothing from that. Scaremongering and shroud waving are still the base elements of its approach.

We hoped for fresh thinking on health from the hon. Gentleman, but there was precious little sign of that in his speech today. He has dashed any hopes that a Labour Government would play a constructive role in improving people's health. Where was his admission that the health reforms are here to stay? When will the Labour party apologise for getting it so completely wrong? The hon. Gentleman's speech boiled down to the same old whine: more money for the NHS. His preoccupation, as always, is with inputs and not outputs. Yet in a recent press comment the hon. Gentleman said that the NHS had had a massive cash boost in the year of the election. It is hard to know which message he is trying to give. He cannot have it both ways. His mode of communication is not just waffle, but multi-directional waffle.

Mr. Blunkett: As there was a cash boost for the general election and the Secretary of State has been parading it, and as I am not denying that, why is there such a crisis? Why is the money running out within three months of the financial year ending in a year in which she says that the Government have an all-time record on spending on the NHS?

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall be addressing the House on the situation in which we find ourselves, where hospital after hospital has exceeded all expectations in the amount of work that they have done. But NHS trusts and other hospitals also have to live within their budgets. If, two thirds of the way through the year, I were to break other parts of the NHS budget, I would be doing exactly the very thing for which I would expect the hon. Gentleman most to criticise me. The way in which I would do it would be to raid the community budget, or help myself to the budget for the mentally ill, community nurses, or all the other unfashionable areas of the health service.

If we are to have a principled health service which delivers services according to a strategy which is right for the health of the nation, it is not right for a Secretary of State for Health three quarters of the way through the year suddenly to say, "No, you have all been providing more care of a higher quality: we will change all the priorities now and take money from the budgets of those least able to defend themselves."

I am proud of our achievements. Hospitals have done well to achieve their high figures—some have treated 4,000, 3,000 or 2,000 more patients than they did a year ago—but they have to live within their budgets and manage the resource for the year.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): If the Secretary of State feels that it is inappropriate to provide extra cash for hard-pressed hospitals, how does she explain the fact that the West Midlands regional health authority was prepared to make cash handouts to a privatised firm that it had set up?

Mrs. Bottomley: That is far from the discussion about how hospitals can manage their budget through the year. There are serious questions about the West Midlands regional health authority. That is why I have appointed such a distinguished and eminent chairman as Sir Donald Wilson to take over in the short term. I deplore the ageist comments of the hon. Member for Brightside. This is the European year for older people and solidarity between the generations. Yesterday I launched the year with Sally Greengross. She talked of the problems of ageism; yet today the shadow health spokesman has shown the most shamelessly ageist approach to a most distinguished and eminent chairman. If the west midlands can achieve the results that Mersey has achieved, the hon. Gentleman's constituents will wonder what on earth he is talking about. They want similar reductions in waiting lists and waiting times and the delivery of health care in an effective, practical and sensitive manner.

We now spend £100 million every day on the NHS, but the challenge—as always—will be to live within a budget. A budget has to be maintained for 12 months, not eight or nine months. Of course I share people's concern when they hear that hospitals are unexpectedly slowing down elective admissions or going on yellow or red alert in the face of exceptional seasonal pressures, but we must learn those lessons and ensure that in placing the contracts for next year we benefit from the experience of this year, pacing activity more effectively through the year and, above all,

ensuring that there are proper discussions with the district and the general practitioners and, within the hospitals, between the managers and the clinicians.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): On the issue of budgets and slowing things down, the Secretary of State talked about principles, but she now accepts that some people are waiting for serious operations while others, brought into local hospitals from fund-holding practices outside the area, are treated ahead of them. Where on earth are the principles in that? I shall not quote an individual case because the right hon. Lady goes on about shroud waving, but she knows that that is happening throughout the country.

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall say a little more in a moment about general practitioners' fund holding. The Opposition still seem to have failed to appreciate that it is GP fund holding that offers the real lever for change if we want a service which is sensitive to patients' interests, because the advocate for the patients in the health service is the general practitioner.

Only last week, the hon. Member for Brightside said that in the long term there would be a shift of resources from traditional hospital care. Yet today he argues the reverse—that money can only come from other services to go into the hospitals. He cannot have it both ways. The majority of services are not affected by the present end-of-term pressure on budgets.

The *British Medical Journal* survey, which has been much quoted, also hides a number of other issues. In Calderdale, for example——

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: Is the hon. Lady going to tell us that in Calderdale only 14 patients now wait for more than a year? That is a dramatic achievement. In Manchester, the number of patients waiting for one to two years has been halved. In Brighton, by March no one will wait longer than 18 months, and an extra 1,500 patients will have been treated. In Norwich and Norfolk, 4,000 more patients will have been treated, and 3,000 more will have been treated at Stoke Mandeville.

Mrs. Mahon: The Secretary of State mentioned Calderdale. A close relative of mine has suffered under that practice. Will the right hon. Lady tell us how many people are waiting to see a consultant before going on to a waiting list? I have absolute proof of what is going on: it is going on in my family.

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall say more later about waiting times, and about what we have achieved. I should very much like to move to a stage at which benchmarks operate for first out-patient appointments. I am sure that that is the next step—having brought down in-patient waiting times, to start setting benchmarks for out-patient waiting times. That is the way forward—to deliver change throughout the service, and to make clear, steady progress.

I should make it clear that the amount of money currently involved is less than three quarters of 1 per cent. of total hospital and community budgets. The problem must be seen in perspective but, relatively small though it is, I do not think that we should ignore it. Doctors and managers do not always get together to work out how to plan activity through the year. General practitioners and district health authorities still have more to do in discussing priorities for the year ahead. I want to encourage closer co-operation between managers and consultants, GPs and other professionals, in the drawing up of contracts for health care between purchasers and providers. That is where discussion should rightly take place. We also need careful co-operation in the monitoring of performance against contract through the year.

I am pleased that the chief executive of the NHS and the chief medical officer have established a working party to examine those questions in detail with the professions, and to spread advice and assistance. The chief executive, Sir Duncan Nichol, will shortly issue further helpful guidance to the NHS. It is important for the lessons that we have learnt from this year to be acted on, and used further to improve the contract process for next year.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I will, but only because the hon. Lady stood against me in my first by-election.

Mrs. Roche: I am grateful to the Secretary of State. I remember that by-election with relish; I also remember that we discussed health on that occasion.

The Secretary of State mentioned the yellow bed alert. She will recall that my region, North East Thames, had such an alert. How does she reconcile her policy with the damaging effect that it will have on the more than 130,000 people on the London waiting list? Does she not agree that it will cause them tremendous harm?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady will be aware that pressures in the winter are a traditional part of health care management. Yellow alerts, and other pressures caused by a variety of unforeseen circumstances, must be managed better: we must be better prepared. I should make it clear, however, that all urgent and emergency cases are seen. Our emergency service is unrivalled anywhere in the world.

Overall decisions about priorities must be made by the district authority, which acts as the champion of local GPs. It must form a strategy for health, deciding priorities between different areas of interest and concern. That coherent approach must be followed to deliver ever-rising standards of health care, which will achieve health gains for local communities.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I want to make a little more headway. I have already given way a huge amount. I want to talk about the achievements of the NHS reforms—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I have been enormously generous in giving way. I have given way almost entirely to Opposition Members; I fear that I have neglected my hon. Friends. I now wish to proceed with my speech.

The NHS reforms have been a tremendous success. We see that success in the record number of patients being treated this year. The number of acute in-patients treated is up again—more than 4 per cent. higher than last year, and even higher than that in the trusts. The health service is on course to treat 7·6 million patients this year; an extra 600,000 a year are being treated only two years into the new health service.

Those record increases have been accompanied by reductions in waiting times. We have now eliminated waits of more than two years in the regions; what for many years

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was a dark feature of the NHS has gone. Since our reforms were introduced, there has been a fall of more than 50 per cent. in the number of patients waiting for more than a year. In line with our manifesto and patients charter commitments, we are on course to eliminate waits of more than 18 months for hip, knee, and cataract operations. A number of regions and areas are heading for an 18-month maximum wait across the board: Mersey, South Western, Northern——

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid Kent): My right hon. Friend has mentioned hips, knees—[HON. MEMBERS: "And boomps-a-daisy."] And, no doubt, boomps-a-daisy. The trouble is that the nature of what can be done in the health service is changing very fast, which creates an entirely different kind of debate about priorities. But for the Government's reforms, it would be impossible to have a sensible debate about priorities, because until now we have not had the faintest idea what any of the procedures in the health service cost.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend's welcome intervention has precisely identified one of the profound changes brought about by the NHS reforms. I hope that he will elaborate on his arguments if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Reducing long waiting times is central to the patients charter. We have spent more than £200 million on the waiting time fund in the past six years, and today I am announcing an allocation of a further £2 million from the £39 million fund this year to pump-prime 30 innovative pacesetter projects to reduce waiting times further. Each project will harness innovation, spread good practice and set quality benchmarks in the service which others can aim to meet.

We are determined—and we shall continue—to take the waiting time battle further.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Waiting for what?

Mrs. Bottomley: As the hon. Gentleman rightly implies—and as I have already said in the House—we want to set waiting time targets for out-patient as well as in-patient appointments. This is yet another example of the way in which the Government have won the argument. Labour Members want us to go further, faster, and I am the first to agree.

NHS trusts are good for patients and staff, and they are here for good. It is far from clear whether the hon. Member for Brightside has yet been able to make up his mind about trusts, but I can tell him that patients have. They will have noticed, for example, the developments in the hon. Gentleman's own area. They will have noticed the £22 million Firth wing at the Northern General trust in Sheffield which opened last May, the two new children's and six new adults' surgery wards, and the state-of-the-art theatre suites and recovery rooms.

The hon. Member for Brightside referred to accountability. I despair at the fact that, even at this stage, he is so unclear about the way in which accountability works. The trusts are accountable financially to their management executive, but they are accountable through their contracts to the district—to the purchaser, who acts on behalf of local people, securing quality improvements, having detailed discussions and championing the interests of local people. That opportunity simply did not exist in the past. The district could not tell a hospital, "We like this aspect of your work, but are not happy with other areas; our GPs are unhappy about one development, but are pleased about your progress in another department." Under the contracts, which are open to the public, accountability is exercised more effectively than ever before.

There has been a revolution in information—in the plans, the accounts, the annual meetings. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said, when the Labour party was in power no one had the faintest idea what anything cost in the health service, what a hospital's budget was, or how resources were used. That suited Labour Members—sponsored, to a man, by the National Union of Public Employees—because they did not want the public to know what they were doing and how they were spending money.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: Many hon. Members will want to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to make their own contributions, but my hon. Friends want me to put on record the tremendous achievements of the health service. I feel duty bound to do so, because my hon. Friends want to know what I am about to say. I am about to announce a record capital allocation to the national health service ——nearly £2 billion. Taking internally generated capital into account, total NHS capital spending for next year is expected to break the £2 billion barrier for the first time. This £2 billion programme will allow trusts and health authorities to take the initiative in developing their services to meet the needs of the future. As my hon. Friends will be only too well aware, it will support the construction industry and support jobs at the same time. It is scarcely surprising that the Labour party is so embarrassed by my announcement of this £2 billion programme, because, as my hon. Friends are aching to say——

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston) *rose*——

Mr. Rhodri Morgan: Give way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The Secretary of State will indicate when she is giving way to hon. Members, but it is clear that there are occasions when she is not. It is no good the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) saying, "Give way".

Mrs. Bottomley: As I feared, my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) took my punch line. As soon as I sat down, he rightly said—this is why the Labour party was making so much noise—that the Labour party cut the capital programme by 28 per cent. That makes the £2 billion that I have announced really look quite something. The punch line is that when the Labour party was in power the capital programme was not a record £2 billion but was cut by 28 per cent.

I very much want to deal with the question of GP fund holding—a voluntary scheme that we hope to extend more widely. We hope that the benefits of fund holding, even for GPs who do not become fund holders, will be taken for granted by all GPs. GP fund holders have helped to raise standards across the board and to integrate primary and secondary care. They have reduced waiting times and brought more health care into the community. The Labour

party, wallowing in the politics of envy—as ever—derides this as the success of a two-tier service. As ever, its policy is equal misery for all. We can never have levelling up; we must always have levelling down from the Labour party.

Let me make it clear that we are going forward with fund holders and we shall make it easier for them to extend services for their patients. The regulations will be changed to ensure that budget holders can cover the cost of providing a wider range of services, covering a range of diagnostic testing and minor surgical procedures which are outside the scope of their existing contract. This will make it easier for them to provide extra services where they are qualified to do so and to bring specialists into their practices. As a result, fund holders will be able to provide those services for patients without having to go to the trouble of setting up limited companies.

We are the party of change and of progress. We have set in place, with our health reforms, a health service fit for the next century. For more than 40 years, the NHS was driven by institutions and illness, not by patients and prevention. We are changing the focus to concentrate on the needs of patients today and tomorrow and on work for better health. We can look forward to achieving the aims of the National Health Service Act 1946:

"a comprehensive health service designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of the people . . . and the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness."

We have established the mechanisms to decide priorities on a national and local basis, and we are not prepared to leave the service to stumble from problem to problem with only the knee-jerk excuse of underfunding to fall back on like the Labour party. We are determined to use the potential of our greatest resource—our skilled and committed work force. In the face of the most negative opposition and the most scurrilous and distorted tactics that the Labour party could muster, the Government have accepted the challenge of reform and carried it through.

Dr. Lynne Jones: The Secretary of State rightly referred to our skilled and dedicated work force. I received a letter this week from a consultant who says:

"junior medical staff, nurses and therapists are on their last legs and morale is lower than ever before."

When will the right hon. Lady get off the clouds, put her feet firmly on the ground and listen to the people who know what is really going on in the health service: the 29 consultants who say that she had said that she will only interfere in the west midlands——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The purpose of an intervention is to raise a single poignant point, which the hon. Lady did.

Mrs. Bottomley: I can tell the hon. Lady when morale was lower: when the Labour party was in power and it cut nurses' and doctors' pay and spending on the health service. Of course there is more for us to do, but we are reducing junior doctors' hours and giving people hope and confidence in the way forward.

Let me speak about the great achievements of the new strategy for health, putting prevention right at the heart of the delivery of health care. I hope that I shall receive co-operation from the Labour party as we take forward that strategy, which is chaired at the highest level by the Lord President to ensure that all members of the Government play their part in achieving and taking forward health gain.

We are determined to see further shifts of power in the NHS—away from institutions and providers to patients. The patients charter has been very important in spelling out the rights and standards that patients should expect.

It is interesting to see the sneering approach of the hon. Member for Brightside to the new telephone information line. Many members of the public, many of our constituents and many patients are not clear about what services or health advice is available and do not know where to go for help. Today I launched the national helpline, which was a commitment in the patients charter and in our manifesto. The number is 0800 66 55 44. That single freephone number, which is available to all, will better empower patients to make the best possible use of the health service. The sneering, patronising attitude of the Labour party shows that it fails to understand that the number will enable our constituents to make better use of the service.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): I applaud my right hon. Friend's superb speech, which accurately represents the situation in my constituency of Chorley. More in-patients and out-patients are now being treated in the community, and below budget. There is one major cause for concern, indeed, I will call it crisis: more than 6,000 of my constituents have been put out of the national health service dental system. I know that my right hon. Friend has already received a report of the dentists' pay review, and I hope that in the closing minutes of her speech she will be able to deal with that problem.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am happy to deal with the matter for my hon. Friend the Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover). One million more adults are now registered for dental care than in July. Dentists' earnings are also at an historic high. Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's report, which I hope that my hon. Friend will refer to his dentists and patients, and also consider himself, offers a number of options for change.

Opposition Members seem surprised that the Government do not have a knee-jerk response to every publication that we produce for consultation. We wish to talk to dentists, the health service and others about whether there are ways in which we can change the system of remuneration. My hon. Friend should be sure, however, that his constituents have access to an NHS dentist. The family health services authority should employ a salaried dentist. If there are any difficulties, I shall personally be more than happy to look into them.

The hon. Member for Brightside spoke about information. Sometimes he tried to lambast the Government for not making available the information that he wants for his own purposes, and which we do not collect because it is not needed to help to run the service. In the next breath, he claimed that there were too many managers and accountants and too much bureaucracy, which is precisely what would be needed if we were to collect a huge amount of unnecessary data.

The role of management in the health service is of great importance: something like two NHS staff out of every 100 are managers.

Mr. Blunkett: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way to me twice. Can she tell me why the Yorkshire regional health authority yesterday refused to provide me with figures on waiting lists which it has available at its headquarters in Yorkshire? Other regions have been prepared to do so, so why was Yorkshire regional health

[Mr. Blunkett]

authority not prepared to release those figures, even though it had had to collect them for its own internal purposes? Is the Secretary of State prepared to take action to stop the secret society taking hold of the NHS?

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not know the content of the hon. Gentleman's discussion yesterday with the Yorkshire regional health authority, but I feel strongly about information being available, which is why I have today launched the national helpline. It is not only the hon. Gentleman who should have information—I believe that members of the public should also have it, and I shall certainly consider the matter for him.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): As the Secretary of State is so ready to go to Chorley to talk to dentists there, will she speak to the dentists who are complaining in Rotherham? We assure her of a riotous welcome.

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that warm invitation, but he should listen to what I am saying. I said that dentists' earnings were at an all-time high and that we now provide 7 million more adult treatments per year than in 1979. I was comparing that with what happened when the Opposition were in power—when dentists' real earnings fell by some £3,000 per year.

The health service has an annual budget of £37 billion, it employs nearly 1 million people, and the money must be managed. I do not think that the Opposition understand that. They continue to promote a state of apartheid between managers and doctors. The Opposition also talk about accountability. My hon. Friends are deeply suspicious of what the hon. Member for Brightside means by accountability. We fear that he means that those who manage——

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall let the hon. Gentleman continue in a moment, but he must be clear that a point of order is a matter on which the Chair can rule, not a matter of the political content of speeches.

Mr. Grant: I am surprised that you will not let me finish before you rule, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall let the hon. Gentleman finish, but I want to be sure that he is clear that it is something on which I can rule.

Mr. Grant: I am sorry but, like other hon. Members, I raise a point of order and then you tell me whether it is true. Is it in order for the Secretary of State to make a promise to one of her hon. Friends but not to other hon. Members?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that has nothing to do with the Chair.

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not think that I should make a promise to another hon. Friend that I would not also make to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant).

My hon. Friends are deeply suspicious about what is in the mind of the hon. Member for Brightside when he talks of accountability. We know that he is really an old-fashioned municipal socialist. I wonder whether he remembers telling the Association of Direct Labour Organisations last year that

"municipal services were started because there was so much price-fixing and corruption when services were not in council control."

That comment will cause a bitter laugh among the people of Lambeth today. I do not think that the people of Merseyside, with all their experience of Labour's chaos and the incompetence of the town hall, would swap the management of the health service for the form of accountability established by local government. I think that the hon. Gentleman's prescription for the health service would be Lambeth-style militancy, Lambeth-style madness and, I fear, Lambeth-style fraud.

I now speak about a subject of great concern, I hope, to all hon. Members—the situation in London. There are inequalities of provision in the health service and they must be tackled. The issues that Sir Bernard Tomlinson has put on the agenda have long been recognised. Many hon. Members have long been worried about the extent to which they subsidised services in London. London spends 20 per cent. of the money on 15 per cent. of the people. Far more serious, however, is the fact that the health service for Londoners is not of the standard that I am determined that it should be. That is because of the great provision of institutions, many dating back hundreds of years, which are not appropriate to the health needs of today and tomorrow. In the past 100 years there have been 20 reports all urging change. At the end of the last century Florence Nightingale argued that St. Thomas's should move out to Blackheath.

We must grasp this opportunity to ensure that there is change. It will not be easy. It means tough decisions, but we shall take them. I pay tribute to the work of the Minister of State, who has held thorough meetings with about 50 institutions and organisations so that we have the opportunity to listen to the views of the people most directly involved. We recognise the need to bring an end to uncertainty—nobody recognises that more than us—but we also have to make sensible, practical, clear decisions to make cost-effective improvements in health care which lead to improvements in treatment, research and teaching.

We shall not transform the health service in London overnight, nor shall we impose change by central diktat. It will take time to correct the imbalances and distortions which have grown up over many decades. There will be different forces in play, not least the shifting pattern of referrals as health authorities inside and outside the capital exercise greater choice on behalf of their patients. The operation of the internal market must continue to play a part in determining the future pattern of services in London.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The Secretary of State says that she is aware of serious problems with the administration of the health service in London. If that is so, why does she still support a report which proposes the closure of seven hospitals while 130,000 people are on the hospital waiting list in London?

Mrs. Bottomley: I regret having given way. The hon. Member for Brightside has a more enlightened view of these matters than the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has. The hon. Member for Brightside has made it clear that the status quo cannot continue. I know that the hon. Member for Brightside got into trouble with

his hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) for daring to have such an enlightened view. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, who normally saves his wrath for castigating Conservative Members, took his hon. Friend to task for having an enlightened view on the question of London. All reasonable and thoughtful hon. Members know that the change must happen—and it must happen on the basis of improved health services for London. All agree that the enhancement of primary care is a basic building block in that change.

I was surprised that the hon. Member for Brightside spent so little time talking about care in the community. Care in the community is an enormously important policy which we are making a reality, not only in the policy, in the guidance and in the legislation, but in the resources. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman misunderstood the issue of ring fencing for drug and alcohol support. When we debated the matter, we did not expect to have a ring-fenced sum for the whole of the transfer money. We have secured £565 million which will be ring-fenced for community care. That is 35 per cent. more than would have been spent through social security.

There is an important opportunity here for local authorities. They are rightly proud that the Government have asked them to provide the lead in community care. That leadership means grasping challenges, establishing priorities, making decisions and shouldering responsibilities. It does not mean running back to the Government for more cash at every turn. Through the funds that we have made available, and through the consistent, practical support and guidance that we have given, we have honoured our commitments in full.

Our community care reforms provide choice for individuals, choice for users and choice for carers. We are determined to protect the independent sector. We fear that Labour councils, left to their own devices, would distort the system—as ever—in favour of their own services at the behest of their trade union masters. There would be the old temptation to ride roughshod over the interests of users in the interests of producers—*[Interruption.]* Before Opposition Members cry too loud, I should tell them that I worked in Southwark at the time of Nye Bevan house. I know many of the scandals with which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), has to cope when local authority providers fail to serve those who are entrusted to their care. The Government want first-class —not Lambeth-class—services for the elderly and needy. That is why we have insisted that a high proportion of community care money must be spent in the independent sector, and that is why we have backed up the reforms with statutory direction which enshrines the right of individual choice.

I leave the last word on community care to Mr. David Townsend, once a special adviser to Baroness Castle and now director of social services in the London borough of Croydon. Mr. Townsend works at the sharp end of social services and he disagrees with the hon. Member for Brightside. In a recent letter, Mr. Townsend said:

> "Having failed to alter the national political map, Blunkett . . . goes home and kicks the cat; in this case local councillors and directors of social services. Mature reflection on Blunkett's part would have led to the correct conclusion that he is the one who loses general elections, not us. Most of us directors . . . get on with the job—"*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Redmond.

Mrs. Bottomley: I sat down because I could not get any quiet, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are all aware that Opposition Members make a great deal of noise because they do not want my hon. Friends to hear what I am saying. I was hoping for your assistance to ensure that I could complete the words of Mr. David Townsend. It would be discourteous to interrupt his remarks and I should like to get to the end of them. Mr. Townsend says:

> "Most of us directors . . . get on with the job, increasing the range of services year on year . . . and leave the more self-exciting 'grand political claims' to those like Blunkett who recline on the green leather benches for a living."

While the hon. Member for Brightside is reclining on the leather Benches, he should reflect on the fact that spending on the NHS is at record levels. It has grown by 57 per cent. in real terms since 1979. We are treating more patients than ever before. Nurses and doctors are better paid than ever. They have seen a substantial real increase in their incomes since 1979. We have cut junior doctors' hours substantially and there are more reductions to come. The range and quality of services the NHS now offers has never been greater. Waiting times are tumbling and long waits are set to fall further.

The hon. Member for Brightside referred to my work many years ago for the Child Poverty Action Group. Memories of that work have stayed with me over the years. The hon. Member for Brightside mentioned prescription charges. It is a source of pride to the Government that, whereas a charge was claimed on one item in three when Labour were in government, a charge is now claimed on only one item in five.

It is an achievement for the Conservative party that more babies now survive the earliest months of their lives than at any time since records began. We have seen life expectancy grow by two to three years over the past decade. In the past decade, perinatal mortality has fallen across all regions and in all social classes. It has fallen substantially in London. The figures in London—*[Interruption.]* As I made clear earlier, many of the changes have been brought about because of the introduction of the GP contract, which the Labour party rejected and voted against. It is as a result of that change that we have seen the dramatic increases—which are still not high enough—in many of our inner-city areas in terms of immunisation and cancer screening figures. For the past two years—for the first time ever—no child has died from measles or from whooping cough.

In "The Health of the Nation" we have established a health strategy that the World Health Organisation has described as a model for others to follow. Those are achievements of which we are proud. It is only those whose sole concern is politicising the health service who wish to deny those achievements. It is only those who are interested in politicising the health service who whine about underfunding rather than trying to get to grips with the complex issues. It is only those who are interested in politicising the health service who exploit individuals' misfortunes rather than examining the arguments. I am afraid that the hon. Member for Brightside and his hon. Friends have shown how out of touch their party is with the modern NHS.

The health reforms were not designed to produce a quick fix or to gain temporary political advantage: they

[Mrs. Bottomley]

have equipped the NHS to serve the people of this country for the next half century even better than it has done in the present half century. The NHS is going through a time of change and a time of great opportunity. It may be easier for hon. Members to duck change, as the hon. Member for Brightside has done, and to indulge in sloganising, but that would betray the people of this country. We have begun the work and we shall finish it.

5.49 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): The Secretary of State has been speaking a load of drivel for more than an hour. Will she not go out into the world of reality where the facts speak for themselves? The facts are at variance with what she has said from the Dispatch Box today. There is a hidden agenda and a two-tier health service. The evidence for saying that exists, and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) has given it.

The chairmen of the trusts—*[Interruption.]* If the Secretary of State would listen instead of opening her big gob, she might learn something. That is the trouble with Conservative Members. They are for ever opening their gobs. If they would listen——

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Redmond: I will not give way. Shut up: the Minister has had well over an hour.

We have had correspondence with the Department about the appointment of chairmen of trusts. Mr. Peter Horsburg was appointed as a chairman but was refused to be acknowledged by the Secretary of State. There was a misunderstanding about the facts surrounding that event. However, there are rewards for political obedience among officers in the health service. When trusts are created, the directors receive wage increases of 100 or 150 per cent. It galls me that the Secretary of State and Trent regional health authority, in my area, appoint political stooges—as the chairman of the health care trust in Doncaster has said. They are paid salaries approaching £20,000. Non-executive directors receive £5,000 each as well as free lunches, subsistence and travel.

Few, if any, of the chairmen and non-executive directors even approach the time commitment that they should make in return for the political gift which they have been given. I challenge the Secretary of State to order the Audit Commission to investigate the time that directors put in for the monetary reward that they receive from the health service. The Tories have always attacked local councillors for working seven days a week for the pittance that they receive. The Government should examine the position of trust directors.

Regretfully, the Government have proposed effectively to reduce the pay of those who keep the NHS alive. They have limited their pay increases to between 1 and 1·5 per cent. Perhaps the Government will reduce the ill-gotten gains of trust directors to the pay of nurses since 1989.

The Secretary of State talks about the health service. She should go into a hospital for 24 hours, seven days a week for a few weeks. Then she would see whether the health service was growing as a result of all the money that the Government are putting into trusts. I do not believe that the NHS is growing. Millions of pounds have been put into the NHS to create the trusts.

The Secretary of State is now telling trusts to slow down. Does she not realise, as she laughs, that to tell trusts to slow down treatment could at worst result in patients dying? She is not interested in the deaths among NHS patients caused by her policies. At the least, the quality of life of patients is affected.

It is no good saying that patients can obtain treatment if their case is an emergency. That depends on the clinical judgment of the GP. The Secretary of State referred to patients' rights. They are nothing but a con trick. Patients have no right to a first out-patients appointment. That fact, together with the placing of patients on review, falsifies the in-patient waiting lists. I wish that the Secretary of State would get the figures right. Millions of patients who are not on any list are waiting to see a consultant. The lists have been reduced simply by removing patients from them.

The Conservative Government shout from the roofs about value for money. I am pleased that the Secretary of State does not live in my household. The reforms have cost money in increased administration costs. Far from reducing the bureaucracy, the reforms have added to it. Doncaster health authority had administration costs of approximately 4 per cent. Celia Wilson, the former chairman, was a Conservative, but she was committed to the health service and to the people of this country. That is a commitment which the Government do not have. *[Interruption.]* I will not give way to the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes). If he will shut up and listen, he may learn something from Opposition Members.

Celia Wilson, the chairman, Tony Dale, who was in charge of administration, and David Eves, the treasurer, did a marvellous job of ensuring that the health authority produced value for money. Doncaster now has four chairmen whereas previously it had one. It has 24 non-executive directors at an annual cost of more than £200,000. It has three chief executives, three directors of nursing, three directors of finance and four directors of medicine, all at vastly increased salaries. There is massive duplication of management. The bureaucracy of Conservatives in government is crazy. If the Secretary of State wants to make improvements, she should reduce the bureaucracy.

I admire the working doctors, nurses and support staff for their complete commitment in return for little reward. They have to live with the greed of the people who seek to exploit them. I am extremely grateful to the doctors, surgeons and nurses of Doncaster Royal infirmary without whose skills I would not be here today. I am also grateful for the research done at Weston Park hospital in Sheffield. Marvellous work is going on there under Professor Hancock and his team. I am also grateful to my GP, who used his clinical judgment to put me into the accident and emergency department. It was his decision, not that of a consultant. That onus should not be placed on GPs.

When one is on a ward for 24 hours, one can see the nurses and junior doctors working under pressure. The Secretary of State should spend a little time on a ward at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and see what the nurses have to do.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman asked me to spend a little time at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning on a ward. That is exactly what I have been doing.

Mr. Redmond: I am not sure whether it was as a patient or as a visitor. If she spent time on a ward day and night, she would know. If she opened her eyes, she would perhaps learn a little. Regretfully she does not appear to have done so.

An early-day motion has been tabled requesting a public inquiry into the maternity wing at Doncaster Royal infirmary. It is important that a public inquiry should take place. The internal inquiry was purely and simply a statistical game. It compares Doncaster with Sweden and western Australia. Instead of looking at figures, it should investigate practices because that would be to the benefit of nurses and the people of Doncaster. I hope that the Secretary of State or the Minister will say whether a public inquiry is to take place. The policy of GP fund holders does not appear to be welcome, but apparently it is the only policy under which money can be obtained from the Department. I hope that even at this late stage the Government will abolish the trusts and let us get back to a true national health service.

5.59 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): It is a mystery to me why the Labour party constantly contrives to turn a success into a failure, an achievement into a disaster and a cure into a calamity. About £100 million a day is spent on the health service, more patients are being treated with better operations and better drugs——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It says here, "Issued by Conservative central office".

Dame Jill Knight: I wrote my own speech, as I always do.

There is also better equipment, and, even more important than all that, there are now cures for diseases which would have killed patients only a short time ago. Waiting lists are down and the pay of doctors and nurses is up. I could go on listing the improvements, but to listen to Labour Members one would think that all was doom, gloom and despondency. We fundamentally disagree with Labour's carping and belly-aching and we are proud of the record of the health service under this Government.

In my well-known way of spreading light, sweetness and agreement, let me turn to a matter on which all hon. Members can agree. All the experts in the health service deserve our admiration and every help which we can give to them and they should not have to face dangers which we have the power to remove. Consider the scenario of a patient needing a transplant of some vital organ—perhaps a lung, heart or liver—being prepared for the operation. All sorts of tests are carried out. Blood cells are measured, haemoglobin and blood gases are checked and the functioning of his organs is carefully assessed by electro-cardiogram. Every test that doctors deem necessary for the safety of the patient is meticulously embarked upon.

However, the one test that is essential for the safey and peace of mind of the medical team is left out—the test as to whether the patient has AIDS. Doctors can check for hepatitis and syphilis, but they cannot check for AIDS unless two conditions are fulfilled. The first is that the patient must agree to the test, and the second is that counselling has to be available for the patient.

I am told that in a recent case a young surgeon's razor-sharp scalpel slipped and cut his hand in the middle of an operation. No one knew whether the patient had AIDS, but when he came round and was fit to talk he was asked whether the doctors could conduct tests to make sure that he was all right. He said that they could not. That young surgeon will not know for many long and agonising months whether he has contracted AIDS. He will not be able to get on with his professional or private life because he can neither operate nor sleep with his wife. We should not put doctors in that position.

Let us look at the case of a person who is brought unconscious into an operating theatre following an accident, an attack or seizure or perhaps an overdose. I am assured that, although he is unconscious, he may vomit blood and that instant care has to be made available to him. However, no AIDS tests can be carried out because he cannot be asked whether he agrees. I do not want to harass AIDS victims or hurt their feelings or multiply their agony, but I certainly want to protect nurses, doctors, surgeons and laboratory staff and all others who may put their own lives at risk by caring for someone who has AIDS.

As I have said, doctors are allowed to test for venereal diseases such as syphilis and the patient does not usually know that the test has been carried out. I am told that if the patient does not have the disease there is no problem, but if he has he is advised about the best medical care that he can be given. Surely we should follow that rule for AIDS. Why not extend the practice? It is not right to sacrifice the life, health and peace of mind of medical staff and their ability to continue to operate, nurse or test because of fear of hurting the feelings of people who, although tragic, undoubtedly pose a serious threat to the lives of others.

I have a second request on another matter to make in my short speech. I am trying to be constructive in asking my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to take two actions that could be of immense help in two different fields. The second concerns a thoroughly responsible and respectable couple in my constituency who were asked by a social worker in March 1988 to take in a six-day-old Sikh girl who had been abandoned by her mother. They did so. They came to love the child and, although they had a boy and a girl of their own, they eventually asked Birmingham social services department whether they could adopt the little girl. Incredibly, the council not only flatly refused but spent a large sum of ratepayers' or poll tax payers' money, or whatever we want to call it—I am told that it amounted to tens of thousands of pounds—on court action to try to get the child away from her loving home, the only home that she knew and the one in which she wanted to stay. A social worker told those caring and excellent parents that white people were not good enough to bring up black children.

Can we imagine the fuss, the headlines and the furore that would result if a black couple were told that they were not good enough to look after white children? And quite right too; I would similarly decry such an appalling statement. No one except the couple and a friend who tried to help them knew about that because for three years Birmingham city council gagged the couple with an injunction. They were not allowed to speak to anyone. I

[Dame Jill Knight]

am their MP, but they did not dare to write to me or anyone else about what had happened. They were afraid that, if they broke the injunction, they would not be allowed to adopt the little girl.

It seems that not only the Race Relations Act 1976 but freedom of speech was flouted. At one stage the couple were told that a black adoptive family had been found for the little girl, but they discovered that it was not a Sikh but a Muslim family and the mother could speak no English, although the little girl had been brought up in a home in which English was the natural language. The proposal to send the child to the Muslim family was called off after the parents protested. A social worker visiting the family forbade the little child to call her parents—the only parents she knew—dad and mum.

The child was then secretly introduced to another Asian family who agreed to take her as a foster child. All this when Joanne had lived for years with the family and loved them dearly, as they loved her. Then, when the couple were given 48 hours' notice that Joanne would be taken from them, they took court action. It was three years before the High Court, in November last year, ruled in their favour and they can adopt the child. There is no excuse for all this, especially for telling a loving couple that they are not good enough to adopt a child because of the colour of their skin.

I make the direct appeal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to look into both these totally different sets of circumstances and stop social workers from behaving in that way in one set of circumstances and to help surgeons and medical staff in the other circumstances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next hon. Member, may I remind hon. Members that Madam Speaker has ruled that we should now start on 10-minute speeches.

6.10 pm

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): We, too, regret the growing crisis in the NHS. The national health service, which is approaching its 50th anniversary, has served several generations very well. Whenever possible, it has cured us. At other times, it has at least healed us. Few would disagree that it has almost always cared for us. Against this background, it is tempting wholeheartedly to follow the Labour party argument. There can be little dispute that the system is underfunded and that the internal market is creating two tiers of care.

However, if we are to alleviate the crisis in the NHS, we cannot just go back to the status quo before the reforms. Before the general election, I was opposed to GP fund holding and to hospital trusts and still am, but we have to accept that they are there and that there will be even more before the next election. We have to face that reality and try to find a solution. The Government are not going to change their minds.

Although I do not embrace this Government's philosophy of change for change's sake, I do at least accept that some change is needed, but that change should have taken into account the needs of the patients and the fact that there was not enough money to meet everyone's needs and that more money should have been found for the health service. I know that some more money has been put in, but that is not enough to meet those needs.

The internal market has not been a great success in most instances. The market can be very cruel when applied to the vulnerable: the sick child who cannot be admitted to hospital until after 1 April will not understand that his GP is not a fund holder; nor do the caring health service staff appreciate having to close hospital wards when they know that there are people who need treatment. The Secretary of State responds by telling hospital staff to pace themselves; in other words, "don't cure people too fast". This is at a time when the Government's own target, a maximum of two years on the waiting list, has not yet been achieved in all areas. They have to acknowledge that fact.

The internal market is also creating problems in a number of trusts. My local Rochdale trust has increased its patient activity, reduced its waiting lists and cut costs considerably, but having done that, it will not be awarded any further contracts by the health authority because of lack of funds. This is not because the health authority does not want to spend the money. It simply does not have enough.

Dr. Liam Fox: Perhaps the Liberal spokesman will tell us how much extra money the Liberal party believes we have to put in to achieve the situation that she wants? Exactly how much?

Ms. Lynne: I am grateful to the hon. Member: as we said before the general election, another £2 billion over the course of a Government. That was stated very clearly in our manifesto commitments.

The hospital at Rochdale is now forced to close wards. Many hospitals may in future, because of this trend, have to throw people out on the dole. GP fund holding has also served only to promote a two-tier system.

It is naive in the extreme for the Government to expect an even result when it has installed two budgetary structures, a more generous one for fund holders and a rather more stringent one for health authorities. At least they cannot say we did not warn them about the problems they were creating. All our calls for wider consultation on the internal market generally were ignored. That will be cold comfort for the thousands turned away from hospitals and told to come back after 1 April. It will be cold comfort to, for instance, the two children in Rochdale who have been in traction for some time and were just settling into their ward but will now be forced to move to another hospital.

The question is how we can reverse the crisis in the health service. A two-tier system with care for some is not quite the way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Beveridge's proposals. The way forward would have been through pilot projects, consultation, listening to both the users of the service and to those who make the very difficult decisions in it every day. But the Government did not do that. Even though they did not do it to start with, the least they can do is to conduct a full survey of the reforms, and, more important, to make the results public. We have a right to know the extent of the problem and why they did not consult fully to start with. We have a right to know how they propose to get out of this mess.

I believe that a new idea of locality fund holding represents a positive way out of the present mess. I am not going to dictate the solution, but I want to talk to health professionals and see whether it is the appropriate solution. As I have already said, hospitals up and down the country are running out of money and closing wards while

some GP fund holders have excess cash. Locality fund holding could be a way round the problem. I hope that the Government will take this on board. Under locality fund holding, GPs in a particular area would band together and become fund holders, between themselves, thus avoiding the two-tier system that is being created at present. Community care services could also come under the locality fund-holding umbrella in order to stop people falling through the net between health authority and social services provision.

I have deliberately not spelt out a definitive policy on locality fund holding, because, unlike the other two parties, I believe in genuine consultation before policies are fully formed and I do not want to limit the responses I receive.

Another area on which the Government appear to have failed is Tomlinson. That also is due to lack of consultation. Why did they not ask the people who know, the professionals and users of the service? If they had, they would have been told that they could not think about closing hospitals before the primary and community health service was up and running. They would have been told that we need a single London health authority. They would have been told that the figures used by Tomlinson simply do not add up. Why did they not ask? Why did they not listen even though they did not ask?

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I was wondering whether the hon. Lady thought that when she and her colleagues came to see me to give me the benefit of their views, as part of the London consultation, I was not listening or taking account of what they were saying.

Ms. Lynne: Yes. My colleagues and I were grateful for that. I feel that the Minister was listening, but he should have consulted more widely previously and should have consulted the health professionals earlier. I am talking about consultation, not with us, but with the people within the health service and with its users. I know that the hon. Gentleman has been round to all the hospitals, but I do not think that he has really been listening. I do not think the Government are going to consult this time. I do not think that they have learnt the lessons, because I do not think that they are listening properly.

Are they going to listen to the dentists and their patients? They have already forced many dentists out of the NHS. Dental health is already at risk. Now the Government want to take away free dental treatment from pregnant women. How much further do they want to go?

Dr. Mawhinney *rose*——

Ms. Lynne: If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene again, I will gladly give way.

Dr. Mawhinney: Which Minister said that?

Ms. Lynne: It was in all the reports, including the report that came out recently. Neither the hon. Gentleman nor the Secretary of State has come to the House to make a statement on that report. Perhaps the right hon. Lady would like to do so; then we can debate the report. I know that the Opposition spokesmen have asked for this, so perhaps the hon. Gentleman can give a commitment to it today.

Dr. Mawhinney: But the hon. Lady wants us to consult.

Ms. Lynne: I should like the Secretary of State to come to the House and make a statement on dentists. Now, if the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Sadly, not this afternoon; the 10 minutes are up.

6.20 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): Once again I have listened to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State with admiration. It is not just the grasp of her subject that is impressive, but the clarity of her vision and her determination to do what is right. Conservatives should not let the mantle of compassion be taken from them. We need to put paid to the myth that management is outside the welfare arena. To manage well is to ensure fairness and the best possible service.

The debate on the health service has certainly come a very long way in the last 15 years. Up to the early 1980s, the service's success tended to be measured by how big a budget could be wangled from the centre and how quickly it could be spent. Huge blanket sums were consumed without guidelines, and seemingly with few controls. The game was to spend, to look good and not to worry about the consequences for others either within the service or outside it. Peter was robbed to pay Paul and shroud waving—a new expression, I think, in the Chamber—was the main feature of the yearly expenditure round.

Less than 20 years ago, the health service did not even know how many doctors it employed, let alone how much a certain course of treatment would cost. Morale was low, and the service was to suffer under the last Labour administration its biggest capital cut ever. The situation was critical, and those of us who believe in the principles enshrined in the NHS knew that there had to be a radical change if a comprehensive free service was to survive into the 1980s and 1990s.

The first step was to restore confidence and to reverse those cuts. There is no disputing that the health service has benefited from massively increased funds under the Conservatives. The health service now has the second largest budget in Government expenditure. At £37 billion, it is second only to social security—and I believe that few here doubt that that is as it should be.

The provision of money alone was not enough to reverse the games that were played before, and the Government deserve credit for moving the debate on. They are only too aware now that it is not how much is spent that matters, but how it is spent. By insisting on and providing the tools for better management, by improving the management structure and by introducing financial disciplines, the Government have given the NHS its own lifeline.

It is less than two years since the biggest ever reforms of the national health service were introduced. The second year has not yet been completed. GPs—only those who could and wanted to—were given the ability to handle their own budgets in certain areas, and some hospitals became self-governing trusts. There is, and has been, no duress to become a trust. Application for trust status is entirely voluntary and open to any unit which satisfies the criteria. Less than two years on, 95 per cent. of hospitals and community health service provision have either moved to trust status or expressed an interest in doing so. Moreover, nearly 550 GPs have become fund holders, and

[Mrs. Marion Roe]

there is a likelihood that a further 700 will join them. That will mean that one quarter of the population will be served by fund holders.

By any standards, that is an enthusiastic response to the reforms in the service—encouraged, no doubt, by the early signs of success. In a recent survey, more than 70 per cent. of GP fund-holding practices reported falling waiting times and improving efficiency. In their first year of operation, trusts treated 8 per cent. more patients than in their last year as directly managed hospitals.

In my own constituency, the East Hertfordshire NHS trust has boosted out-patient attendances by 3 per cent. from last year, and in-patient cases have risen by 4·2 per cent. Also, waiting times are dropping. The East and North Hertfordshire district health authority is on target to achieve by 1993 the region's standard of no one waiting more than 18 months. The expectation is that waiting times will be dropped to 15 months in the coming year.

I maintain that contracting has improved service delivery and will continue to do so. GPs handling their own affairs can understand the cost implications more easily and arrange their priorities according to their needs. Trusts can plan ahead freely without interference from the regional health authorities and the Peter robbing Paul mentality. Services can be delivered as promised and strategic plans made for the future with confidence. They know at the beginning of each financial year how much elective—that is, non-urgent—work they will be required to do, so they can plan staffing and other facilities accordingly. Better information also enables trusts to make accurate estimates of the amount of emergency and urgent work that they are likely to do and to plan their budgets accordingly.

Inevitably, some of the shroud-waving mentality has survived and is finding its voice on the Opposition Benches today.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Roe: We have a 10-minute time limit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there is a great deal that I want to say. I shall give way when I have finished my speech.

No reasonable person would expect radical change to be introduced without some teething problems. Equally, no reasonable person could expect to return to the old mentality which was so ruinous to the provision of services. It is unfair to other parts of the health service to raid their budgets to get some hospitals out of financial difficulties. It is also unfair to take a snapshot view of what is happening in the health service before the year is out. Doing so distorts the picture. The fact that there has apparently been over-performance on elective surgical contracts reflects the situation that more elective work is done in the first six months of the financial year—that is, in the summer—because more beds are required for emergency medical admissions in the winter months. Surely it could also be claimed that this is sensible planning—to plan the elective work when it can be done and leave the hospitals free to cope with the demands that winter brings.

To counter some of the very negative stories that we have heard from the hon. Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne), I should inform the House that the East Hertfordshire NHS trust is working to contract and has no plans for bed closures. The elective and emergency services will be maintained to year end, and financially the trust will be broadly in balance. Its strategic plans have been published and over the next five years its programme of development includes completion of a 30-bed day care unit at the Queen Elizabeth II hospital in Welwyn Garden City, construction of a purpose-built orthopaedic unit in the grounds of that hospital, and construction of a 60-bed unit for continuing care of the elderly on a site in Hoddesdon in my constituency. There are also a further six projects. The result of such developments will be that services will be more convenient and supplied more quickly and efficiently and to a higher standard.

I urge the Government to continue with their reforms. Recently, the Health Select Committee published its interim report on NHS trusts. One of its concerns was that there should be a strategic overview of the management of trusts. Within this question lies the future role of the regional health authorities. I believe that as the reforms take a firmer hold on the future provision of the services the present role of the regions will change. Their role will therefore have to be redefined as we continue to improve the standards and provision of patient care.

Mr. McCartney: Perhaps the hon. Lady would like to comment on the statement of one of her local GPs, Dr. Laurence Buckman, that patients in his area have already died because of serious bed shortages—and one of his patients died in an ambulance because of a row as to who should pay for his treatment. That is not the Labour party but one of the hon. Lady's local GPs.

Mrs. Roe: That local GP has certainly not written to me on the matter. He has not drawn it to my attention for me to bring it to the attention of the local authorities.

6.30 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I shall not be congratulating the Secretary of State on her speech. Indeed, when she resumed her seat I thought, "Thank goodness we have got to the end of that self-righteous rant."

This month's edition of *GP News*, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), contains a report under the headline:

"Human toll mounts as reforms fail."

It goes on to say:

"Patients have already died waiting for beds."

In that article Dr. Buckman, a member of the General Medical Services Committee, whom the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) claims has not written to her, reveals in tragic detail the case of a severely asthmatic girl who nearly died when Barnet general hospital sent her away because no beds were available.

What I say may be dismissed as shroud waving by some Conservative Members. They would not dismiss things so lightly if members of their own families were affected. What would the Secretary of State say if her mother experienced the suffering of a patient cited by Dr. Buckman—an elderly person with a leaking aortic aneurism who died in the ambulance while a row ensued as to who would pay for the treatment? Conservative

Members would not want tragedies of that sort to affect their families. Labour Members do not want them to affect anybody at all—that is why we demanded today's debate.

It is time the Conservatives admitted, before more tragedies occur, that the internal market has been an unmitigated disaster for health services in Britain. Dr. Buckman's examples highlight the human cost of the greatest crisis in the hospital service since the NHS was formed.

I do not want to talk simply about headline tragedies. I am anxious to bring attention to bear in the debate on what is happening to the NHS throughout the country. The Secretary of State referred to Calderdale. Halifax is one of the two towns comprising that district. There has been a massive bed closure programme in Halifax. It has been going on for the past 13 years and it has led to many serious problems. Management there will hasten to deny it, but I know from talking to members of staff and patients, and from visits to hospitals, that serious problems exist in Calderdale. The Royal Halifax infirmary recently had no beds available for a two-week period. I understand that panic sets in regularly among managers and consultants who are desperate for beds. I also understand that they regularly discharge patients early.

That brings one to the dreadful business of bedding out, which has not been referred to in the debate so far. Bedding out is the norm in most hospitals nowadays. Does the Secretary of State know what bedding out is all about? A woman who had been pregnant recently wrote to me saying that although she was in danger of losing her baby —she finally lost it—placed in the next bed to her was a psycho-geriatric patient. That happened on the gynaecological ward as she was going through the trauma of losing her baby, and it was distressing for both patients and for staff and relatives.

The Secretary of State might feel differently if she had been moved from an acute medical ward to a surgical ward to make way for new admissions. Such transfers happen on a regular basis. Had she experienced it, she might understand just what a rotten practice bedding out is. Elderly people are regularly suffering dreadfully as they are admitted to casualty and have two or three moves as they are bedded out on to different wards to make way for other patients.

It is widely known in Halifax that psycho-geriatric patients are often admitted to ordinary wards for the elderly because there are not enough specialist beds to cope with patients of that type. That, too, puts great stress on staff. Noisy, disturbed and perhaps doubly incontinent patients require special care. Would the Secretary of State describe such a situation as levelling up or levelling down? I assure her that that sort of thing did not happen when I worked in the service in the 1970s.

For years, we in Halifax have not had any coronary care beds for males. Four beds are coming on stream and should have opened on 1 January. I believe that their opening has been delayed due to lack of cash, though the Tory-appointed administrators will no doubt say that the delay has occurred for other reasons. It is high time that those beds came on stream.

Because of the shortage of beds, a practice known as mixing is taking place. I was recently visiting a friend in a ward for elderly females and noticed that there was one elderly male on the ward. I believe that he died during the following 24 hours. I did not regard it as respectable, dignified or comfortable for people of that age to have to be on a mixed ward. I have spoken to many patients in that position and it is clear that they are not happy in that situation. I ask Conservative Members to ask themselves whether, if they were feeling low, they would like to be on a mixed ward. I would not. That is happening as a result of the Government's bed closure programme, and the Tories are proud of it.

The response of the Secretary of State to the types of situation that I have described has been frankly insulting. She tells my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) that he is scaremongering. The criticisms of the British Medical Association are dismissed, the BMA being told that it has said nothing apart from complaining about the NHS being underfunded. The right hon. Lady may say that my hon. Friends and I do not know how the system works, but I accuse her of not understanding what is happening in the NHS. Her highly paid political friends who are now running the service are issuing harsh penalties against anybody who dares to blow the whistle.

We have been made aware of how serious a threat that is to the freedom of staff to speak out. Doctors and nurses are under great pressure not to express their views, as their evidence when trusts were looked into made clear. The Government have devised a special plan for dealing with what one might call the deviant doctor. It is called a rolling contract or a fixed term contract. Tory business managers are casualising the work of doctors. Indeed, they have the ultimate weapon over doctors. As Mr. Chawner of the joint consultative committee with the BMA said:

> "A doctor is bound to think . . . his job is coming to an end . . . unless he complies with some set objective which may not have been set by him or his peers. In fact, at times I have to say I think it may be set for political reasons in that it would be useful to cut a waiting list. That a doctor should be subject to that sort of influence is quite undesirable from the patient's point of view. Doctors should always decide on the basis of an individual patient, in front of him, and not according to whether he is going to please the manager or anyone else."

I would go further than Mr. Chawner. I would call them not rolling or fixed contracts but blackmailing or gagging contracts. Clearly, the present contracts have been well thought out.

Labour Members have time and again said that underfunding is the problem with the NHS. We warned that the Government's guidelines on equal access would be openly flouted. Fast-track patients from GP fund holdings are being canvassed openly and placed at the head of the queue for purely financial reasons. The Secretary of State's excuses on that have been disgraceful.

Because of the 10-minute limit, I do not have time to quote from a letter dated 24 December from the managers of the Bradford trust. They were clearly canvassing GP fund holders in respect of consultants holding waiting lists. That must represent a two-tier system and it should be exposed, as should the waiting list cheating that goes on. Cheating is taking place on a massive scale. The report of the Select Committee and the evidence about trusts makes the position clear. Doctors said that the two-year waiting list was fatally flawed, that people with acute clinical conditions were sometimes unable to get treatment and that they often faced a life and death situation. The Royal College of Nursing says that nurse redundancies are occurring throughout the country, including 300 at Horton psychiatric hospital.

That is happening at a time when political nepotism is the norm. What qualifications does Alan Titterington have

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

to make him a suitable chair for the West Yorkshire ambulance trust? His businesss background is fibre-optics in the music industry—his political background is the chair of a local Conservative association. Nor should we overlook Lord Hayhoe, who yesterday deliberately canvassed for the chair of St. Thomas's and Guy's.

There is only one place for the Tomlinson report, and that is the dustbin. It is disgraceful. I hope that Londoners can get back the feeling of the blitz, recognise who the enemy is, defeat the Government and damn the report.

6.39 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): First, may I make a declaration of an interest? I advise the Western Providence Association, which is a non-profit-making organisation.

I listened most carefully to the speech of the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) whom I have known for years. We served together on the Select Committee. It was interesting to hear that she totally disagrees with her Front Bench on the Tomlinson report.

We have heard on many occasions from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) that he believes that the status quo is no longer an option. I wish that the hon. Gentleman were in his place. Bring back the hon. Member for Livingstone (Mr. Cook); all is forgiven. I may not have agreed with him, but at least he understood and mastered his brief. Here we have a shadow Secretary of State who has hands on, but absolutely no grip whatsoever.

I understand why Opposition Members feel rather twitchy about the motion. It is not so much a motion as a stream of consciousness in the image of Dave Spart. They talk about the growing crisis in the health service, the commercialisation of the health service, concern at the total fragmentation of care due to underfunding, the impact of internal market trusts and GP fund holders. It goes on and on. Worst of all, it contradicts Opposition Front-Bench policy—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members should listen and then they would learn.

Not so long ago we heard the hon. Member for Brightside at the Blackpool conference going on about

"the Tories' own Frankenstein's monster"

and saying that he was committed to getting rid of the trusts. The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) said pretty well the same thing. On 21 August 1992 she told *The Independent* that trusts enjoyed "no public support". She told BBC television that she was committed to getting rid of them.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Absolutely.

Mr. Hayes: Let that be on the record.

When I picked up my copy of *Hospital Doctor* which I recommend to the hon. Lady, I turned to the back page. This is not *The Daily Telegraph* or the Tory press, it is *Hospital Doctor*. It says:

"Labour abandons vow to end trusts".

It goes on:

"Labour has officially reversed its general election pledge to abolish trust hospitals. Announcing the decision, Labour health spokesman David Blunkett said, 'you can't turn the clock back'."

I hope that the hon. Lady totally agrees with the new policy.

Ms. Primarolo: I am happy to say now, to avoid speculation until the end of the debate, that Labour party policy was confirmed by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) this afternoon. We do not accept trusts, GP fund holders or the internal market. The hon. Gentleman has heard that twice now and I hope that he is now clear.

Mr. Hayes: I hope that the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Brightside will be calling for an immediate apology from *Hospital Doctor* for publishing such a terrible travesty, accusing them of making a U-turn.

Opposition Members attack GP fund holders. In *The Times* on 14 January 1993 the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman said that the system would be scrapped. But another medical publication, not the Tory press but *BMA News Review* in January 1993, published an interview with the hon. Member for Brightside saying:

"he is aware, however, that all GPs have benefited from increased flexibility and influence in purchasing decisions".

We watch this space for another dramatic U-turn.

The wonderful Dave Spart motion also attacks underfunding. On 26 September 1992 *The Times* reported:

"On funding, Mr. Blunkett made it clear that Labour was no longer tied to the general election commitment to restore underfunding within the NHS since 1979."

Perhaps there should be another apology. I imagine that the hon. Lady would totally refute that as well.

The Dave Spart motion goes even further, condemning the internal market. The hon. Member for Brightside was reported in *The Times* on 14 January 1993 as saying that Labour should not have any hang-ups about the market. I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman has no hang-ups, which is more than many hon. Members, but perhaps he will demand an apology from *The Times* as in his motion he has condemned the internal market, as have his hon. Friends.

The hon. Member for Halifax made a wonderful attack on Tomlinson. We know full well what the hon. Member for Brightside said about Tomlinson. *The Guardian*, which is not exactly the Tory press, said on 24 October 1992:

"If Labour was in office it would be proceeding in exactly the same way."

But what did the hon. Gentleman say about Tomlinson?

"The status quo is no longer an option."

He went even further in a Labour party press release on 15 October:

"The evidence is now overwhelming that there is a need for the reorganisation and relocation of resources in London."

That was another dramatic U-turn; it is absolutely remarkable.

We have heard something about the BMA backing rationing and saying that we have the worst crisis for 30 years. It is written on the front page of *Hospital Doctor*. However, in the same column the National Association of Health Authorities dismissed the BMA's criticism and allegations. Its director, Phillip Hunt, said:

"I am not disputing that there are problems, but we have to set them against the impressive results that we are achieving on waiting lists."

Hon. Members on both sides of the House should appreciate that.

I have no interest in *Hospital Doctor*, but the first two pages cover eight little stories. One is headed, "Praise for Combined Drug Cash"; another reports neo-natal services in Wales being given an extra £4·5 million boost; another reports nearly £2 million being made available to treat babies with severe combined immuno deficiency-related

disorders and another deals with the United Kingdom's first small intestinal transplant at Addenbrooke. That is all good news.

I am not trying to say that everything is rosy in the national health service; of course it is not. I now refer again to *The Times* and I think that the Opposition may agree with this:

"Imminent demise has been the prognosis on the Health Service almost since its inception, but in recent years complaints that it is falling apart from lack of money have become louder . . . Doctors complain that the service is chronically under-financed, that their incomes have not kept pace with inflation and that the 1974 reorganisation led to chaos in hospital services."

That article was in *The Times* in 1978. Nothing whatsoever is new.

Ms. Primarolo: Except that the money was spent.

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Lady said that the money was spent and I expect that she is about to make an incredibly crass point about bureaucracy. Let me give her some help. For every £1 spent on bureaucracy, £47 is spent on doctors and nurses——

Ms. Primarolo: So?

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Lady says "So?" but it is incredibly important. We have increased financing of the health service in real terms by 57 per cent. and £100 million a day is being spent on the national health service.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) made an interesting speech. Although she did not tell us what the Liberal Democrats would do, she said that they would make a commitment to an extra £2 billion. She made that commitment at the general election, but that was the precise amount that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State got for the health service in the last financial round.

6.49 pm

Ms. Jean Corston (Bristol, East): This debate is well named. There is a crisis in the health service and it is necessary to go back to the founding principles to identify it. One of my most treasured possessions is a leaflet sent out to the population in 1948 by the Central Office of Information entitled "The New National Health Service." It said:

"Your new National Health Service begins on 5th July. What is it? How do you get it?

It will provide you with all medical, dental, and nursing care. Everyone—rich or poor, man, woman or child—can use it or any part of it. There are no charges, except for a few special items. There are no insurance qualifications. But it is not a 'charity'. You are all paying for it, mainly as taxpayers, and it will relieve your money worries in time of illness."

Those were the founding principles of the NHS, but the Government's policy is a retreat from them. They spent £1·7 billion to change the service—and I emphasise the word "service"—into a market.

Like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), I make no apology for using anecdotes. Unlike the Secretary of State, I understand that health care is about personal experience rather than statistics, and anecdotes are all that can relate personal experience. I shall explain the consequences of the Government's policy on Bristol by using letters written to me by constituents. I consider that to be a reasonable way of dealing with the matter.

There is now a 19-month wait for an orthopaedic out-patient appointment at Frenchay hospital. I discussed that with trust officers, who confirmed that it was true and said that it was the norm. They said that it was due to underfunding. Are they whingers? Are they shroud wavers?

A woman constituent wrote to me saying that her condition caused her such pain and distress that she is afraid that she will have to give up work. She cannot even get an out-patient appointment at a clinic in the directorate of surgery at the Bristol Royal infirmary. She cannot get on to the waiting lists that we are told are being reduced. Another example is of a frantic woman waiting half a Saturday afternoon for her collapsed husband to be taken to hospital by ambulance because the bed bureau could not find a bed.

At the ambulance service, which is now a trust, the aim of the management is to cover 95 per cent. of shifts. Ambulance crews say that the cover should be 100 per cent.; that is their commitment. However, to provide that cover they have to work through their meal breaks and rest periods. Meanwhile, to make money the trust has produced a corporate brochure advertising servicing and maintenance of vehicles; sales of pagers, portable radios and telephones; and first aid and driver training courses. The logical conclusion for patients of all that is that money talks.

Another constituent who needed a physiotherapy assessment after a serious accident telephoned the Bristol Royal infirmary to ask when he would get that appointment. He was told—he says somewhat irritably—that it would be at least a month. When he mentioned that membership of BUPA was a condition of his employment and asked whether that made any difference, he was told to come at 2.30 pm that day. That is what is happening. If the Secretary of State were to wander around our hospitals incognito and talk to staff and patients, she would see that for herself, rather than being shielded by officials and protected by a massive departmental public relations machine.

The United States private health care system has admirers in the Conservative party, but one third of the population has no cover, one third has inadequate cover and one third has some overprovision. It is no accident that President Clinton won the election when he promised a proper health care system; the market has been shown to be wasteful and inefficient. One 200-bed hospital in Massachusetts employs 220 staff to send out bills to various insurance companies. I have spoken to consultants working in our hospitals who are overwhelmed by the paperwork in the new market system. Is the American experience to be our inheritance? The price of each General Motors car in the USA includes $1,050 for the cost of its employees' private health care. The company is now thinking of relocating to Canada where there is a health care system.

The Government are always telling us that we cannot have the social chapter, wages councils or a decent minimum wage because of what they claim to be the burden on employers. Will they tell us what is the current cost to commerce and industry of providing health care insurance for employees? To cap it all, I understand that BUPA is in contact with the Dental Practice Board to consider the feasibility of a national private dental insurance scheme.

I met members of the Avon dental committee yesterday. They described a system that is fast breaking down. The Department of Health concept of the "average"

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dentist bears no reality to the true position in Avon; neither does the assumption that a dentist's pre-tax income after expenses is £35,805. Dentists in Bristol would need to increase their gross income by at least £20,000 a year to guarantee that level of income.

Many of my constituents in Hengrove are being told that their dentist can no longer continue to provide NHS treatment and they are being invited to join a scheme called Denplan at a cost of £9·75 per month. To add the insult of bureaucratic red tape to the injury of a withering service, patients are now subject to automatic monthly deregistration from a dentist's register. Adults who have not contacted their dentists for two years—for children it is one year—are taken off the list by the Dental Practice Board. They then have to shop around for NHS treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney *indicated dissent.*

Ms. Corston: It is no use the Minister shaking his head—that is the experience of dentists who spoke to me yesterday. The Minister should try telling them that that is not the case.

To safeguard their patients' position, dentists now send out reminders telling patients to make an appointment so that they do not risk deregistration. However, the dentists have to bear the added costs of the administration, printing and postage. Most dentists in Avon are keeping open their current lists, but they are not adding patients. The Medical Sickness Society will no longer cover dental practitioners beyond the age of 55 because of its experience of claims resulting from the stress of trying to work harder to keep up. I was told of a dental technician who worked from 2 am to 6 pm to make a living.

The Bloomfield report will not lead to initiatives until 1993-94. Avon dentists told me yesterday that that would be too late. They asked me to draw the attention of the Secretary of State to paragraph 2.6 on page 3 of the report, which states:

"I have been asked to identify options"—

and the word "options" is emphasised—

"for change rather than a single recommended course. I welcomed this opportunity to examine alternative possibilities. The sums made available for the remuneration of General Dental Practitioners are not simply for the purpose of paying dentists but for the wider purpose of securing dental health. Much will depend upon the direction in which Government—no doubt after full discussion with the relevant interests—wishes NHS dentistry to go."

The dentists ask, "Which way do the Government want NHS dentistry to go?" They say that it is fast going down the drain.

6.58 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I have some sympathy with the Opposition today because when I was first elected to the House in 1974 I spent my first few years on the Opposition Benches. From time to time, Opposition Supply days are available and the Opposition have to find a subject for debate. It has to be one on which they can try to prove that the Government are not doing a good job and they could do better. That is the Opposition's position today. After an interval of two years, they have settled upon the NHS. I suppose the feeling was that the health service is always a good subject for the purposes of finding something somewhere that has gone wrong. But the Opposition may well be having second thoughts about their wisdom in choosing this topic for debate, having been so effectively dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in a very robust speech. In my view, she won game, set and match, as she did at Question Time today.

Inevitably the cry is for more money—hardly a new or original slogan. But we all know that more money than ever is being spent on the national health service, and we heard from my right hon. Friend today of a further £2 billion. The argument is not simply about how much money is spent but also about how it is spent. That is the important issue that we are discussing today.

The other theme that has been coming through revolves around the in-word "crisis". How very original. When has the national health service not been in crisis? I made a point of looking up the definition of "crisis". Presumably the Opposition are using it in the sense of an emergency or a time of distress—as they allege. But a crisis, by definition, is also a crucial or decisive moment or a turning-point. That is where the national health service is. We all remember the 1980s, when although more and more resources were being devoted to the health service, there were still lengthening waiting lists and variations in the quality and efficiency of service up and down the country. This led to the Prime Minister's instigation of the review that resulted in the White Paper from which flowed the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. I have vivid memories of serving on the Standing Committee that dealt with that Bill.

A review of health services is hardly unique to this country. Such exercises are taking place in countries all over the world. It is well that, following the general election, there was a change in the health affairs personnel on the Opposition Front Bench. If the dire predictions of the hon. Members for Livingstone (Mr. Cook) and for Peckham (Ms. Harman) were quoted to their faces, they would at least blush, if not hang their heads in shame.

The truth is that the reforms are working and that the beneficiaries are the patients. I am not saying that the reforms are working smoothly. There are bound to be problems in a new climate and with a new way of working. Hospitals must learn that when they know the contracted work for elective activity the work load must be phased. They must involve the clinicians in the management process, and the clinicians must be willing to be so involved. The situation is not easy. There are bound to be teething problems, but what is intended can be done and, indeed, is being done up and down the country. Only here and there have problems arisen. Everybody can learn from the experience of the early days of these reforms, just as we are learning from the experience of the role of the GP fund holders, who can themselves negotiate contracts. There are bound to be circumstances in which health authorities have exhausted their budgets and where hospitals have capacity that the fund holders can use. Why not, if priorities and emergencies are not overridden? Consultants are now going to surgeries to do work on the spot for fund holders—a new concept for surgeons, but surely a good one. This too is working for the benefit of patients.

Some problems have certainly arisen with regard to extra-contractual referrals. Perhaps that too was inevitable, as this was unknown territory. Again we are learning from experience, and health authorities may need

to earmark a larger proportion of their budgets for extra contractual referrals. But the fact is that the reforms are working.

As soon as the White Paper proposals came out, it was obvious that they would have a particular effect on London. I recall discussing this matter with a previous Secretary of State—not the last one but the one before that, I think. Up to now general practitioners in outer London and the home counties have tended to refer cases to their friends in the inner London hospitals. Now, because of costs, they refer far more on a local basis. It would have been easy to let matters take their course, to have a gradual falling-off of activity in the London hospitals, some of which would eventually have withered on the vine. But this would have been messy, it would not have been in the interests of patients, and it would have been costly.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the fact that she grasped this nettle by asking Professor Tomlinson to look at the matter and make recommendations. Clearly there must be managed change. I admire the way in which the Tomlinson report is now being considered in detail, and I admire especially the diligent manner in which my hon. Friend the Minister for Health is visiting every hospital and—contrary to the impression given by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne)—listening to representations about the proposals in the report.

It is interesting to note the similarities between the Tomlinson report and the King's Fund report and to note the number of hospitals—such as Guy's and St. Thomas's, Brompton and Marsden—which, by discussing possible ways forward, were anticipating Tomlinson before he even started his work. I eagerly await my right hon. Friend's decision, but should like to make two comments.

First, we must not lose sight of the fact that Tomlinson is not only about the number of hospital beds—at present there are four acute beds per 1,000 people in London, as against 2·5 nationally—but also about primary and community care in inner London, which is well below the national average and, clearly, under-resourced. Secondly, Tomlinson looked at medical need but, on his own admission, did not quantify costs, on the rather curious ground that it would be too difficult to do so. I do not need to tell my right hon. Friend or the House that costs cannot be ignored, that they are an essential element of any political decision. We have to consider not only the loss of capital investment that the closure of hospitals entails but also the cost of effecting some of the moves that are proposed.

It is obviously important that some of the centres of excellence in London be retained. But, whereas some are simply teams of highly qualified people—and it is immaterial where they work from—others involve specially constructed units and complex equipment. For example, one needs only to visit the cardiac unit at Brompton hospital to see that its removal to purpose-built premises at Charing Cross hospital might be possible but would be enormously expensive. Then there is the unique asthma/allergy centre that is under construction at Guy's. Incidentally, that centre was financed largely by funds raised voluntarily.

There are two other matters that I wish to raise briefly. First, I pay tribute to the work of the voluntary hospices, which perform such a valuable role in relieving the national health service by providing high-quality care to people nearing the end of their days. From modest beginnings—pioneered by Dame Cicely Saunders—they have become a national movement. I welcome the fact that the Department gives them some support, but more would certainly be welcome.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend will not be surprised if I mention the question of nurse prescribing. In view of my personal involvement, I was naturally deeply disappointed at the decision—one of the autumn statement measures—to defer implementation. But, more to the point, it was a very deep disappointment to the thousands of nurses who were looking forward to such a step——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order.

7.9 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I wish to speak about the future of St. Bartholomew's hospital. Last Wednesday a candlelit procession moved from Bart's to St. Paul's cathedral. This was followed by a service as part of the campaign to save Bart's. Sixteen hundred people prayed to God that Bart's would survive. Afterwards the Dean of St. Paul's said to me, "If Bart's does survive, perhaps we should have a thanksgiving service." I pointed out to him that, because of the personal determination of the Secretary of State to close it, Bart's might not survive. We may have to rely on the Prime Minister's political antennae which tell him that there will be an enormous eruption if the hospital is closed.

People are puzzled at the attitude of the Secretary of State. They ask why she seems determined to do what the Black Death, Henry VIII and Hitler's bombers could not do. They ask why she desires to destroy St. Bartholomew's hospital. The answer is simple. It lies in the fact that she wants to get rid of the impediment which has blocked her political career—the fact that she has less political clout than the proverbial feather falling on a blancmange. She wants to be able to say that she took on the finest doctors in Britain and beat them. She wants to be able to say that she closed down the best hospital in the world, and it shows how strong she it. Closing down the best hospital in the world, however, is a sign not of strength but of weakness.

The House will be interested to know that shortly before Christmas, St. Bartholomew's hospital received a telephone call from one of the best-known journalists in the country who said that he had dined with the Secretary of State and that she had told him she was going to close Bart's. We have recorded a number of occasions, mainly Conservative functions, when she has told people that she will close Bart's. Bearing in kind that one is not supposed to prejudge a consultation, this is a contempt of Parliament and an insult to democracy.

To show that I am even-handed, I should like to say of the Minister for Health, with whom I have had many talks since the consultation began, that I have found him to be courteous, charming and propriety itself. When the decision to keep Bart's open is finally made, I imagine that the Secretary of State will resign and that he will take her job. Congratulations, doctor.

There is something special about a hospital that can persuade one of our greatest cathedrals to hold a service for it. There is something special about a hospital that has persuaded no fewer than 750,000 Londoners, an enormous number, to sign petitions in its favour. Looking back over the past 50 years, I cannot remember an occasion when one single, small institution facing political survival has

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had such support. I dare say that no institution this century facing political survival on its own has had the same amount of political support.

There is something special about a hospital that has support from every part of the globe. I have here a publication which contains 53 letters from all parts of the world to the Prime Minister. We also know that the Prime Minister has received a large number of letters of which St. Bartholomew's hospital does not have a copy. In addition to that, Professor Leslie Rees, the dean of the medical school, has received 406 letters from 46 countries round the world. They are from doctors and specialists, all of whom are pre-eminent in their field. So, in total, 500 top doctors and medical scientists around the globe have pleaded for St. Bartholomew's hospital to stay open.

I will give a few brief quotations. Herbert Pardes, dean of the faculty of medicine of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University, writes to the Prime Minister:

"The adverse effects of closing St. Bartholomew's Hospital will be felt not only in the United Kingdom, but the medical community throughout the world. What's more, it may raise justifiable doubts about the future viability of the British biomedical research establishment which is already under attack by recent extensive budget cuts."

Joe Leigh Simpson, faculty professor at the University of Tennessee, Memphis, writes about the proposed closure of Bart's:

"I hope this is mere rumor as I personally have ongoing experience with two groups of valued collaborators—Professor Nicholas Wald (Epidemiology) and Professors Gedis Grudzinskas and Timothy Chard (Reproductive Endocrinology/Biology). I can personally attest that both these groups are not merely national (U.K. treasures) but rather worldwide resources."

Professor Jorn Nerup from the Steno Diabetes Center in Denmark writes to our Prime Minister:

"Seen from abroad, closing this excellent institution and dispersing its facilities and specialists to other locations will be a major loss for British as well as for international medical science."

Lastly, Professor Jenkin from the Toronto-Bayview Regional Cancer Centre writes to our Prime Minister:

"I have recently heard, to my distress, that there is an official proposal to close and disperse St. Bartholomew's Hospital. I cannot understand the thinking that must have gone into such a decision . . . [it] is quite unbelievable and surely unprecedented."

The Secretary of State, in attempting to take on the whole of the world's medical establishment, is surely behaving like some female version of Doctor Strangelove.

I have spoken in an Adjournment debate, but I want to make two further brief points. Tomlinson measures bed efficiency by the number of beds that a hospital uses to treat 1,000 patients. He uses this analysis to say that there is a great deal of scope for efficiency improvements in London as a whole, and that this factor, rather than changes in patient flows, will be crucial in determining loss of beds. Yet, amazingly, in his analysis of individual hospitals' vulnerability, Tomlinson includes potential loss of patient flows, but makes absolutely no reference to performance on efficiency.

The North East Thames regional health authority submitted figures to the Tomlinson inquiry in July. The figures were not published, but I have them here. On bed efficiency, they show that Bart's is more efficient than the Royal London, the Royal Free, University College Hospital/Middlesex and the Whittington/Royal Northern. Further figures show that, taking the combined effect of efficiency improvements and loss of distant patient referrals, Bart's is less vulnerable to bed loss than any other inner London provider in the North East Thames region—that is, less vulnerable than the Royal London, which it is proposed to keep open, the Royal Free, UCH/Middlesex and the Whittington/Royal Northern.

The region also submitted to Tomlinson an analysis of day cases as a measure of efficiency and progressive clinical practice. It shows that Bart's fared better than the Royal London, the Royal Free, UCH/Middlesex and the Whittington/Royal Northern.

There is, therefore, a gigantic inconsistency in the Tomlinson report. Tomlinson says that efficiency is the key to bed loss in London. He says that the survival of many hospitals will depend on it. Yet he recommends the closure of the hospital in north-east London with the best record of efficiency.

My last point concerns the financial deficit of Bart's. Tomlinson wrote that the unit was in severe recurrent financial difficulties. The Minister of Health, quite rightly, has bullied and cajoled Bart's into bringing its deficit down. In June this year, its total projected deficit was £11·45 million, made up of £6·74 million recurring deficit and £4·71 million non-recurring deficit. As a result of the extraordinary efforts of the new chief executive, Professor Besser, two days ago the total deficit had come down from £11·45 million to £5·5 million, made up of £2·45 million recurring deficit and £3·1 million non-recurring deficit. That is an extraordinary example of bringing finances under control. The news that I have for the House, however, will excite the Minister and make him ecstatic, because early this morning I was lying——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to cut the hon. Member's peroration short. Mr. James Cran.

7.19 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): This is one of those occasions that generates a great deal more heat than light. I am bound to say that, on the basis of the evidence before me, most of the light in today's debate has been shed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in what was a superb speech.

I say that against the background of the Opposition's motion which is peppered with exaggerations—"growing crisis", "total fragmentation", "destruction of NHS dentistry". That is simply not reflected in my constituency in east Yorkshire. From correspondence with my constituents, I know that they take the view that the internal market is beneficial to their interests and is delivering, as the Americans would say, the bacon to the people of east Yorkshire.

I freely admit—it is only prudent to do so—that general practitioners were unhappy in the run-up to becoming fund holders. They distributed leaflets to my constituents describing the dire consequences of fund holding. I would not say all of them, but many are now beginning to see the benefits to which they have signed up.

The same applies to the staff in the trusts in my constituency. Before the event, staff could not relate to this thing called the national health service because it was too

big. They had few means of communicating with anyone. Now the NHS has been broken down into units to which they can relate.

I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) say in an intervention in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that he had unsuccessfully requested statistics relating to the health service in Yorkshire. I have found it exceedingly easy to obtain statistics on health provision in Yorkshire. All I had to do was to ask for them, and I got them.

I could spend much time outlining those beneficial statistics, but I shall not do so because I do not have the time. Suffice it to say that statistics resulting from a survey of health users in the Yorkshire region, which was published in November last year by the National Association of Health Authorities, show a satisfaction rate of 89 to 90 per cent. Such a level of satisfaction would not be achieved if the Opposition's motion, to which I am having to address myself, was the case. It simply would not be so.

The Opposition could and perhaps should say that the level of satisfaction should be higher. If so, I would agree. That would be a reasonable statement to make. But, on the basis of a 90 per cent. satisfaction rate, it is not reasonable to say that the NHS in my neck of the woods is in crisis.

My constituency has a first-class general hospital, the Castle Hill hospital, built mainly out of own resources. I receive few complaints from my constituents about health care and health delivery at that hospital. Out-patient cover there has increased by about 54 per cent.

Opposition Members have spent much time talking about long waiting lists, but open heart surgery in my constituency has one of the shortest waiting lists in the country. The same is true of cardiology. Patients are attracted from all around the country to my constituency and the Castle Hill hospital.

There is clear evidence that people prefer day care and Castle Hill hospital and my authority are responding to that. I repeat that my constituents are not complaining in the way that Opposition Members are. In addition, the radiological unit at Castle Hill hospital is acquiring a new digital X-ray machine and a whole body scanner.

I could go on and on outlining—*[Interruption.]* I know that Opposition Members would really like me to go on, and if I had the time I would. I shall simply say that the evidence does not seem to show a service in retreat.

However, naturally, all is not completely well. It would be silly for me to say that everything is well. Of course, it is not. My constituents' access to orthopaedic surgery is not as it should be. One of my constituents had to wait 96 weeks for an appointment with the relevant consultant. That is simply not good enough, as we all know. However, I can report that my health authority and the hospital trusts are moving like greased lightning to reduce that waiting list. If it does not reduce to the level to which I think that it should, I shall make vigorous representations to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health and my health authority. But I am confident that improvement is on the way.

I have no worries that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not respond in the way that I would wish to the Bloomfield report on dentistry in the NHS. I simply want to register the fact that my constituents wish to be able to obtain dental care within the NHS. They do not want, as is reported to me to be the case in other parts of the country, only private dental care to be available. That is not acceptable to my constituents. It is in that light that I would expect my right hon. Friend to respond to the Bloomfield report.

The Department of Health has looked in some detail at no fault compensation. In one case at the Beverley Westwood hospital, not involving one of my constituents, a child was starved of oxygen at birth with the result that she sustained severe mental injury. Eight years later the health authority has decided upon a settlement of £1 million. The delay is just not good enough. All hon. Members will appreciate that the family in question has gone through eight years of sheer hell. I hope that it is not beyond the wit of man to devise a compensation system whereby such families would not have such an agonising wait and I await the comments of the Secretary of State.

In summary, the NHS in my constituency is in good order. We deeply resent people, particularly politicians, running down the NHS. Thus, Opposition Members who would like to see how the NHS should be run should come to my constituency. I should be delighted to welcome them and show them around.

7.27 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I listened carefully to the Secretary of State and some of what she said surprised me greatly. She expressed great respect and admiration for workers in the NHS, but went on to denounce members of the National Union of Public Employees and other trade unions. Apparently, she respects only those NHS workers who are not members of a trade union.

The right hon. Lady talked about the hot line, or the information line, that she is opening today. That will not be much use to the gentleman in my constituency who wrote to me recently to say that his urological operation had been cancelled three times and to ask whether I could find out when he was likely to have it. In reply to my inquiry, the Royal London hospital trust said that the district health authority was low on funds and could afford only emergency and urgent operations and my constituent would be considered in April in the new financial year.

The Secretary of State said that people often do not know to what services they are entitled. In the old days, my constituents knew very well how to get their services. They used to go to their GP, wait a few weeeks and get an appointment with a consultant who would then put them on his list and they would have an operation within a fairly short time. Now they do not know how to obtain the services that they need, because those services are not there. Such services are not free; people have paid national insurance contributions throughout their working lives to receive them. Some of those people have hardly used the national health service in the past, but, when they are older and need an operation, they find that the service is no longer there for them.

I am sure that the Royal London hospital has not given up all elective surgery; but for whom is it performing that surgery? Is it performing surgery for people who live outside London and whose GPs are budget holders? That is very likely.

An old friend of mine, whom I have not seen for years, telephoned me today: he said that he had had four heart attacks, and was waiting for a bypass operation. He went to Kings College hospital in south London, and was told that he would have to wait for at least 15 months. He said

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to me, rather naively, "Strangely enough, the only three people who were admitted came from quite far away: one of them lived in Ramsgate. I could not understand it. All of us local people were sent home. Perhaps they were emergency cases." I thought, "Perhaps their GPs were budget holders, or their district health authorities had not run out of funds."

The system is becoming totally unfair. As many hon. Members have pointed out, it is turning into a two-tier system. This callous, inefficient, doctrinaire, bungling Government are destroying the benefits of a service that people have enjoyed for four decades.

The Royal London hospital trust—the very organisation that wrote to tell me how sorry it was that my constituent's operation had been cancelled three times; that the trust understood how awful that must be, but he still could not have the operation—is in favour of the Tomlinson report. It is closing one of its two accident and emergency departments in February, but says that it can deal with some of the specialty work currently handled by Bart's, along with paediatric work currently handled by the Queen Elizabeth children's hospital: a merger is proposed between that hospital and the Homerton hospital. The trust also says that it can take on the work of the London chest hospital and sell its site. It can do all that—it is into empire building—but it cannot operate on a man whose operation has already been cancelled three times.

I recently visited the Queen Elizabeth children's hospital and the London chest hospital, and met the general managers of both hospitals. The London chest hospital is in a rather salubrious, unusually green part of the borough of Tower Hamlets, near Victoria park. It has a wonderful reputation: many people have written to me saying how awful it would be if it closed and how it saved their lives, or their mothers' lives. If it becomes part of the Royal London hospital—separated from the Brompton chest hospital—the building will be sold in the medium term: that is the plan. Patients with severe respiratory problems will be treated in the Whitechapel area, in the midst of filth and dust, rather than in the green area that contains the London chest hospital, with all its marvellous facilities. That will not benefit the people of London, no matter how the Secretary of State twists the truth and tries to pull the wool over our eyes. It will damage their chances of good treatment, and will prevent lives from being saved and improved.

Although Tomlinson treats it as a general hospital, the Queen Elizabeth children's hospital is more than that. It is a specialist hospital. If it is merged with Homerton, Great Ormond Street hospital will be affected very badly. I was told by officials at Queens that, without the Queen Elizabeth children's hospital, Great Ormond Street would be unable to provide the full range of paediatric care for which it is universally renowned. The research in pathology, radiology and anaesthetics which, for babies and children, represents a very special sphere of practice is done at the Queen Elizabeth children's hospital. If the Tomlinson proposals are implemented, the Great Ormond Street hospital will have to compete in the market, and is unlikely to be able to do so successfully: a comparatively small volume of the population uses its services, and the highly specialised procedures for small children are expensive.

The Carshalton and Westminster children's hospitals are closing, so that London will be the only capital city without a specialist children's hospital. Hospitals in Toronto, Boston and Melbourne, for instance, all work on the system used by the Queen Elizabeth and Great Ormond Street hospitals. We should view the matter in context: 30 per cent. of babies in London attend an accident and emergency department in the first six months of their lives, and 15 per cent. are kept in—mostly with respiratory and gastroenterinal problems. The child population in Tower Hamlets, on the borders of which the Queen Elizabeth hospital is situated, will grow by up to 19 per cent. in the next few years, and the area has twice the average number of premature births. These recommendations can only lead to the death of babies and children through lack of facilities. In these circumstances, do hon. Members think it is worthwhile to implement a doctrinaire policy about market forces in order to save money? I certainly do not; nor do my constituents, and nor would any right-minded person.

The Tomlinson proposals will affect Londoners severely. We want better primary health care in Tower Hamlets; there are many single-person practices there, and, although the position has improved, it could improve further. We want better care in the community—and we want the funding for it: in the past, care in the community has meant increased burdens on carers of both sexes, but especially women, and, often, on the whole family. "Care in the Community" has meant no real care, but the imposition of more burdens on people who are already doing more than their fair share—picking up the pieces of the welfare state that the Government are destroying. As my hon. Friends have pointed out, 13,000 Londoners are on waiting lists. The Americans are currently demanding, and moving towards, better health care provision; meanwhile, our Government are moving us towards the bad arrangements that have existed in that country hitherto.

A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have mentioned dentistry. The Government have offered early retirement to all dentists over the age of 55. My dentist has taken it; he would have been stupid not to. But it is a way of encouraging large numbers of dentists to leave the health service. The other day, my husband had a small filling and his teeth cleaned: it cost £12·60. He was told, "This is the last time; at the end of January, the dentist will retire and do only private practice. He will not work in the health service any more." That dentist had spent 20 years in the health service. I said, "What will the same cost privately?" I was told, "Between £45 and £50."

I remember the days before the health service. I remember when many people in my constituency—not necessarily old people; some were not much more than 20—had no teeth. Their teeth had been pulled out, they could not afford false teeth, their gums had hardened and they had had to eat sops. I recall clearly their gummy faces. Do we want a repetition of that? I fear that, with prices such as this, many people will be unable to afford dental treatment. Meanwhile, competition to get on to the list of a national health service dentist is becoming increasingly fierce.

Opposition Members are proud of the health service. Labour created it, and is justly proud of its creation.

Londoners are proud of their hospitals, and do not want them to close. I have had an enormous postbag about Bart's, although it is in an adjacent constituency. We want to modernise and improve the health service, but on the basis of the fundamental principles——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: May I finish my sentence?

Madam Deputy Speaker: No; I am sorry.

7.37 pm

Mr. Gerald Malone (Winchester): I am sorry to have to disagree with one of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), but I feel safe in doing so because he is not in the Chamber. He suggested that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) was not nearly so welcome as his predecessor. I profoundly disagree: I believe that in this debate we can put in context some of the remarks made by Opposition Members before the general election, and some of their predictions about the health service which would result from the re-election of a Conservative Government. One of my hon. Friends mentioned that earlier, but chose not to return to the assertions made then. It may be worth detaining the House for long enough to quote some of those predictions, so that we can see whether they would be endorsed yet again by Opposition Members.

We were told by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that we were moving quickly towards a system in which patients would die in casualty rooms while the accountant was finding out who would pay for them. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) said that she had never heard of waving the shroud before: I commend that totally unsupported assertion as just one example of what was happening on the Opposition Benches during the last Parliament. We also heard from the Labour party that the Government were planning to embark on the final stage of selling off those hospitals that they had prepared for privatisation, that we were proposing to return health care to the free market of the 1930s and that we were creating trusts which would not be part of the NHS. That was one of the five great scare stories, which ran for some months without any foundation, none of which came to pass and none of which will come to pass.

I welcome the transition of the hon. Member for Livingston to another post and the arrival of the hon. Member for Brightside, from whom we heard not scare stories but nothing at all. We certainly heard little to support the contention in the Opposition motion that the health service is in crisis, and we heard nothing about the second part of the motion, which calls for reform. What reform? I doubt that we shall hear more detail from the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) because the truth of the matter, whether she or other Opposition Members like it or not, is that Labour has conceded that our reforms will remain broadly in place—and quite right, too.

I wish to deal with the free market in health, which has not been mentioned so far. It is not a free market at all. Opposition Members suggest that the unseen, hidden hand of the market is directing reforms in patient care. That is sheer balderdash. There is a seen hand in the internal marketplace which has been created by national health service trusts—the seen hand of primary care. We must not forget that what underpins the reforms is the fact that, for the first time in the health service, provision will be dictated by primary carers. It is not the unseen hand of accountants that will dictate what happens, but the seen hand of need as determined by general practitioners who will be able to place contracts and have them fulfilled.

Many eloquent speeches have been made on the Tomlinson report by Opposition Members who have constituency interests, I too, have a constituency interest, but it is somewhat different. It lies at the heart of what Tomlinson is trying to do—to reallocate resources within the health service to areas of population expansion and away from areas of population decline. That is what drives the report. Wessex region has, historically, received one of the lowest allocations of resources in the country, principally because a tremendous amount of resources have been siphoned off to nearby London. I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend the Minister that Wessex's 1·5 per cent. increase in real terms for 1993-94 is extremely welcome, taking Wessex's budget to over £1 billion for the first time, but still leaving it as one of the lowest areas of expenditure per head of population. However, Wessex has experienced the highest growth in population of any area in the south in the past 10 or 15 years. I welcome the Tomlinson report because it will mean that resources follow population in a more sensible pattern than hitherto, which will be to the long-term good of health care not only in the Wessex region but throughout the country.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a tremendous speech in opening the debate. She and other health Ministers have made remarkable efforts to visit all the hospitals affected by and mentioned in the Tomlinson report and to listen to what is said. I hope that she will decide that some of the decisions about hospitals will be determined by those in the primary care sector, who by the contracts that they provide will show what the health service pattern should be in London. I hope that that will determine the process.

An application made last year for the Winchester integrated health care trust was rejected because it was deemed not to be in the interests of the Government's policy for it to be an integrated trust. The application has been resubmitted with some changes, and I commend it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is important that Winchester should be carried along in the fourth tranche of health care trusts. Some changes have been made since the previous application was submitted. Some fear was expressed that the extent of current clinical and management integration in the health service in Winchester would not enable a self-standing trust to operate. I have taken considerable care to speak to all those who provide the service. Management changes have been effected and are being implemented. I believe that it will be well worth while giving the application close consideration again. I do not want to go through all the details in this short debate, but I shall write to my hon. Friend the Minister soon to back up the arguments advanced by those who provide health care in my constituency.

I join other hon. Members in paying tribute to those who provide health care in our constituencies. We owe them a tremendous debt. They do a tremendous job, but they do a better job under the reforms that the Government have put in place than they were able to do before. A record number of patients have been treated in Winchester this year. Like many other hospitals, we are

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now experiencing problems with pressure, but they do not disguise the fact that 28,000 patients have been treated. That was the target, but it has been exceeded by 400 already and there is still some time to go. It is a bit rich to suggest that such success, where budgets are being used by enthusiastic medical personnel and where more patients are being treated than before, is not an improvement on the previous situation.

The debate has exposed clearly the paucity of Labour policies for the health service. They criticised the health service in the run-up to the last election and exaggerated its position, saying things which were not going to happen and, what is worse, which they knew were not going to happen and formed no part of the Government's policy. We have now seen a collapse into inactivity. Labour Members do not know what their policy is. They have fumbled and mumbled about what they would do, but they will not come out—I shall be interested to see whether we hear more about this in the winding up speeches—with a detailed policy about why we are wrong and what they would do about it.

7.47 pm

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): The World Health Organisation has defined health as

"a state of complete physical and mental well-being and not merely the absence of disease."

Health economists inevitably place themselves in an uneasy position if the economy being promoted by them undermines that well-being, which should be central to their endeavour. In short, what has gone wrong with the national health service?

Rationalisation really means centralisation, whereby the central, powerful and big are allowed to colonise the weak, small and peripheral. In other words, central institutions are dictating people's need, rather than responding to needs of the people. We have the technology to put men on the moon, yet there is much debate about whether women can have their babies in the local hospital.

Since the Westminster election of 1987, the Conservative Government have embarked on a reorganisation of the health service that owes more to the ideology of the marketplace than to real concern for the health and well-being of people. Northern Ireland has adopted a copy of those proposals, regardless of the different circumstances of small size, high levels of deprivation and the fact that regional specialist services are provided in a single location.

The Government's changes are not intended to reform the national health service as a public service but to deform it into a commercial business. Hospitals are being forced to compete against each other for business rather than to co-operate with each other for the benefit of the patient. The national health service is not and should not be treated as a marketplace. There is no proper democratic accountability.

The Royal group of hospitals in Belfast, which includes the Royal Victoria, the Royal Maternity and the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, and which is in the heart of my constituency, is among the finest in Western Europe. It is not only in the front line of medicine but has been in the front line of civil unrest and conflict in Northern Ireland for more than 20 years. It serves the people of Belfast and, through its regional services, the people of Northern Ireland. I pay tribute to the nurses, doctors and other professionals who, with the non-professional staff, have given so much to the health and welfare of the people.

It takes much more than manpower to run a health service. Under the so-called rationalisation of services, many peripheral hospitals in Northern Ireland have been closed and there has been a serious reduction in the number of beds in the larger ones, including the Royal group of which I spoke.

The incidence of coronary artery disease in Northern Ireland is one of the highest in the world. Through its research, the Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association has shown that 1,200 bypass operations are needed each year, but only half that number was being carried out because of a lack of staff and resources. However, I accept that the chief medical officer in Northern Ireland is doing something about that at present.

The Royal group of hospitals has applied for trust status and will become self-governing on 1 April. While I wish the chief executive and his staff well, I believe that the road ahead is fraught with great difficulties. Only in the past few days we have been informed that the Eastern health board had a secret meeting last week. It is to hold a public meeting on, I think, Thursday and will put forward proposals that will decimate those great hospitals. Even those seeking trust status have been taken by surprise.

Like other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I read last week's *British Medical Journal* which said that many hospitals around Britain are working at less than full capacity because health authorities do not have enough money to buy their services. Apparently, some of those hospitals will have to scale down admissions and operations unless they can obtain more funds from the health authorities and fund-holding general practices that buy their services.

The Government have ignored the wishes and needs of the people. Perhaps they will listen to the British Medical Association which said that the breakdown of many hospital services, which will lead to a two-tier provision to patients in many parts of the country, is wholly unacceptable. The current cash-limited funding is inadequate to deliver fully comprehensive patient care. Also like other hon. Members, I read the letter that the Consultants Specialist Committee recently published which speaks of the difficulties of most of the hospitals in Great Britain.

In the Government's strategy for community care, it is right to place great emphasis on keeping the elderly, the mentally and physically handicapped and the chronically sick in the community if at all possible. However, proper resources and care for the carers are extremely important. There are an estimated 210,000 carers in Northern Ireland according to the Carers National Association and without them current Government policy would be a nonsense. They are unpaid and largely uncomplaining. Much greater emphasis must be put on respite care which can be of such tremendous benefit to the carer.

Earlier, reference was made to the young man who went into the lion's den. One of the greatest problems in primary health care is with the young psychotic or schizophrenic who refuses treatment. I know that the Secretary of State for Health expressed her concern at the time and I shall certainly wait with great interest for any realistic proposals to resolve that burning issue.

Insufficient attention has been paid to the implications for health of social inequalities, including unemployment and poor housing, which were identified in the 1980 Black report, "Inequalities in Health", and in "The Health Divide" published in 1987.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I share the burden that the hon. Gentleman is bringing before the House. Does he agree that where there is a need for cardiac surgery in Northern Ireland, there could also be room for co-operation? The City hospital had the theatre space and nursing staff, if only surgeons had been prepared to use them instead of saying that there was not sufficient surgery space in the Royal Victoria, as a result of which many people are still waiting for surgery.

Dr. Hendron: The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) makes a point, but I understand that it would be difficult to have the extremely expensive technology for cardiac surgery in two hospitals that are literally only a mile apart. However, I understand that there are plans to increase the number of operations in the Royal Victoria.

The health service in Northern Ireland is in a state of chaos. Senior executives are attempting to defend the indefensible while people in need of urgent care are being neglected or ignored. The Government have unashamedly helped to secure the acquiescence of a significant number of senior staff by enhancing their terms of employment.

The national health service is in a state of crisis, and I seriously believe that the Government should take heed of that message which is ringing out across the land.

7.56 pm

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): From listening to the Opposition, one would think that a £37 billion national health service was the end of the world, instead of the envy of the world which indeed it is. We have witnessed the political football marked "underfunding" being kicked about wildly and heard the national health service being talked down. Overall, I believe that the national health service is in good shape and improving all the time, but there are aspects still to be considered. That is the work of the Select Committee on Health, of which I have the honour to be a member.

One particular issue which recently came before the Select Committee was tobacco advertising, which I shall deal with in the context of the prevention policies mentioned in the Government's amendment and of the unjustified criticism of the Government by the Opposition spokesman. The Select Committee considered tobacco advertising and took evidence from a number of witnesses. There was general agreement on most of the analysis which resulted from our inquiry—that it was a laudable aim that smoking should be reduced, and that the means to achieve that should be considered. There was a great deal of agreement, but there was also an important dissenting voice on the final recommendations in our report last week which, in a magnificent week for Select Committee reports, was slightly overlooked by the press.

Of the eight members voting, three did not agree with a total ban. As background to what I shall say later, I should like to explain the two main reasons why I and two others did not agree with such a ban. First, in the context of the European dimension, we were being asked to subscribe to a European directive which we did not think was an appropriate vehicle. We did not think that it was necessary for the completion of the single market. It was not a matter of competence for trade but a matter of health —and health is not and should not be a matter for majority voting.

There was also much bogus talk about what happens in the rest of Europe. Is it not odd that all countries with nationalised tobacco industries support a ban? Some may say that that is to discourage imports. Is it not odd that the vast majority of those countries which grow tobacco and support a ban receive more than £1 billion in European Community subsidies? Is not our record on curbing smoking second only to that of the Netherlands where, as here, there is no statutory ban? Yet there are countries in Europe where tobacco consumption is still rising, and the highest rises in consumption coincide with the lowest prices.

The second reason why we objected to the final recommendations of the Select Committee report was the important matter of commercial freedom of speech. Tobacco is a legal product. A ban on its advertisement would be a serious step in a free country. Commercial freedom of speech is part of freedom of speech itself. I can think of no other example of the makers and vendors of a legal product not being allowed to advertise that product, but I can think of many areas to which some people might want to extend an advertising ban if the proposed tobacco advertising ban set a precedent. There could be a knock-on effect in many areas, such as alcohol, some fatty foods, fast cars, fireworks, gambling and guns.

There may be an argument for banning tobacco, but I should like to see someone brave enough to put that argument forward in this context. Unless tobacco is made illegal, commercial freedom of speech should not be sacrificed in terms of banning tobacco advertising. A statutory ban on the advertisement would turn a hard case into bad law. If we need to consider the whole idea of restricting commercial freedom of speech, we should do so openly and honestly. We should not do it in this way. We should start with the basics and establish new ground rules from which to judge particular cases. One generation's unique evil will soon be overtaken by another's. If we changed the general rule on commercial freedom of speech, bans would be extended.

I support the Government's present position—a basket of measures which have been notably successful. Effective prevention, as mentioned in our amendment, has been the heart of our policy. The Government have done much in terms of price. The price of cigarettes has gone up by 43 per cent. in real terms in the past 12 years. It is calculated that each 10 per cent. increase in price leads to a 3 per cent. to 6 per cent. fall in consumption. It is a serious mechanism.

The Government have insisted that warnings are put on tobacco packets. The tobacco industry is often accused of being a friend of our party, yet it has taken the Government to court over what it regards as the over-zealous size of the warnings that it is required to put on packets. Some people have said that the only way to spot a cigarette advertisement nowadays is by the large Government health warning on it.

The Government have made much progress in education, through the health education authority and through the inclusion of aspects of smoking in the national curriculum. The GP contracts include a remit for health promotion clinics which deal with smoking. There is also

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the general determination of the Government and especially of the present Secretary of State as shown in the White Paper, "The Health of the Nation". There is no doubt that the Government intend to bear down strongly on smoking.

Social pressure is even stronger. In the past 10 or 15 years, people have made their own decision in companies, in factories and elsewhere. In restaurants and in trains, smoking has become socially more unacceptable as the years have gone by. The climate of opinion has been a strong mechanism. Against that background, I support the Government's package of measures. I should like to see the continuation of the voluntary agreement—indeed, I should like to see it strengthened, especially for children and young people.

I am suspicious of conceding a false point to the European Community over the directive, especially when I consider the bogus practices which I have described. I have said that I am suspicious of making new case law for commercial freedom of speech without first looking long and hard at the deeper implications of such a move. I am also suspicious of the idea that there is a quick fix to be had by banning tobacco advertising. Although I do not deny the obvious link in general terms between the advertising and consumption of all products, I did not find any convincing evidence in the recent Smee report that a ban now would lead to a major drop in the smoking of cigarettes in the United Kingdom. His own evidence was decidedly ambiguous on that point.

I am against the quick-fix school of politics in general. Those who advocate quick-fix policies seem to be permanently fixed on the Opposition Benches. They use the NHS as a political football, but, as the past four general elections have shown, all that they have done by kicking the ball around in their characteristically volatile and hare-brained manner is to score an impressive series of own goals. To continue the football metaphor, that is why Labour Members are sitting on the Opposition terraces looking as sick as parrots.

8.4 pm

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): The one benefit of the recent economic chaos from the Conservative party's point of view is that it has masked the health chaos developing in the wake of the NHS reforms. The two problems are connected because, just as an ideological obsession with the market has damaged the economy, so an ideological obsession with the market will destroy the national health service unless action is taken to check it.

We in Scotland are protected at the moment from the worst excesses of the market. There are only two GP fund holders and no trusts yet in Edinburgh, but it is with alarm and dismay that we have looked on as events have unfolded in England. We hear from the British Medical Association that we face the worst crisis for 30 years. We see hospitals under red and yellow alerts, patients turned away and admitted only when they become emergencies and an all-round preference being given to GP fund holders as a two-tier system develops.

We also read about plans to axe hospitals in London when waiting lists there clearly show that the problem is not that there are too many beds for the patients, but that there is simply not enough money to cover the necessary treatments.

The Government know that the market system, with its purchaser-provider split, is the most effective method by which to cash-limit hospital services. While cynically claiming that choice has been increased, as the Secretary of State said today, the Government know full well that the reverse is true.

The most extreme manifestation of the market system on the provider side is the trusts, which are now about to be imposed on Lothian region and on Scotland as a whole. The phoney consultation for the West Lothian trust has just been completed, and the phoney consultations for all the hospitals in Edinburgh are about to begin.

The dates for all the opt-outs were pencilled in in a document in the Scottish Office at the time of the general election and no serious consideration has been given to the alternative, which is directly managed units. Even the Select Committee on Health, with its Conservative majority, suggested that the Government should proceed with caution with trusts. The Committee referred to problems of accountability, of strategic planning and of conditions for staff, yet within two years Scotland will be covered with trusts in the way that England is at present. That is undemocratic from several points of view, not least because the vast majority of people in Scotland are totally opposed to the imposition of opt-out hospitals. It is also irrelevant to the real problems of the health service in Scotland and will make them far worse.

The real problems in Scotland, as in England, are to do with underfunding, with lack of health service democracy and with the social conditions in which people live. The Government may ignore the connection between poor health and poverty, but Dr. Helen Zealley, the director of public health for Lothian health board, recently asked the health board to take seriously the greater rates of death and of illness among people living in deprived areas of Lothian. The figure for such people was 29 per cent., and many of them live in my constituency. It is scandalous that that link was not highlighted in the recent White Paper "The Health of the Nation".

The effects of underfunding in Lothian can be seen in waiting lists, accident and emergency services, continuing care of the elderly and community care. More than 25 per cent. of people wait more than one year for general surgery in Lothian. There is no way of reducing that list without spending more money.

Accident and emergency services in Edinburgh were centralised in the Royal infirmary following the cash crisis in 1990. I and three of my hon. Friends visited that hospital on Friday and saw the consequences of that centralisation of services. We were told that 80 per cent. of beds were tied up in emergency admissions. Of course, that is one reason why it is difficult to reduce the waiting lists. We were told that there were not enough beds in the coronary care unit but that every 999 heart attack call had to go to that hospital because it was the only one in Edinburgh with an accident and emergency department. We were also told, as I knew full well, that people from all over Edinburgh had to go to that hospital with even the most minor injuries. That has been the result of the centralisation.

Care of the elderly is another issue which is being hotly debated in Edinburgh. Following the English example, Lothian health board proposes to cut the number of NHS

continuing care beds from 1,800 to 500. That means that 1,300 beds will be privatised. The reason is simply that the board does not have a sufficiently large capital allocation to build the necessary new buildings. That means that we cannot have the continuing care hospital in my constituency of Leith for which many people have been planning in the past few years.

Another cause of anxiety to which my attention was drawn at a recent surgery is the drugs which the Government will allow on prescription. A newspaper article was brought to me which said that many drugs would no longer be available on prescription. When I sent it to the Secretary of State, she did not deny that that was the case. Examples of such drugs were the contraceptives Femodene and Minulet. They are more expensive than others and may be taken out of the list for that reason, even though they have no side effects and they help to protect against breast cancer.

The Government claim that they are putting a great deal of money into the health service in Scotland. However, detailed analysis of the figures shows that the outturn health expenditure this year for Scotland is £3·64 billion. The planned health expenditure for next year is £3·75 billion. That is an increase of slightly more than 3 per cent.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that health expenditure in Scotland is some 50 per cent. higher in real terms than when his party was in office? Does he accept that a record number of patients are being treated in Scotland and that there has been a great deal of major hospital development in Scotland since his party was last in office? We now have more hospital beds and more doctors and nurses. Far from being in crisis, the health service in Scotland is faring well under the Conservative Government.

Mr. Chisholm: I cannot reply to all of those points, but the number of nurses has declined recently. I ask the hon. Gentleman to use all his influence to ensure that his Government approve a new hospital for Edinburgh. The proposal has been with the Treasury for a long time and many people in Edinburgh want an answer soon.

The 3 per cent. increase in health expenditure in Scotland covers normal inflation, but everyone knows that health service inflation runs at 2 per cent. beyond that. That is not covered. Everyone knows that an extra 1 per cent. is needed to cover the needs of the increasing elderly population. That is not covered. Everyone knows that at least an extra 0·5 per cent. is needed to cover developments in medical technology. That is not covered either. So the much-trumpeted deal on health expenditure for Scotland is not acceptable and is not enough.

The example of the accident and emergency services which I gave a moment ago also raises the important issue of health service democracy. When the Public Accounts Committee recently investigated accident and emergency services in Scotland, my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) asked the chief executive of the national health service in Scotland whether local people had been consulted about removing the accident and emergency service from the Western General hospital. The chief executive was reluctant to answer for the simple reason that no consultation had been carried out.

In my constituency people from Granton, Pilton and Muirhouse opposed vigorously and vociferously the closure of the accident and emergency department. Yet their views were ignored.

The rhetoric on trusts is all about taking account of local needs and paying attention to local people. But the reality is the opposite. Reference has been made in the debate today to new appointees to the health boards. There is no democracy about that. The political affiliations of new appointees have been referred to by several hon. Members. I would point out that few women and few representatives of the ethnic minorities sit on the new trust boards. The proportion is even lower than in the House. That shows how bad the position is.

The new agenda for the national health service must involve emphasising the connection between poverty and poor health. It must involve developing health service democracy and replacing the market. That is not going back but going forward. The Conservative party lives in the past with its market obsessions. It has taken 14 years for many people to see the Conservative party's failures in economic policy, but its health policies are imploding after only two years. It is time for another U-turn. Let the Government start by saving all the hospitals in London and not proceeding with any more trusts in either Scotland or England.

8·16 pm

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): It is a shame that the debate, which could have been an opportunity for rational and mature discussion about the future of the national health service, has been turned into something of a circus by the Opposition. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) made a supposedly keynote but ultimately sournote opening speech. He made personal attacks on the Secretary of State. I am sure that she is flattered that the Opposition feel that they have to attack her personally on so many occasions.

The hon. Member for Brightside failed to grasp the main issues. Startlingly enough, he did not come up with a single suggestion about how to move ahead in the national health service. Instead, he carped on about this and that problem and threw up individual cases, as we have heard Opposition Members do in every debate in the House since the election. Not one constructive idea has been given. For a party that believed that it would form a Government last April, it is amazing that, after all this time, it cannot come up with one constructive idea about the way forward.

However, Conservative Members like to listen. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne), the Liberal spokesman, is not in her place. Conservative Members like to consult. We do not take lightly the views of any who work in the NHS, not least the British Medical Association. Therefore, we must take the BMA chairman seriously when he says:

> "The low morale in all areas of the service is largely due to the poor state of so many of our hospitals, lack of equipment to improve and, in some cases, save the lives of patients, shortage of staff, and the proper rewards to which all health workers are entitled."

I am sure that Opposition Members support those words. Unfortunately, that was the BMA chairman in 1978, when the Labour party was in government.

That was the year when I went to medical school. My first experience of the national health service was of a

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service falling around our ears—that was when we could get into the hospitals, when they were not being blockaded by the unions and when the health workers were not on some sort of strike.

My first experience of the national health service was of staff having to push patients into the wards because porters were on strike, supported, needless to say, by the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees, which have gone all white and caring in recent years.

Of course, 1978 was one of Labour's years of record. The hon. Member for Brightside talked about Labour records. One of the records of which I am sure that the Labour party does not want to be reminded is that it is the only party to have cut spending on the NHS; 1978 was the only year in the history of the NHS in which spending was cut. The Opposition cannot get away from that, but I do not intend to dwell on their record in office compared with ours, as it is becoming statistically insignificant.

We must look at the health service in 1993 and its problems and compare it with my early experience. In the first six months of this financial year we treated 200,000 more patients than last year. National health spending has reached £100 million per day and capital spending has gone up by 76 per cent. from when I entered the medical profession. Those are all achievements.

We are looking at ways to make the service more efficient and to bring doctors and others with medical expertise into management. That is one of the great benefits of trust hospitals.

We have heard much from the Opposition about how encumbered we are by management, but those in management at all levels in the NHS constitute only 2 per cent. of its work force. Total spending on management in the NHS is only 3 per cent. of total health service spending, and that makes the NHS one of the most efficient health services—if not the most efficient—in the world. Compare that with the United States where current management expenditure is 19·5 per cent. of total health care funding. That shows the efficiency of our NHS.

There are 17,000 more doctors in the NHS than there were when I went to medical school in 1978. General practitioners' lists are 18 per cent. lower than when we came to office in 1979. Preventive medicine is now at the heart of medical policy making and that was unheard of, even unthinkable, in 1978-79. Those are all major achievements and the House would be held in higher esteem if, from time to time, the Opposition accepted such achievements. Problems may still exist and may always be there for us to tackle, but for the Opposition to pretend that everything in the health service is rotten makes a mockery of rational debate.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon), who is not in her place, said that the Labour party created the NHS and that it was proud of its creation. When were the Opposition last proud of the NHS? Was it when they left office, which they occupied from 1974 to 1979, when the NHS was falling apart? At no time that I can remember since 1979 have the Opposition said that they are proud of the NHS. When advances are made, why can they not say that they agree with the Government, congratulate them and then move on to rational debate? The answer is that they simply cannot bear Conservative success. Even when it is staring them in the face, they refuse to accept that what we have done has benefited the health service.

Over the past few years, we have been subjected to all sorts of predictions about what would happen under the Conservative reforms. Listening to some Opposition Members, one would think that the health service was absolutely perfect before we instituted our reforms. We introduced those reforms simply because the NHS was such an inefficient system and was failing to deliver what we regarded as modern standards of health care. Standards have improved as a result of the reforms, not least of which is the GP contract.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) shakes her head. The Opposition told us that we would never reach our targets for immunisation or cervical smears. We surpassed them, and that is another major achievement. In view of those rising levels of immunisation it beats me why for once the Opposition cannot say, "You have done well."

The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) said that there was no support among GPs for the concept of fund holding. How is it that already we have 3,000 GP fund holders and by April there will be 5,000. When the Secretary of State relaxes some of the conditions governing GP fund holders, as she told us she will, there will be even more. I welcome the fact that GP fund holders will be able to come in with a list of 7,000. Many Opposition Members and Liberal Democrat Members—when they decide to come to the House—are keen to speak about consultation and pilot schemes. We said that we would limit GP fund holding to those with a practice size of 9,000 and later said that we might extend it. Did we get credit for that pilot scheme? No, we did not, but it has been an undoubted success and now we shall extend it because that is the prudent way to go forward and it has always been the Government's policy.

The magazine *Doctor*, hardly a mouthpiece of the right, this month conducted a survey of GP fund holders. The survey showed that over 70 per cent. reported cuts in waiting times and improved efficiency for their patients. Over 60 per cent. reported improved services for follow-up appointments, over 50 per cent. reported improved dealings with consultants and were providing extra services such as chiropody. Over 40 per cent. reported better pathology services and improvements in the prescribing service and almost 40 per cent. of practices now have consultants visiting their practices. Those are all good for patients. We must get away from the idea that the health service is for those who provide it. We run it for those who use it, and that is one of the biggest differences between the Conservative party and the Labour party. It is one of the reasons why we are in government. *[Interruption.]* I shall give way to any Opposition Member who wishes to intervene.

We are concerned philosophically to move in the health service in a direction that allows decisions to be made closer to the patient. That is why it is correct to concentrate more power in the hands of general practitioners. There has always been rationing of one form or another in the provision of health services. There was hidden rationing for a long time and it worked in the following way. If I wanted to refer a patient for consultation I ticked one of four boxes at the top of the letter. The boxes are labelled "emergency", "urgent", "soon" or "routine". That was how GPs always rationed

care in the health service, but in many cases it was not explicit. However, GP fund holders can decide which groups of their patients can be seen more quickly than others, and surely GPs are better placed than bureaucrats in health boards to decide whether a group of patients in a specialty should take precedence over another group. That is why we must continue to extend the fund-holding practices.

Not all services are covered by GP fund holders. The Opposition seem to think that GP fund holders are keen to involve themselves in coronary care and every other acute service. They cover "cold" services for which GPs can make a rational decision—one that does not involve acute patients. The Opposition say that a two-tier system is being created. If they believe that GP fund holders can offer a better service to patients than GPs who are not fund holders, surely the logic of the argument is to extend the fund-holding scheme to more and more GPs. However, the Opposition are intent on destroying our improvements and returning to the lowest common denominator, which is the base line for all their policies.

Of course, there will be problems during the transition. We are some way from knowing how GP fund holders use their contracts and how they will pan out. It is not entirely unexpected to encounter problems nine months into the financial year. No matter how we decide to use the funding, problems will remain throughout the decade. Medical science is advancing at a far greater pace than we can ever fund by public money. The gap between what can be provided by medicine and what we can afford to purchase will increase. Within whatever finite budget is in place there will have to be choices between acute and chronic care, between centralised hospitals and community hospitals, an issue raised by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm).

There is a conflict of interest in my constituency about whether funding should go to Bath or to one of my local hospitals in Paulton. It is a matter of trying to decide at the lowest possible level to respond to what local people want. We must take a fresh look at the advantages of community hospitals as opposed to centralised care. There will be a limit to the level of increase in funding that can be internally generated by efficiency. Sooner or later, we shall have to make explicit judgments about the rationing of health care.

I asked in a previous debate whether it was acceptable, when there is a shortage of money in certain sectors, to pay for tattoo removal and so on. We shall have to look explicitly at whether we make these things freely available on the NHS. We have to use the personnel who work in the NHS in the most efficient way, and that is especially true of general practitioners. They are at the forefront of all the advances that we are making. As GP fund holding is extended, they will be asked to make more and more specific rational decisions, but their time must be used appropriately and, while many benefits have come from fund holding, not least the ones I have mentioned about cancer screening and immunisation, we must make sure that GPs are not overburdened with regulation.

It is prudent now, a couple of years into GP fund holding, for the Government to look at which areas are being productive and which may be unnecessarily overregulated. As we have asked for unnecessary regulation to be swept away in other areas of government, the Department of Health should also look at whether it is using GPs' time most efficiently.

We also have to look at whether we must have the regional tier because, while we are waiting for the internal market and its working to become clearer, as it will over time, there is still some need to keep the regional tier but there will come a point in the not-too-distant future when the regional tier will become over-bureaucratic and interfering and we may no longer require it. I hope that the Government will seriously look ahead to that time.

I want to make a final point, about the mental health changes, following the comments made by the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron). I also feel strongly about this subject. It is dangerous to try to oblige any one fashionable medical idea across an entire spectrum and that is what has happened with mental health.

I do not believe that it makes any more sense to say that all the mentally ill should be institutionalised than it does to say that they should all be in the community. There has to be a balance, and I very much welcome the commitment by the Secretary of State a few weeks ago when she said that the Government would be reviewing all those guidelines. Surely we must have a balance in that system so that those who can integrate will be integrated and those who require institutional care can get that institutional care.

I hope that we shall turn back a little of the medical fashion which is putting everybody into the community which, as one can see on the streets of any city, is proving to be something of a mistake, especially for patients suffering from schizophrenia.

The Government have been brave in recent years in carrying forward their proposals. They have always done so against the wishes of the Opposition, who cannot tolerate anything that smacks of change and movement away from bureaucracy, and often in the face of criticism from the medical profession.

It has taken seven years for the Labour party to change their mind about council housing policy; five years for them to change their mind about British Telecom. I wonder how long it will take them to change their mind about NHS trusts and fund-holding practices.

I am sure that the real world will catch up with them in this, as in all the other policies which they have foolishly turned their faces against. I hope that it will be sooner rather than later, but for the electorate it will not make any difference because the Opposition will not get the chance to put their policies into practice.

8.34 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): The hon. Gentleman's belief that everything in the NHS garden is lovely is not a view shared by NHS professionals or NHS patients. He will know that the BMA recently condemned the breakdown of many hospital services leading to a two-tier provision of service. The BMA has also condemned underfunding and flaws in the reforms and has called for radical reforms of the Government's changes immediately.

They know, and we in the Opposition know, that two years into the market all the impact that we predicted would occur with the introduction of the market into the NHS is now coming to fruition. The chickens are coming home to roost. Hon. Members on both sides know in their heart of hearts that the Government have created a system in which hospital services in many parts of the country lie idle for three months of the year because there is not

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sufficient money. It is unfortunate that NHS patients refuse to become ill for just nine months of the year. They become ill for 12 months and many are having to wait longer and longer for treatment.

The lack of resources for clinical care contrasts markedly with the booming resources that seem to be made available for bureaucracy within the NHS. The hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) and some of his colleagues have spoken of the relatively small ratio of bureaucrats to clinical staff in our national health service. That was something to be proud of. I speak in the past tense because the figures from the Department of Health, as the Minister knows full well, point in a startling new direction.

Mr. Malone: So that we can get something positive from the Opposition, with what structure would the hon. Gentleman replace the management structure?

Mr. Milburn: I will deal first with the point that I was attempting to highlight and come to that later. We have more and more red tape in the NHS. Arguably, it is strangling the service. We have had a boom in bureaucracy in the past few years. The figures that I have received from Ministers indicate that during the period when the market was introduced into the NHS, between 1989 and 1991, the number of managers tripled while the number of nurses and midwives available on our hospital wards and in our communities fell by some 8,500. That has to be coupled with the enormous growth in administration generally. We now have 9 per cent. more clerical staff and more administrative staff as a result of the Frankenstein that the Government have created. Once one has the market, one has the purchasers and providers, opted-out units, more accountants, more financial directors and more of the institutions of the market.

In my region in the north, during that three-year period we saw a 500 per cent. increase in the number of managers. I would happily have lived with that, and many of my hon. Friends would happily have lived with that, if it had been complemented by a 500 per cent. increase in the number of nurses and midwives, but it was not—it was accompanied by a real decline in their number. There are fewer nurses on our wards. Many nurses are losing their jobs altogether and almost 5,000 health workers were made redundant between 1989 and 1992 because of the closure of their hospital units. Those are not my figures. They are not NUPE's figures. They are not the BMA's figures. They are the figures of Ministers from the Department of Health. They know in their heart of hearts exactly what is happening. Job losses were up by 50 per cent. in the first year of the market. It will not surprise my hon. Friends to learn that the biggest wave of redundancies took place in NHS trusts because there the ethics of the market are running amok. We are seeing more redundancies and suckings and fewer nurses and midwives at the sharp end of health care.

I go back to the introduction of the market and the Government's White Paper promising all these changes. I vividly remember as a humble parliamentary candidate that we were promised a leaner and fitter national health service. We were promised that it would be more efficient and less bureaucratised and that there would be a freeing of resources to enable the health service to treat patients at the sharp end. But it is not leaner: it is fatter—fatter with bureaucracy. It is bureaucracy gone mad. I understand that the Secretary of State enjoys being well briefed and therefore might want extra staff to monitor the effects of her policies, but do we need thousands of extra bureaucrats, accountants and administrators at the expense of qualified nurses? That is what we have got. That is a national scandal because it has done precisely nothing to improve patient care in this country.

I will allude briefly to some of the problems in my own area. Darlington's NHS is suffering a three-fold crisis because of underfunding, continuous administrative upheaval and the emergence of a two-tier health service. Darlington health authority is being denied any growth funding until 1995, despite having a greater than average elderly population. The local hospital is in dire financial crisis. In the current financial year, it is rumoured to be facing a £2 million deficit, and that is having a real impact on patient services. Hon. Members have spoken about looking after, listening to and ensuring that the concerns of NHS staff are taken fully on board, but in Darlington there is a vacancy freeze on new NHS staff.

In the past six years the hospital's cost improvement programme has taken £3·25 million away from hospital services. As a result, we have seen acute medical and surgery wards closed, children's wards being merged and, finally, desperate underfunding of our accident and emergency provision. The accident and emergency department treats some 10,000 patients every year. In the event of a major crisis on the east coast mainline railway, at Teesside airport, just two miles from Darlington, or on the A1M, just one mile from Darlington, that accident and emergency department would have to deal with a catastrophe without having any specialist accident and emergency consultant because the hospital cannot afford to appont one in this financial year. That is courting disaster and gambling with local people's lives.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Before my hon. Friend leaves the point about the lack of jobs for nurses, he may be interested to know that a student nurse recently described to me graphically how, as an official part of the course in the final year, students are being lectured on how to find opportunities to work overseas when they qualify.

Mr. Milburn: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that we face a major brain drain from the health service precisely because opportunities are lacking for qualified nursing staff.

Money can always be found for managers, of course. I understand that Darlington health authority is about to appoint a new project manager to lead the opt-out of acute services, on a salary of up to £53,000 per annum. That appointment is quite unnecessary. It is a direct product of the interference from Whitehall in local decision making about the future make-up of local health services in Darlington.

Dr. Liam Fox *rose*——

Mr. Milburn: I have given way on a number of occasions and I should like to begin to wind up my remarks.

One of the final issues that I want to address is the decision which has just been taken today about the future make-up of health services in my constituency. We are sick and tired of governmental interference with our local

health service. Just today, the regional health authority agreed a merger between Darlington and South West Durham health authorities, in the teeth of opposition from patients, staff, the two community health councils, the four Members of Parliament, the local authorities and local people. It is claimed that the Government are prepared to listen, but where is the listening there? They have not listened; they have ridden roughshod over the wishes of local people in my town. There will be no choice for patients as a result of that merger, because increasingly patients will have to travel for treatment to Bishop Auckland and out of the town altogether.

Some patients, of course, will not need to travel at all. They can take advantage, if they are lucky, of the top tier of health care in a two-tier service. Fund-holding GPs in my constituency have the benefit of referring patients directly to fast-track treatment. They do not do so through the NHS; they refer patients directly to the local private hospital. Hon. Members have attempted to mock some of the statements made by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) prior to the general election. He warned about creeping privatisation. That is not creeping privatisation; it is full steam ahead privatisation. Hon. Members should be ashamed that we have seen the development of a two-tier health service in this country.

I do not blame the GPs or the patients; they are playing by market rules, but the market means winners as well as losers and I am afraid that the NHS has become a national lottery. Lucky patients hit the jackpot, but this is not the sort of NHS that the British people want. They want an NHS which is free at the point of use, guaranteeing equal access to expert medical help when it is needed. That is the sort of NHS that we had in 1948 and the sort of NHS that we had in 1979. Unfortunately, it is not the sort of NHS that we have today.

8.45 pm

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in this debate because the motion put forward by the Labour party reveals that it fails to understand the basic objective of the Government's health reforms and how they work for the benefit of patients. Hon. Members talk about commercialisation of the health service and fragmentation of health care, but what the Labour party calls commercialisation and fragmentation is freedom for the providers of health care to serve the best interests of patients for whom they have responsibility.

A piece of doggerel that was circulating in the NHS many years ago summarises the purpose of the Government's health service reforms. It was said of doctors:

> "Masters of their patients when servants of the state,
> Servants of their patients when masters of their fate."

It is the purpose of the Government's health reforms to make GPs and self-governing hospitals masters of their fate, no longer tied up in elaborate bureaucracy, and in doing so to ensure that they can properly serve the interests of their patients.

I will look first at primary care and the role of GPs now that they have the opportunity to be budget holders. Here I draw on my experience of serving for several years as a member of a family practitioner committee. Although many advocates of the old-style NHS have said that one of its strengths was the so-called gatekeeper function carried out by GPs, in practice the division of responsibility between primary and secondary care was one of the great weaknesses of the old NHS. It was a weakness that went back to Bevan's original design. On the one hand, GPs had the freedom to refer wherever they wished; on the other hand, they had no power to send resources to the places to which they were referring patients. The allocation of resources was determined by the Department of Health —determined, as Nye Bevan famously observed, by a department where, if a bedpan was dropped in any hospital in the NHS, the sound could be heard in Whitehall. That was no way to run the NHS.

If GPs are to be given proper freedom to refer, that freedom must be backed by the power to send the money to the places to which they are referring. That, of course, is the crucial significance of the option for GPs to become budget holders. It is an innovation which resolves one of the contradictions in the old-style Nye Bevan NHS. It not only solves the problem of that tension with which the NHS had wrestled for a long time, but also goes with the grain of technological development. The old-style view of the NHS as a service which required larger and larger hospitals, with more and more functions centralised in enormous hospitals, is not what the patients want, it is not what communities want, and it is no longer what medical technology requires. The power of miniaturisation and medical advance makes it possible for many treatments to be carried out in the GP's surgery or in the local clinic. Only 10 years ago, such procedures would have been thought to require hospital treatment. GPs are now properly reimbursed for minor ops—lumps and bumps. In future they will be able to carry out in their surgeries pathology tests with the use of small sensors, enabling patients to have immediate results. In the past, patients would have had to go to hospital, lie on a bed, have a blood test, return home, and be called to see the GP or hospital a week later for the result. Many enormous simplifications will be made possible by technology.

The old style NHS stood in the way of such advance. It had no interest in services becoming available at the primary care level because there was no financial system by which the pattern of funding the NHS could keep up with the pattern of technological change. Freedom to spend the money that they are allocated in the way they know to be in the best interest of their patients will result in GPs saying, "I need not send my patients to the big district general hospital 10 miles away for some tests; I can invest in the technology which will enable me to do those tests in my surgery."

The strengthening of the GP has been one of the great success stories of recent reforms, going beyond the wildest hopes of Ministers when they originally planned those reforms. In the old days, the contempt with which many hospitals and district health authorities treated GPs had to be seen to be believed. I recall the way in which the local district health authorities, as they saw the review of the NHS coming into effect, for the first time realised that if they really wanted to make sure that money was properly allocated, they had to conduct research into what GPs thought about the current pattern and quality of hospital services. They were horrified when, for example, they came across GPs who could say, "We are not satisfied with the quality of treatment from this or that hospital or department."

When writing contracts and deciding the services that they wanted to buy on behalf of patients, DHAs for the

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first time seriously consulted GPs to find out what they wanted. They now know that if they ignore GPs' views, many more GPs will become budget holders. The threat of becoming a budget holder has improved the quality of care for GPs who are not budget holders as much as it has improved the quality of care for those who are. That is why the reference in the Opposition motion to a two-tier health service goes against the reality of developments in recent years.

Dr. Liam Fox: Does my hon. Friend agree that what is important in cases of referral is not where patients go—whether to a private sector or a NHS hospital—but how quickly they are treated? The Labour party is tied to dogma, whatever Opposition Members say about Conservatives being dogmatic on the issue.

Mr. Willetts: I agree with my hon. Friend. He reveals the cynicism with which Labour Members speak of privatisation. They use it in the sense of people having to pay for their health care. That is not, and never has been, Conservative party policy and what we are discussing is not in any way privatisation in that sense.

Completely different is the concept of a patient enjoying health care free at the point of use—that care perhaps being delivered most expeditiously by a private hospital with which a DHA has a contract so as to reduce its waiting list. That is not privatisation, but delivering publicly financed health care free at the point of use in the most cost-effective and efficient manner. Only blinkered ideology could lead anyone to oppose such an approach to health care. The patient gains by getting the best possible health care without having to pay for that care at the point of use.

I move from primary to secondary care—the hospital service. An irony of the hostility of Labour Members to self-governing hospitals is that they oppose a measure which was modelled in many ways on a feature of Nye Bevan's health service which deserved approbation. When he was establishing his health boards, he deliberately decided, after consulting the leading representatives of the hospitals, that the leading teaching hospitals, with their medical schools, should not be brought under the direct control of medical boards. The old teaching hospitals were to remain self-governing.

Bevan envisaged that they would be self-governing, and so they remained until—the irony of what occurred will not escape my hon. Friends—Lord Joseph's reforms of the health service in 1970 to 1974, which brought those teaching hospitals under the direct control of health authorities. It was not a fundamental feature of the post-war NHS, but a relatively recent development. Indeed, in Guy's hospital there is a notice on the wall with a rather melancholy inscription saying that the board of governors met there for their final meeting, in the 250th year of their existence, in February 1974.

An idea behind the reforms which has proved enormously popular is now to give every NHS hospital the opportunity to enjoy self-governing status, the sort of freedom which Nye Bevan envisaged should be enjoyed by our great teaching hospitals. It is in no sense a dismantling of the NHS, but an attempt to ensure that all hospitals can enjoy the freedom which teaching hospitals had up to 1974. It is ironic that Labour Members should be committed to a stout defence of an over-bureaucratic, over-managed structure of the NHS introduced in the 1970 to 1974 period. There is no reason why that should be regarded as a fundamental feature of the NHS. As we see with several waves of applications for trust status, doctors, nurses and managers at those hospitals greatly relish the opportunity to employ staff more flexibly so as to serve patients in the ways that they know best.

Much has been said by Labour Members about the management of the NHS. If one wanted an indication of the inability of the Labour party to take seriously concepts such as efficiency, effectiveness and high quality care, it is their manifest opposition to anything regarded as management in the NHS. They do not like the idea of managers or accountancy or the efficient use of money. The NHS is one of the largest organisations in western Europe. The idea that it can survive simply by the endeavours of doctors and nurses, crucial though they are, without a professional cadre of people committed to the efficient use of resources, the proper control of money and the proper management of large and expensive hospitals is at best naive and at worst shows an extraordinary disregard for what is in the real interests of patients. I hope that we shall hear no more attacks on the essential work that managers do in the NHS. We do not say that the only staff doing a real job in ICI are chemists or that the only people doing a worthwhile job in Shell are those who work on oil rigs. We accept that large, complicated organisations have management functions which need to be carried out by experts.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): The hon. Gentleman has philosophically explained his case for fund holders and has made a similar case for trust hospitals. Now he is moving on to management. He has left out the purchasing authority. He obviously envisages an increase in the number of fund holders and presumably he wishes all GPs to become fund holders. What role does that leave for the purchasing authority? Or is the purchasing function to be entirely in the hands of individuals?

Mr. Willetts: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important question. The reply is twofold. First, the Government have always made it clear that becoming a GP fund holder is a voluntary option. Nobody is being dragooned into becoming a fund holder. I welcome the enormous number of GPs who have already exercised that option and I expect that many more will do so in future, but it is not compulsory.

Secondly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) has already pointed out, the GP budget does not cover all services that the NHS provides. It covers the services which are frequently used at relatively low cost, but it was not thought feasible or sensible to include expensive and relatively rare treatments because they are randomly distributed. A relatively small number of cases would risk overturning a GP's ability properly to plan his budget, so such treatments remain financed through DHAs as purchasers. We may hope that some of the services currently bought by district health authorities will in future be bought by GP budget holders, but I expect that there will always be a wide range of services to be purchased by DHAs and not by GP budget holders.

I return to the point about management with which I was concluding, and to the record and the figures that we

heard from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health today in a speech that I thought was so effective and persuasive.

Mr. Trend: It was brilliant.

Mr. Willetts: My hon. Friend describes it as a brilliant speech—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Front—Bench Members say that they were deeply impressed. I am pleased to have such confirmation of its quality. That speech included figures on the record number of patients treated and the record activity in the new style NHS which have been achieved by a combination of high-grade management and the freedom at last for people working in hospitals and for GP budget holders to act without the crippling control of the state. I therefore strongly oppose the Opposition motion.

9.2 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): The Opposition, and indeed the country, are getting quite used to the bland assurances of Conservative Members that there is no crisis in the NHS.

The picture of fund-holding GPs, hospitals and health authorities all competing in perfect harmony and patients armed with their own personal copies of the patients charter waiting only a short time for treatment is about as believeable as the adverts for private health care which show healthy people sitting up in hospital and smiling, being treated by nurses who never look tired while the patients never look sick. I cannot comment on whether that is an accurate picture of a private hospital because, unlike some Conservative Members, I do not use them. However, I do know that that is not a picture of care in the national health service in my region, the west midlands. In that region, the Government's health reforms are creating a kind of Trotter's Independent Traders, without the same social conscience but with the same financial acumen.

Qa Business Services, the computer division of the regional health authority, was sold off and went bust within 18 months. Millions of pounds have been spent on a value-for-money exercise that saves no money. We see HealthTrac, a new all-singing, all-dancing supply system that has to be investigated by the Audit Commission. That is what is happening under the new-look national health service.

It would not be so bad if the effects were simply financial. But it is not simply money; it affects real people such as those who worked for Qa Business Services—pensioners who stand to lose two thirds of their pension entitlement because of that mismanagement.

In my area of south Birmingham a merger was forced through against the wishes of local people and community health councils. It resulted in a deficit of about £25 million. That is leading to the closure of hospitals. It has already led to the loss of beds, and it means that the Royal Orthopaedic hospital in my constituency is to close, as is the accident hospital which has one of the best burns unit in the country. Services are also to be transferred from the general hospital in the city centre. Consultants opposed it and the local community opposed it. Consultants have warned of the danger of cross-infection—but because the market dictates, the policy must be pushed through.

Even before that happens, the Royal Orthopaedic hospital has to offer bargain basement prices to get contracts from other health authorities, but it cannot get them because those authorities do not have the money. A constituent of mine has been told that he must wait 92 weeks even to see a consultant. He needs the services of that hospital. The services exist, but he cannot use them because the market dictates that he cannot do so.

Another constituent of mine, a young boy aged nine called Thomas Leavy, has cerebral palsy. The health authority has told him that, because it does not have the resources as a result of the financial crisis caused by the health reforms, he cannot get adequate physiotherapy treatment and he must wait six months just to see somebody about the possibility of occupational therapy.

That is the reality of the Government's health reforms. It has been summed up much more eloquently than I could put it by a Birmingham consultant, who wrote to general practitioners in the north Birmingham and Bromsgrove areas—copying the letter to the Secretary of State, among others—saying that it was not possible to place patients from their authority in his hospital. He said:

"My medical colleagues and I believe that this is a totally unsatisfactory state of affairs. The NHS reforms are not working. Money is not following the patients. The choice of patients and General Practitioners is being restricted not preserved as promised. We are into the realms of a two-tier health service depending on who has got the money and where patients live."

Those are not my words, nor the words of the Labour party, nor even the words of NUPE—which Conservative Members like to quote—but the words of a consultant. That is the reality of the health service as it operates today.

Everything happens behind closed doors; secrecy surrounds the health authority. I and other Birmingham Members have tried to get answers time and again. We have asked the Secretary of State, Ministers and the regional health authority to provide us with the reports of the investigations into the financial crisis facing the South Birmingham authority. We have asked for copies of audit reports on the financial scandals in the West Midlands authority.

Time and again, the Government insist that they listen and consult, but they have fobbed us off. Time and again, the Secretary of State has refused to meet Members of Parliament from the south Birmingham area to discuss the plans to close hospitals such as the Royal Orthopaedic. Of course, they say that it is a matter for management. We know what management means in the west midlands—financial scandals. It has meant Sir James Ackers running the flagship of the authority's internal reforms. We called for his resignation for months and months. Finally, after ignoring those requests, the Secretary of State was forced to accept his resignation a month or so ago, under circumstances not yet revealed.

There is now new management in the authority—Sir Donald Wilson, formerly of the Merseyside authority, which is itself the subject of calls for a public inquiry. He has been foisted on us. We are told that there is a new regime with a new open-door policy. That sounds great, but still all the hon. Members who have been asking for those reports have not been given them. That new management has not said that it will save one hospital or one hospital bed.

The new management is not much change on the old. When we discovered that, we asked the Secretary of State to direct the new management to ensure that the reports were made available to us, the local democratically elected representatives. Although she said in the debate today that she was in favour of all information being made available,

[Mr. Richard Burden]

her hon. Friend the Minister for Health replied to our requests, "No, it is a matter for management whether those reports are released."

A stop must be put to the situation in which the health service is run as if it were some kind of glorified supermarket. When we say that privatisation is creeping into the NHS, we are not exaggerating. We shall have in the health service what has happened in a number of other industries. First, the financial structure is changed and financial shackles are applied. Then there is the pretence that there is some kind of decentralised decision-making, whereas the only thing that is being decentralised is responsibility. When that system breaks down, Ministers say, "Wouldn't it be much easier if you went independent, if you freed yourselves from the shackles of Government control?"—the Government that put the shackles on in the first place. That is what Conservative Members intend for the national health service, although they do not have the guts to say so, and it is what Opposition Members will oppose and oppose and continue to oppose because we support and defend the health service that we created.

Conservative Members have asked us what our alternative is. Let me make three points for a start. First, the market mechanism, which is alien to the concept of health care and proper health planning, should be abandoned. Secondly, the health service should be given the funding that it needs. No amount of jiggery-pokery, with purchasers, providers and contracts, can make good the underfunding. Thirdly—and equally important—people who believe in the national health service, who use it and who live locally should be put in to run the service in a way that does not suggest that it is some kind of glorified supermarket.

9.10 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I should like to put on the record my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) for giving me five minutes of her time.

I want to put on the record too—so that it will not be possible for anyone to claim otherwise—the fact that, as a Member of Parliament, I am sponsored by NUPE. I am not ashamed of that connection; indeed, I am rather proud of it. Members of my union and, indeed, of the unions with which we are about to merge do very valuable work in the health service and are dedicated to the principle of a health service free at the point of use. They will remain dedicated to that principle, as has been demonstrated by their many years of service.

I wonder how those people are expected to continue their dedication when they are told that their pay rise in April will be limited to 1·5 per cent. despite the fact that the rate of inflation is far higher than that. Conservative Members may find this extremely amusing, but they are quite concerned about the future of their own jobs—especially the London Members, to whom I wish to address my comments tonight.

The Government's treatment of the health service in London is nothing short of appalling. We have seen 5,100 beds lost since 1982; during the same period there has been an increase of 18 per cent. in demand for hospital places; and regional health authority decisions have been imposed on London health districts, with no democracy whatsoever in the decision-making process. With the growth and merging of health authorities, we now have bigger, more impersonal and less accountable bodies in London and a continual drift of resources out of London and into the home counties.

I do not intend to be dragged into a false argument about the needs of inner London as opposed to those of Essex, Hertfordshire, Surrey and Kent. What we require is recognition by the Government of the needs in inner city areas. In London there are 60,000 people living in temporary housing accommodation, a considerable number sleeping on the streets, 1 million people living in poverty, above-average levels of deprivation and a high incidence of suicide, AIDS and many related diseases and illnesses. If the Secretary of State were to look at statistics produced by any family health service authority in inner London, she would recognise the degree of deprivation.

But what did the Government offer? The Tomlinson inquiry. It is proposed that a considerable number of hospitals, including Bart's, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) spoke so eloquently, should be closed, with the loss of a very large number of beds. It is claimed that, somehow, this will solve the problem of a London waiting list of 130,000 people. The implication is that the problem will be solved by transferring resources from the hospital sector to the primary care sector. That is not the alternative for which we are looking. What we want is recognition of the fact that the people of London need and deserve a proper health service. That means increased resources for the primary sector, increased resources for general practitioners, and better general practitioner services. But that will not be achieved if much of the general practitioners' time is taken up as a result of premature discharges from hospitals and inadequate hospital services in the first place. The Secretary of State and the Government must recognise that Tomlinson has got it fundamentally wrong. What Tomlinson is talking about is mass closures, with loss of beds, in order to solve the problem of underfunding of primary care in the first place when what we require is a recognition of those needs.

There is at last an inquiry into the activities of the London ambulance service, after years of providing an inadequate service because of an incompetent management and a particularly incompetent board. What we need at the same time is the recognition that the health needs of London will be met not by things like the Tomlinson inquiry but only by an increase of resources as a whole to the people of London. It is not right that people living in inner London suffer a higher level of infant mortality, a shorter life expectancy and a higher level of notifiable diseases than those living in the rest of the country. These problems must be addressed by an adequate provision of resources by Government to meet the need.

9.15 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Ms. Primarolo: Perhaps I should sit down now and quit while I am ahead, with the support from my hon. Friends.

The debate has been about the realities of the national health service and the experience of people using and working in the service. My hon. Friends who have taken part in the debate have adequately described that

experience. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) pointed out the political nature of the appointments, the placemen who are put on to trusts and rewarded generously while poor pay continues in the national health service and there is a pay freeze of 1·5 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) spoke about the human cost of the national health service reforms, the bed closure programme and the desperate situation in her constituency because of bed shortages.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms. Corston), speaking about her constituency in particular, concentrated on what the national health service was created to do and what it does now in our communities. She spoke particularly from the personal experience of her constituents waiting 19 months not to be treated but merely to receive an appointment to see a consultant. She also mentioned the problems with dental services in Bristol, the ambulance cover, which is only 90 per cent., and the two-tier system whereby the patients of general practitioner fund holders are treated in advance of those on the waiting list.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) was cut off in his prime. He had enthusiastically defended Bart's hospital, and I am sure that the Minister on his frequent visits to Bart's will likewise defend that excellent institution, but my hon. Friend was cut off before he could tell us that Bart's has now eradicated its deficit. It is, I hope, about to tell the rest of the London hospitals how it managed it, and then the closure programme proposed by Tomlinson can be abandoned as irrelevant.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) spoke about the importance of access to care on the basis of need, the cornerstone of the national health service, and went on to describe why the basic facts and data used in the Tomlinson report were incorrect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) spoke about the experience in Scotland and drew comparisons with England; he rightly said that the British Medical Association describes the crisis now being experienced in the national health service as the worst for 30 years. That is nothing for hon. Members on either side of the House to be proud of, and it is something which we should address.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) spoke with great authority and accuracy, cutting through the assertions made by Conservative Members about our now having a leaner, more efficient national health service in which the bureaucracy has been reduced. Using Department of Health figures, he put paid accurately to that misrepresentation. As he pointed out, there has been no freeing of resources for patient care.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) talked eloquently about Trotter's independent trading company, as he called it, in the west midlands, and the secrecy that persists about the misuse of money in the NHS. He pointed out that one of his constituents had a 92-week wait to see a consultant. That is disgraceful.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) pointed out further shortfalls in the Tomlinson proposals. Most important, he showed that at no point had there been any assessment of London's health needs or any assessment of the tremendous problems that London faces, as do many of our other inner cities.

The Secretary of State told us that she had launched a new health help line to which she had made the first phone call—presumably to try to find out what is going on in the service. However, she failed to tell us that the help line closes at 5 o'clock. We have tried several times to get through, in the hope of obtaining some of the information that we cannot obtain from the Government, only to be held in a queue or requested to leave a recorded message which would be dealt with in due course. I hope that we do not have to wait until April when the new contracts start.

The Secretary of State said that a health service should be based on principles, but she went on to qualify that, saying as long as those principles stick to the budget. That is the politics of the balance sheet, not clinical priority.

The Secretary of State announced that £2 million would be given to pump prime pacesetter projects. I wondered whether that had anything to do with heart surgery; then I realised that it did not. She said that the object was to reduce waiting list times by setting new benchmarks. Perhaps she will explain to the House how pacing treatment, spreading it over a longer time, will lead to a reduction in the waiting lists. Presumably people will have to wait longer before they are reached.

The Secretary of State then announced something that she has already told us about.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The sort of schemes to be funded are those at Walsall and Horsham which ensure that people can have their cataracts treated more swiftly and that people coming forward for breast cancer checks will be seen within 48 hours—innovative schemes, different ways of doing things, which others across the health service can emulate.

Ms. Primarolo: It is a shame that the Secretary of State could not have told us that in her speech and that she did not make it clear that the scheme was not about pacing treatment but about access.

The Secretary of State also announced for the second time the £2 billion to be used for capital projects within the NHS. She went on to say that that was to be provided by the sale of land and property. First, that is not new money, because it was in the autumn statement and, secondly, it is money which is funded by closure programmes, and the right hon. Lady cannot be sure that it will be available.

The Secretary of State referred to the huge investment that has been undertaken by the Government, and derided Opposition Members for the performance of past Labour Governments. She went on to talk about primary care. In 1981, the Acheson report identified the fact that 15 per cent. of GP premises in London were below the national average in that respect. Extensive and good proposals were made for the expansion of primary care. Hardly any of those were implemented, but linked to that was a bed closure programme. That, no doubt, sounds familiar to my hon. Friends.

A total of 5,000 beds were closed to pay for the increased primary care, but, by 1992, when we received the Tomlinson report, we found that the situation in London had deteriorated rather than improving: now 46 per cent. of GP premises are below the national standard. That decline in primary care has been presided over by a Government who claimed that they were providing more money.

Mr. Willetts: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Primarolo: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that Conservative Members have spoken at length, and that I have given up some of my time to ensure that my hon. Friends could speak and to allow time for the Minister. Every time hon. Members interrupt me, thus reducing my time, I shorten the Minister's time. Does the hon. Gentleman want to incur the Minister's wrath?

I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to repudiate paragraph 12.25 of the Bloomfield report on dentistry, which states:

"In considering priorities for exemption from payment, there must be doubts about the category of pregnant women/nursing mothers."

Will the Minister state categorically that there will be no reduction in that exemption? Will he also refer to the new blacklist that is to be introduced, and give the House a categorical undertaking that no contraceptives will be removed from the list?

The Government told us that the national health service stumbled from crisis to crisis, and that we needed to accept the implementation of their reforms; the crises would then disappear.

Mr. Miller: We have heard a good deal about choice from Conservative Members. Would my hon. Friend like to comment on the board of the Countess of Chester hospital, in the Mersey region? There are four Conservative activists on the board—including Lord Wade of Chorlton—a failed Tory party treasurer and cheese maker. Would my hon. Friend care to contrast them with my constituent, a YTS trainee who suffers from a life-threatening disease and who—because of the "choice" offered by the Government—cannot get free prescriptions on the national health service?

Ms. Primarolo: My hon. Friend has summed up what is happening in the national health service. There are jobs for the boys; jobs in return for past work; jobs as a reward. But there are no prescriptions for those who need them.

The market, we were told, would eradicate the crisis. We would have a lean, finely tuned, responsive national health service. Let me give the House an example by describing a day in Bristol's health service. Bristol has three large teaching hospitals and a number of other hospitals.

This is what happened on 7 January. All through the night, Manor Park hospital had no female beds available. Before 8 am, the Bristol Royal infirmary and the Frenchay hospital had no coronary care beds available. The Southmead had one. The Frenchay refused to take patients from outside its catchment area. The BRI started at 9 am with no medical beds, and, by 2 pm, was completely closed; it had no beds. By 12 o'clock, the Southmead had no available beds, and Western General was closed to all admissions. Shortly after lunch, the Bristol general hospital had no beds. By 8 pm, the Frenchay, the BRI and the Southmead all had no medical beds available. Some time after 9 pm, the Southmead decided to accept medical admissions, but only from within the Southmead area.

The crisis in the NHS has been documented by everyone except the Government and their Department of Health. It has been demonstrated that patients wait in casualty for hours on end, and hospitals go on and off red and yellow alert.

Job losses among health workers rose by more than 50 per cent. in the first year of the Government's market-style changes to the NHS. Junior doctors are reportedly working more than the legal number of hours, despite the Government's pledge that the NHS would meet its first major deadline. Hospitals run out of beds and emergency admissions are not allowed as the money dries up. The BMA says that hospitals are facing financial collapse because of the ravages of the internal market. The mechanism that the Government told us would save the health service is destroying it.

We are seeing queue jumping; patients are refused treatment; people's working conditions deteriorate further; yet the Government do nothing except peer at the world through the rose-tinted glasses of Richmond house. An editorial in the *Doctor*, in absolute desperation, advised doctors to

"Bend Virginia's ear with proof of the crisis. The Secretary of State's underlings do not tell h[illegible]he extent o[illegible] the bad news."

What can doctors do to persuade her that the present crisis is the most catastrophic but can be avoided?

One day the Secretary of State is full of praise for those who work in the national health service and is proud of their professionalism and commitment—rightly so—but the next she shifts the blame for the chaos on inept managers, greedy consultants or whingeing GPs. She should make up her mind about who is to blame, what is going wrong and how it should be put right. It is her fault and her Government's fault. Her reforms have demonstrated the persistent underfunding of the national health service: the very thing that the Government wished to disguise has been exposed by their own reforms.

The Secretary of State tells us that pacing work in hospitals is important. Hospital resources stay underused for three or four months of the year. How do doctors pace themselves when they are faced with seriously ill patients? I shall give an example of how they pace themselves from the intensive care unit admission policy of Gloucester health authority. This is what the reforms mean:

"Any surgical patients who are expected to require post operative intensive care will be deferred or transferred to another hospital pre operatively . . . In addition the following . . . patients will not be admitted. Patients with acute . . . chronic lung disease . . . Patients with chronic poor quality of life"—

goodness knows what that means—

"Patients 70 years or over with: Acute Renal failure . . . Respiratory failure due to pneumonia".

That is what pacing is. Those are the priorities of the budget sheet.

Waiting lists, perversely, allow people to be treated not according to clinical need but on the period of time and political priorities of the Government. People are called finished consultative episodes instead of people. Refurbishment means closure; in the Secretary of State's national health service, any word can be used. Prevention is distorted. Breast cancer services are a clear example. There are 1,400 victims in the United Kingdom every year —the highest number of deaths in Europe. We have the fewest cancer specialists in Europe, yet the Secretary of State tells us that prevention is better than addressing the need for such facilities. Prevention is a good strategy, but 4 million women in this country, 2 million of whom live in London, have not had a cervical smear in the past five and a half years. It is about time that that was addressed. Patients' choice has been eradicated; patients cannot choose their hospitals. Money does not follow them—they follow the money.

In Bristol we are about to have catchment areas for hospitals—if one does not live in the catchment area, one cannot go to the hospital. It is interesting that we are not allowed to have catchment areas in education, but we are allowed them in health. Frenchay health authority is already proposing to administer such a scheme. We are in the ridiculous position where the hospital in Truro—Treliske—faces financial difficulty because tourism has dropped in the west country as a result of the Government's failure with the economy. That shows the state of the national health service under the Government's reforms.

We have tried today to show the perverse incentives that the Government have introduced into the national health service. The reforms have not worked, but are making the situation worse. It is about time that the crises were dealt with. I urge my hon. Friends to support our motion, as I know they will. If the Government continue to preside over this crisis, they will carry the shame in years to come.

9.35 pm

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): In view of the self-proclaimed importance that the Opposition attach to the health service, some of us have wondered why they have not called such a debate for so long into this Parliament. Now we understand: they have not had such a debate because they had nothing to say. Indeed, some of us are driven to conclude that today's debate has more to do with the standing of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) in the shadow Cabinet than with the health service. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman had the flu, and I hope that he will soon be feeling better. I shall not go into his speech in great detail. However, he talked about records of which Labour and Labour Governments were proud.

I need to remind the hon. Gentleman, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox), that he forgot to mention the record of a real cut in NHS spending under the previous Labour Government. He also forgot another record which will have great relevance against his hon. Friends' rhetoric during the debate: in four of the five years of the previous Labour Government, nurses' pay was cut in real terms. I hope that the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) will take careful note of that point.

Another of the hon. Gentleman's points that interested me involved accountability. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State dealt with that in political terms, but I am genuinely surprised that the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) have taken such a jaundiced view of the Government's attempts to empower patients by giving them as much information as they possibly can to enable them, in turn, to have informed conversations with their general practitioners, the better to get the type of care in the location and in the time frame most suitable for them.

Not only is the help line being launched today but regional health authorities have had a number of similar schemes available for some time. Indeed, some have been publishing waiting list times in local newspapers. I believe that *The Citizen* in Peterborough was the first in the country to do so, and I applaud it. We believe that patients should have as much information as possible because, after all, the service is designed to benefit them and to deal with their needs.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South invited me to comment on the Bloomfield report and on selective lists. When the Government said that they would listen to the views of people in the NHS, of dentists and patients before reaching a conclusion on the report, they meant what they said. On the whole, the hon. Lady is encouraging us to consult and listen and to try to find common ground, so she will not take it amiss if I do not accept her generous invitation but stick to the consistency which, as she is learning to appreciate, is shown by the Government.

I sum up the speeches of Opposition Front-Bench Members as follows: nothing should change in our thinking in a world that is changing. To paraphrase more neatly, they seemed to say, "Stop the world, I want to get off."

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) raised two important points. First, she asked about AIDS testing. I can confirm that the arrangements that she set out are those contained in the General Medical Council guidance. I listened carefully to her speech, and I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will reflect on it.

Secondly, my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston spoke about an adoption story. I am sure that I am not alone in the House in being shocked by the details she gave. We have a strong commitment to and a strong appreciation of the work of social workers, but we draw definite lines beyond which they should not go. From what my hon. Friend has said, it seems that she knows of a case in which those lines were transgressed. If she would be kind enough to let me have the details of the case, I will ask my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), who has responsibility for these matters, to investigate the case in depth.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, because I should like to make a little progress.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) encouraged us to consult. She was, if she will forgive me for saying so, rather churlish about the efforts that the Government are making legitimately, sensibly and sensitively to do exactly what she wants us to do. I am pleased that she was gracious enough to recognise that, when she and her colleagues came to see me, I was genuinely consulting and genuinely listening. I assure her that I took note of the points they made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) made an important point. She said that management cannot be taken out of the context of care, and she was right. Some peddle the false argument that we have to choose between care, and the efficient and effective use of resources. That is a spurious dichotomy. As we use resources efficiently and effectively, we enable more patients to be treated. There is nothing from which to resile in wanting to see the £100 million a day we spend on the health service used to best effect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) raised a number of questions about London to which I shall return in a few moments. He also expressed his

[Dr. Mawhinney]

concern and regret about our decision on nurse prescribing. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who has been one of the strongest advocates in the House of nurse prescribing. The genesis of the policy, to which we are still committed and about which we are still enthusiastic, owes much to his advocacy.

We are concerned to ensure that nurse prescribing is launched in an environment that is as conducive as possible to its success. We are not at all certain that the present climate, in which there is to be an extended discussion about the drugs bill and about prescribing generally, is the best in which to move forward that policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst paid an appropriate tribute to the hospice movement and to its work. I am sure that that is a matter for appreciation across the House. There is nothing partisan in our appreciation of the work done by hospices. I am pleased to announce to the House a £43 million extra payment to charitable hospices through health authorities in the coming year to help them to provide support for voluntary hospices. The Department will provide £32·3 million for voluntary hospices. A further £5 million is to be given to health authorities to help them to pay for hospice care for terminally ill people as part of the community care changes, and £5·6 million is to give voluntary hospices access to drugs supplied by health authorities. That means that the total Government funding to voluntary hospices since 1991 is £105·3 million.

Mr. Blunkett: As we are not having an evening of churlishness, I should like to put it on record that the Opposition welcome that statement and wholeheartedly give their backing to the allocation of those resources to hospices, which do such good work.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I appreciate the generosity of his statement and of his gesture in making it.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) for the assiduous way in which he has represented his constituents' views on the future of St. Bartholomew's hospital. Indeed, outside my family, I have probably written more letters to him than to anyone else in the whole world in the whole of my life.

The hon. Gentleman is in danger of going down in this debate as a tease because he raised my expectations to fever pitch and was cut off in his prime. So exceptionally —I hope that you will not feel that I am transgressing your 10-minute rule, Madam Deputy Speaker—I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman to let him have his expectation.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to intervene. I received a telephone call from Professor Besser, the chief executive of Bart's, this morning. He said that Bart's should be making an announcement in the next few days that it can finance the whole of its non-recurring deficit and that its recurring deficit should so be slashed that it will be close to having a balanced budget.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman will understand, given the discussions that we have had in the past few months, if I hang on to my ecstasy for a little longer until I see the small print.

While the hon. Gentleman was personally generous, I deplored the attack that he launched on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It was without justification or foundation. I hope that he will find it possible to withdraw it on a suitable occasion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) was entirely right to draw attention to the importance of day care surgery and the effect that it is having on the ability of the NHS to treat patients.

I intended to dissect the Opposition motion this evening, but my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) did it for me and probably did it better than I could. He pointed out that for every claim in a newspaper there was a counter-claim in another newspaper and that mutually exclusive statements were made elsewhere. He said that, while the Opposition Front-Bench team had been busy, it did not have an idea what it had been busy about.

Only a fraction of hospitals are affected by the crisis that Opposition Members have unsuccessfully tried to sell to the House this evening. We spend £100 million a day on the NHS. It has treated 600,000 more patients on average every year since the reforms were introduced. The number of people who wait between one and two years is down by more than 50 per cent. since the reforms were introduced. According to a recent survey in *Doctor* magazine, 70 per cent. of GP fund holders recorded reduced waits and improvements in efficiency.

The NHS trusts treated 8·2 per cent. more patients in the first year of operation, compared with 7·2 per cent. for the directly managed units. In other words, no matter how we approach the reforms—whether it is trusts, GP fund holders, quality, waiting lists or convenience to patients —they are delivering better services for patients.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Not only the Opposition Front-Bench team is in two minds. As the Minister knows, in Northern Ireland the boards of both the local health authorities and the hospital trusts are composed of Government appointees. He may also be aware that a trust will come into operation in my constituency in a couple of months. However,, the health board is rushing through a review which threatens to close two hospitals, thus pre-empting what the trust might do. We have good reason to believe that the trust will keep at least one and perhaps both hospitals open. Is not that an example of bad co-ordination and management?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman's constituents are fortunate if they are to have a trust in a couple of months because they can look forward to better patient care and more treatments. I was in the Province for six and a quarter years and it may have appeared to the hon. Gentleman that I was a permanent fixture. However I was not, and he will have to raise those issues with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. John Marshall: My hon. Friend will be aware that the London gender clinic is in my constituency and that its activity has caused great concern. Will he ensure that it operates within the law and look at any lacuna by which it may have breached the law?

Dr. Mawhinney: As my hon. Friend may be aware, the British Medical Association has expressed some views

about the clinic and the HEFEA committee has published a paper on the issue. We are looking carefully at the matter.

The characteristic feature of the debate is that, while we have been speaking about patient treatment and care and numbers of patients, the Opposition have spoken about beds and buildings. I suppose that that represents the division on thinking between us. For more than 40 years the health service was provider driven. As a result of the reforms, it should become purchaser driven, with the needs of the patient at the centre.

I accept without embarrassment or difficulty that a service that has been running for more than 40 years on provider lines and has to start running on purchaser lines will find that that line is not unlikely to be as strong as the previous one. There are obvious reasons for that and it takes time to build expertise. It would be absurd to suggest that there is not a single case among the 45 million people whose lives are touched by the NHS in any one year in which the system has not worked to maximum advantage. We are debating 1 million employees, 45 million patients and an organisation with a budget in England of £30 billion.

However, I am perfectly prepared to defend the reforms, to laud the advantages that they are bringing to patients, to confirm the strengthening of the purchasing line year by year and to recognise that the contracting process needs to be properly managed. It is more likely to be properly managed if hospitals, doctors and consultants are included at an early stage in management discussions. It is likely to be even better managed if GPs who are not fund holders enter into early discussions with purchasers, with the district health authorities, so that when those authorities are putting contracts to providers they will do so in a way that satisfies the GPs in the area.

We have heard much about GPs. It is quite wrong to assume that GPs who are not fund holders are unable to influence the standard of care that is available to their patients. I should like to see more influence exercised by GPs on the district health authorities as they prepare contracts for hospitals. I hope that those with management responsibilities in the trusts will recognise that their ability to deliver consistent health care throughout the year will be improved if doctors are involved in the process from the beginning.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) made an excellent speech, as one would expect because he clearly understands the importance of the freedoms— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I should be obliged if hon. Members on both front Benches below the Gangway ceased their conversations so that I might hear the Minister.

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend clearly understands the importance of the freedoms that we have given to GPs and the importance that we attach to their fundamental role. If the service is to be as sensitive as possible to the needs of the patient, the GP must be involved in the system as much as possible.

My hon. Friend was right. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. We are not coercing, forcing or cajoling GPs to become fund holders. The debate on trusts is over. By April 1994, something like 95 per cent. of all the provider units in the country will be trusts, and if the Opposition ever come up with a policy they will not be able to put it into effect if that policy in any way involves dismantling trusts. Of course they will not get into office, so it is a bit of a hypothetical point.

At the heart of the reforms is the role of the GP and of the GP fund holder, and GP fund holders are increasing in number precisely because they recognise that they can provide more, better and more sensitive services to their patients.

It is worth reminding Opposition Members that we have made it easier for patients to move from their GPs if they are dissatisfied. What is happening to GP fund holders? Their lists are not going down but up. To talk about a two-tier system is totally to misunderstand the heart of the Government's reforms. It is not a two-tier system but a shared purchasing system. I am very clear, particularly given the record of Opposition Members in this debate, that we shall have to keep on saying that to them regularly month by month for a long time until finally the penny drops. The penny will need to drop because GP fund holders are at the heart of the reforms and will drive forward the improvements we are all committed to making.

Turning to the question of London, I wish to pay tribute to Sir Bernard Tomlinson, a distinguished academic and public servant who has produced an excellent report. He does not deserve some of the personal abuse which has been heaped on him over the past three months. It is important to understand that the Tomlinson report, which remains, until my right hon. Friend makes her decisions, advice to Government, is not about whether one closes a hospital here or merges a couple of hospitals there but rather about the re-configuring of health care in London. The fact is that change is taking place and even the hon. Member for Brightside once recognised that London's status quo could not be maintained. He has wobbled a bit and waffled a bit since, but he did at least recognise that.

Part of the change is reflected in increased standards of health care provision in hospitals outside London so that those who used to send their patients to London no longer have to do so, because the patients do not want to travel if they do not have to and they can get treatment at home.

We have been consulting. I have been listening to representatives of the users, of the providers and of the purchasers as well as to the politicians, and I recognise the importance of primary care. Tomlinson does and so do we. In addressing primary and community care, we recognise that we have to address the problems of bed blocking in hospitals. All of my conversations have been confidential, but I will give the House one piece of information from a medium sized teaching hospital in London, which told me that on every day of the year between 60 and 100 of its beds are blocked by people who are clinically discharged but cannot go home because of inadequacies in primary care. We recognise the importance of addressing that issue.

It is easy to sum up this debate. There is a crisis. It is a crisis in the Labour party; and those who do not believe it should have been watching the face of the Leader of the Opposition when the hon. Member for Brightside was speaking. The Labour party policy on the NHS was rejected by the public in April. Now there is not even a policy, not a whiff of a policy. The Opposition have elevated the whinge to an art form.

Labour Members have a concern for individuals, as do all of us. The difference between us is that we are

[Dr. Mawhinney]

developing systems that ensure that more patients are treated to higher standards and with more regard to their wishes than ever before. GP fund holding is at the heart of those reforms.

The public's appreciation of the NHS is far greater than the Opposition's. Its appreciation of what we have done to improve the NHS is far greater than the Opposition's. Our commitment to the NHS is clearly far greater than the Opposition's. For those reasons, our vote tonight will be far greater than the Opposition's.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 281, Noes 316.

Division No. 125] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian

Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann

Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Madam Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its reforms to the National Health Service which have led to record numbers of patients being treated, the elimination of two year waiting lists in the regions, a substantial reduction in long waiting times generally and significant improvements in the quality of care; looks forward to more general practitioner fundholders and National Health Service trusts and the futher improvements they will bring; and believes that in the modern health service the focus should be on patients and prevention and not on politicisation, which remains the dominant concern of Her Majesty's Opposition.

SCA Aylesford Ltd

10.14 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I beg to move,

That this House authorises the Secretary of State to pay, or undertake to pay, by way of financial assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, in respect of the installation of new and the refurbishment of existing machinery to manufacture newsprint from recycled fibre at Aylesford, Kent by SCA Aylesford Ltd, sums exceeding £10,000,000 but not exceeding £20,000,000.

As the House knows, last March my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State announced our intention to provide a grant of not more than £20 million to SCA Aylesford Ltd towards the cost of an investment in a project to manufacture newsprint from recycled fibre at Aylesford, near Maidstone in Kent. The project is estimated to cost no less than £260 million.

We propose to provide the financial support through the Department's assistance-for-exceptional-projects facility. That is funded under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, under which the approval of the House is required before assistance of more than £10 million can be granted to any single project.

The purpose of the AEP facility is to assist a small number of investment projects and research and development projects that are likely to yield exceptional national benefits. Applicants must also show that the project is commercially viable and that, despite its exceptional merits, assistance is necessary to enable the project to go ahead as planned. Assistance is provided on a selective basis, usually as a grant. The amount is negotiated as the minimum necessary for the project to go ahead and is subject to a maximum of 25 per cent. of eligible costs. In SCA's case, the exceptional national benefits are environmental and the project has the strong support of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

SCA currently operates a single newsprint machine at Aylesford, which manufactures 80,000 tonnes of newsprint annually from 100 per cent. recycled fibre. Indeed, it is the only company in Europe presently manufacturing newsprint wholly from that source of raw material.

The project is to install an additional machine, together with the associated de-inking, water treatment and other facilities required to manufacture a further 250,000 tonnes of newsprint a year wholly from recycled fibre. The existing 80,000-tonne machine will also be refurbished to improve the quality of its output and increase it by 26,000 tonnes a year.

In all, the plant will consume some 430,000 tonnes of waste paper a year, much of it from household waste. The developments will enable the feedstock to consist of 80 per cent. post-consumer waste—that is, old newspapers and magazines—and only 20 per cent. pre-consumer waste. That would reverse the proportions used by the present machine.

The project will thus make a major contribution to our target for recycling 25 per cent. of domestic waste by the end of the century. To help to meet that target, British newspaper publishers have also agreed that they will use 40 per cent. of recycled fibre in their publications by the year 2000. A new accessible source of wastepaper-based newsprint is vital if publishers are to fulfil the undertaking from United Kingdom sources.

In due course, the project will create an additional 100 permanent jobs. It would be uneconomic simply to refurbish the current machine unless the new machine is installed. The project will therefore also safeguard almost 300 existing jobs at the Aylesford site. Construction work will give rise at a peak to about 1,000 additional temporary jobs.

A detailed assessment of the project has been carried out by my Department in conjunction with the Department of the Environment. That has established that all the criteria of the AEP facility have been satisfied and that an offer of £20 million would be justified. The independent Industrial Development Advisory Board, which advises the Department on the provision of selective financial assistance, has also recommended that support of £20 million should be offered.

We have also notified the European Commission of our intention to assist SCA Aylesford. It has recently informed us that it considers that the project is of demonstrable environmental interest to the European Community, that the aid is necessary for the project to take place, and that the level of aid is sufficiently modest to make it unlikely that it will distort trading conditions between member states.

I should like to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), who first brought this environmentally significant project to the Government's attention in 1991, and whose support has been invaluable. We have greatly valued his continuing and energetic support, particularly during our discussions with the European Commission.

I believe that SCA's project will make a valuable contribution to the infrastructure for recycling household waste in this country. In asking the House to approve the proposed assistance, I therefore particularly commend the project's potential for recycling waste material and for raising awareness of the commercial benefits of recycling.

As I have said, this scheme was devised for very exceptional cases. That is why the criteria are deliberately very tightly drawn and difficult to satisfy. Of the many inquiries received by my Department during the five years the scheme has been in existence, only 55 projects justified further consideration. We accepted fewer than 10 for a time-consuming full appraisal process. Of these, only two have succeeded in meeting the criteria and have been offered grant.

I have therefore concluded that we should suspend this scheme for the present. The extreme difficulty of qualifying for grant means delay and uncertainty for companies. This complicates the often difficult decisions that they have to make on potentially eligible projects. The lengthy grant approval process involves an investment of resources by both the company and my Department.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Would the Minister take time to explain this matter in the context of the motion before the House? My understanding was that we should be discussing simply a grant to SCA Aylesford, but the Minister has announced the suspension of the scheme, shutting the stable door after the horse—the grant to SCA Aylesford—has bolted. Is it not a matter requiring a separate statement if the Minister thinks that there should be no more grants of this type? Surely, out of courtesy, he should make a separate announcement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My feeling was that the House would like to be told of the suspension of the scheme at the time of the announcement of this grant as the two matters are very closely related. Obviously this is a very substantial grant.

Mr. Morgan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to give an explanation that should meet his point.

As I have already pointed out, in the case of most applicants, this investment does not produce a return by way of grant. In addition, the scheme requires that Government funds be earmarked for possible successful applicants. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand that. Often these funds have not been spent, as there have not been any successful applicants. It is clear that the funds might more effectively have been used for other schemes. That is inefficiency that we cannot afford, particularly with the very heavy current pressure on public expenditure, of which the House is aware.

Relaxing the criteria and making more grant offers is not a practical possibility, as we—like Opposition Members, I hope—attach great importance to the existence of a level playing field in Europe. The Commission has required member states to phase out general investment support schemes outside assisted areas. We strongly support its efforts to limit such schemes as they can so easily distort competition. We should not want to detract from the Commission's efforts, and thus undermine the achievement of the objective of a level playing field throughout the Community, by operating our scheme less rigorously than at present. I should, however, emphasise most strongly that regional assistance will continue to be available in the assisted areas.

In those circumstances, and in the light of the substantial grant that I am asking the House to approve and of the demand on funds that that represents, I intend to suspend the operation of the assistance-for-exceptional-projects facility with effect from the end of February for the next financial year. No further applications will therefore be accepted from the end of February, and the scheme will be suspended until April 1994.

I stress that I shall keep the position under review and make a further announcement in due course. Applications which have already been received, or which are received by the end of February and which are adequately prepared and sufficiently developed to enable appraisal to go forward, will be fully considered against the criteria of the scheme. I can confirm that we shall consider against those criteria the application currently being pursued by North British Newsprint in respect of the Gartcosh project.

I repeat my thanks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling for bringing SCA Aylesford's project to the attention of the Government. I emphasise the exceptional environmental advantage of the project that we are considering today and I ask the House to agree the motion.

10.24 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I had thought that we would have a broadly consensual debate on the application for money and the agreement by Government to make money available to SCA, but I must say that the Minister's announcement at the end of his speech was, in

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

my view, a discourtesy to the House. It is, Madam Speaker, as you fully realise, a very tight motion which relates to the Industrial Development Act 1982, to section 8 of that Act and to a particular project. For the Minister to come to the House and announce the suspension of the scheme in this way is discourteous. It should have been announced in a different way. There should have been a statement in prime time to give other hon. Members the opportunity of asking questions of the Minister.

The Government did not even have the courtesy or the courage to put this on the Order Paper. It is a substantial change in policy dictated by one of two reasons. Either it has been dictated by financial concerns, which is a further indication that the Government are in difficulty with their trade and industry budget—perhaps the Minister will confirm that—or it has been dictated to the Government by the European Commission. The Minister talked about a level playing field. Perhaps he could make it clear to us whether this is a result of the intervention of the European Commission. If so, the House has a right to know.

The Minister's statement is cursory and unreasonable, having regard to hon. Members' right to know about important statements of this sort. I am sure that, as a courtesy to yourself, Madam Speaker, and to the House it would have made some sense if the Government had put down a motion related not just to SCA but to the broader issue. I realise, Madam Speaker, that in many respects I am out of order in making these general comments, but I think that it is appropriate in the circumstances when the Minister has taken the opportunity to make a wider statement.

Madam Speaker: May I make the point that the Minister of State has opened it up, and the hon. Gentleman is perfectly in order, once the Minister has done so.

Mr. Fatchett: I realise that, Madam Speaker. I meant that it may have been discourteous to you and the House for the Minister to make the statement in this way.

The statement raises a number of points which also relate to the more general issues. Why this particular scheme? The criteria are set out in the Government's documentation under the Industrial Development Act 1982—the annual report for the year ending 31 March 1992. We welcome this scheme. We believe that it has environmental advantages. We are also delighted to hear that the Department of the Environment agrees with the Department of Trade and Industry on this project. It may be almost unique at the moment for the Secretary of State for the Environment to agree with the President of the Board of Trade, so the SCA scheme has brought together two members of a warring Cabinet—and it may reflect further credit on the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley). He must have healing tendencies.

The Minister said that the scheme may need to be looked at because of the number of projects that have been approved, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) said, it is not because of the lack of projects. It is interesting to look through the number of applications received in the year to 31 March 1992. All but two of the 44 applications were turned down. All the way across the country, project after project was turned down because, according to the Department of Trade and Industry, it did not meet the requirements set out. Two projects for Wales gained approval and expenditure of £4·2 million.

Mr. Sainsbury: One project.

Mr. Fatchett: I only read the documents that the Department of Trade and Industry pushes out. It is difficult to conclude other than that two projects received offers. Perhaps the Minister is suggesting that only one of those offers was taken up.

Mr. Sainsbury: It may be a little confusing. Perhaps I can help. Two separate companies were involved, each receiving a grant in respect of the same project. Therefore, it was effectively one project.

Mr. Fatchett: We seem to have resolved that small matter. Two companies, one project, 44 applications, only two approved.

The Minister says that it would be unreasonable to change the criteria, so the scheme is stopped altogether. If various companies have expressed an interest in relation to 44 projects, would it not also have been sensible, instead of announcing the suspension of the scheme without consultation, for the Government to have consulted so that people could comment on the nature of the scheme, its success, whether the criteria need to be changed or whether schemes could fall within the criteria? But the Government do not even bother to consider consultation on that basis.

The Minister has given reasons for this particular scheme. He also commented on the Gartcosh scheme, which has many similarities to the SCA scheme. Will the Gartcosh scheme now gain Government approval? I understand that if section 8 money had been made available to that scheme in 1991, when it was short of only £15 million out of £250 million, it would now be on stream. Perhaps the Minister will give us the details of the Gartcosh scheme, and where it now stands. When there is such difficulty in finding successful applicants for the scheme, will he explain why, in 1991, when Gartcosh was so close to achieving all the criteria, the Government did not make the necessary money available?

As with any scheme of this sort, a number of issues are raised. We are told that the scheme qualifies only if the capital investment is guaranteed by the scheme and will not be available in any other form. The Minister provided no evidence that that condition has been met in relation to this scheme. Why has the Minister come to the conclusion that this scheme, and this scheme alone, will be in a difficult position and not attract the capital investment other than by means of the grant?

The Minister skated over the job implications of the scheme. As I understand it, he said that the SCA scheme would protect an existing 300 jobs. We welcome that. He also said that there would be 1,000 temporary construction jobs. But in the long term the scheme will not create one new job. It will simply protect existing jobs. I hope that the Minister will confirm that that is the case.

The National Audit Office report in relation to Wales, not necessarily the Department of Trade and Industry, entitled "Creating and safeguarding jobs in Wales", published in October 1991, criticised the Government for not always having effective forecasts and estimates of the job creation implications of particular schemes. It said:

"From the point of view of jobs alone, the National Audit Office believe that the bodies have been slow to make forecasts

for and assess the achievements of the initiatives by measuring and verifying actual jobs achieved and by undertaking more regular and communally devised evaluation studies."

That may apply to this scheme as well.

The Minister will be aware that SCA has not just had an interest in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling in Aylesford in Kent, but also has or had an interest in Blackburn. SCA bought out the Reed paper organisation, and, on that basis, inherited the Sun paper mill in Blackburn, which employed 180 people and was closed last July. Other buyers were interested, but the impression given is that SCA was not concerned about the possibility of selling the land to any buyer; it was keen to close the mill, and to concentrate its activities on Aylesford.

In the Minister's calculation of jobs and his discussions with the company, has he taken any account of the 180 jobs that have been lost in Blackburn as a result of SCA's decision to close the Sun paper mill? If he has not, the equation changes dramatically.

Finally, I should like the Minister to say more about the details of the scheme. I am relying solely on what the *Financial Times* said on 12 January about the construction contracts. The Minister may well have more information; if so, I defer to his greater knowledge.

According to the *Financial Times*,

"John Brown, a member of the engineering division of Trafalgar House, is to construct a . . . gas turbine based heat and power . . . plant at . . . SCA . . . papermaking site in Kent.

The company was awarded the Aylesford contract by National Power who will own the plant and supply the electrical power and heat to meet SCA's current energy and process needs on site."

Will the Minister tell us whether that gas-driven scheme, however small it may be, was taken into account in some of the broader energy discussions? Were the energy implications noted?

I welcome the grant, and the support for the plant. I have raised a number of detailed questions. We are keen to know about the future of Gartcosh, the implications of the job losses for Blackburn and the evidence that capital investment would not be made available by other means; but the most disappointing feature of the Minister's statement is the decision to suspend the scheme. That, I think, will disappoint British industry. It will certainly disappoint the House that the Minister has sneaked out the statement so late at night.

If the Government want industrial partnership with British industry, they should recognise that making such an announcement at this time of night is not a good way of setting up the new relationship. The Opposition will support the measure, but we shall want to return to the broader issues at a later stage.

10.37 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I am glad that we have the support of the Opposition Front Bench. Obviously it is for my right hon. Friend the Minister to respond to the questions raised by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), but it may assist the House if I briefly sketch the history of paper making at the Aylesford site as it bears directly on the rationale for the grant.

Paper making began in the 1920s at Aylesford, which was a perfect site for the purpose. The River Medway runs through the site, providing the all-important water supply, and also river access from the Thames estuary for the key raw materials—pulp, china clay and, at that time, coal. The site prospered until the second world war, and after 1945. Paper making continued to expand on the site until the end of the 1950s. At that point, there were no fewer than 13 paper-making machines on the site, which was the largest single paper-making complex in Europe. Since then, the story of the site has been one of sedate but remorseless contraction. In 1959, there were 13 paper-making machines, but now there are three.

Sadly, under the management of successive British companies, it has not proved possible to find the finance for the major investment necessary to render the site competitive in the long term. An opportunity to change that occurred in 1990 when the Swedish SCA group took over the site. SCA's strategic plan was to establish within the confines of the EC area a major newsprint manufacturing operation using only recycled paper. It was far from certain that SCA would locate the new £260 million investment in this country at Aylesford, and it reflects credit on the Government that we are holding this debate today and that this important strategic national investment has been secured for this country.

I should like to pay a personal tribute to two members of the Cabinet and one former member of the Cabinet who were instrumental in retaining this investment in the United Kingdom. I first took the chairman of SCA to my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in August 1991. The chairman eloquently and persuasively set out the case for the major investment at Aylesford. He developed the environmental case, the significant balance of payments case and the employment case. He pointed out, very reasonably, that other countries were anxious to secure SCA's investment, in particular Germany and the Netherlands, both of which were offering substantial capital grants running to tens of millions of pounds to attract investment. He told my right hon. Friend that, unless the British Government were able to match to some degree the financial assistance being offered by other countries, SCA would inevitably have to locate the investment elsewhere. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central may wish to note that because it directly addresses one of the points that he made.

Against that background, it was clear that unless a degree of financial assistance was offered by the Government the project would be lost to this country. The initial response of my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans was not particularly encouraging. He told us that it was not Government policy to subsidise private companies, that private companies were expected to stand on their own feet and that the Government were not sympathetic to the suggestion that they should intervene in industry.

The meeting ended cordially and, to his credit, my right hon. Friend reflected closely on the detailed case for the project submitted to the Department and moved from a position of scepticism to one of support and strong backing. He was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the £20 million grant was announced at the end of the last Parliament.

Secondly, I pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). I well remember that on the key day—Monday 16 March, the last day of the last Parliament—the Department of Trade and Industry was ready to go ahead with the

[Sir John Stanley]

announcement of the grant. All that was necessary was Treasury approval in the form of the agreement of the Chief Secretary. I went in search of him and found him discharging his duties in the House. I was able to have a discussion with him behind the Speaker's Chair. With his usual energy, my right hon. and learned Friend managed to produce Treasury approval in a matter of hours. It is wondrous what can happen on the last working day of a Parliament when Ministers and officials are desperate to clear ministerial desks for whatever may lie ahead.

Thirdly, I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who was Secretary of State for the Environment in the previous Parliament. Since he has become President of the Board of Trade he has played a crucial role in ensuring that the Government's intention to give the go-ahead to the project with the assistance of the £20 million grant was not torpedoed by the European Community. The House may want to know that that was a real possibility at one point, and we are indebted to the determination, skill and persuasiveness of the President of the Board of Trade and his extremely diligent officials in ensuring that the EC did not manage to wreck the project in the United Kingdom. I am grateful to my three right hon. and right hon. and learned Friends.

I mention one policy point which is important to me as I have lived with the project for some two and a half years. I know that what I am going to say will not please hon. Members with constituencies in assisted areas. My experience of the project is that it has now become almost impossible to gain major manufacturing investment in a non-assisted area in the United Kingdom because of a double handicap faced by such areas. The geographical extent of non-assisted areas in the United Kingdom covers the greater part of England.

The double handicap applies, first, in the United Kingdom itself. In the non-assisted areas, there is no help with development grants for new manufacturing investment. That is in contrast with the substantial assistance available to assisted areas and it can have some grotesque effects. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central referred to the SCA closure in Blackburn. I do not know the background to that, but I offer an illustration of what has happened as a result of a major discrimination against non-assisted areas in the United Kingdom.

On the Aylesford site, alongside SCA, there is another paper-making company called Kimberly-Clark. If hon. Members have not heard of that company, they will at least have heard of its major product—the excellent Kleenex tissue range. A few years ago, Kimberly-Clark managed to secure a major new plant investment in Wales —I know that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) will be glad to hear that—with development grant assistance. As a result, in October last year Kimberly-Clark at Aylesford announced 300 redundancies. The new plant that it had established in Wales with Government assistance meant that it was transferring products from Kent. It does not seem to make sense to use taxpayers' money to create notional employment in one part of the United Kingdom while producing redundancies in another. That is a serious issue which the Government need to address.

The second handicap relates to the EC's competition policy. My right hon. Friend the Minister sought to justify his suspension announcement today in terms of helping the EC to maintain a level playing field. Although the EC notionally seeks to establish a level playing field for manufacturing industry, there is no level playing field in practice—for the simple reason that any assisted area in the EC can obtain any amount of subsidy that the national Government can produce and not run any risk of having that investment torpedoed by the EC. Inside a non-assisted area, such as Kent generally and Aylesford in particular, the moment any form of Government subsidy is used one runs the gauntlet of the EC and is likely to have one's investment torpedoed

There is no level playing field. The real issue is whether it is possible to have genuine and fair competition when one geographical section of the EC—the assisted areas —has limitless amounts of Government subsidy open to it while the rest of the EC has no such access to subsidy and faces the possibility of its manufacturing investment being torpedoed by the EC if any Government subsidy is used. There is no such thing as a level playing field at present, and until the issue is addressed there will be no fair competition. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench to take my point seriously and to look for some sensible answers to it so that we can have genuine and fair competition in manufacturing investment in the EC.

Mr. Fatchett: The right hon. Gentleman is making an important point. May I push him a stage further? He said at the beginning of his speech that what was important to the company was the assistance, which is supported in the motion, under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982. Is it not the case, in terms of the right hon. Gentleman's argument about the level playing field, that Governments in other countries, regardless of regional policy, find ways to support such projects? The danger with SCA and other similar companies is that if the money had not been forthcoming from the United Kingdom they would have taken the jobs and the investment elsewhere.

Sir John Stanley: The hon. Gentleman is correct and precisely describes the position. He has explained the central rationale for the grant, as I see it. If the Government had not made the grant available, the £260 million project, with the environmental and employment benefits to which hon. Members have referred, would have gone either to Germany or to the Netherlands. Other countries understand that the wider they draw the boundaries of the assisted areas, the greater the ability they have to play the subsidy system free from EC interference. That is a lesson that other countries understand. Ministers should reflect on that point.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that there is no possibility of other EC countries diminishing the level of state aid that they provide until we provide the same level of aid? We should then be able, as one sovereign country with another, to negotiate within the EC for overall reductions in state aid, thus providing a genuine level playing field.

Sir John Stanley: I do not see the position as the hon. Gentleman describes it. My experience, deriving essentially from this project, is that each Government will try to work the existing EC rules to their own national

advantage. That does not affect the aggregate amount of subsidy. Each Government will try to work the system to help their own national interest.

I suggest that the Aylesford paper-making site has been a microcosm of British manufacturing industry and the way in which it has ebbed and flowed in the post-war period. It prospered through to the end of the 1950s and since then has experienced a slow but steady contraction, although the site is still effective and has done pretty well through the severe recession that we have recently experienced.

With the assistance of the grant—if the House approves it today—we shall see ushered in at Aylesford another significant period of manufacturing investment and benefit to manufacturing industry at Aylesford. Although the debate has inevitably focused narrowly on my constituency—I am grateful to the House for its time—it is my fervent wish that the strengthening of manufacturing in Aylesford in the 1990s will be accompanied through the 1990s by a general widening and strengthening of manufacturing investment in Britain as a whole.

10.55 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a few comments on the remarkable statement that the Minister made. He is bound to make a statement to the House under the Industrial Development Act 1982 when a grant of more than £10 million is made. It is a matter of great regret that the Minister slipped in a significant change of policy while he was making a statement about an individual grant. He was bound to make such a statement under the terms of the legislation.

The Minister's change of policy means that all the claims of advantage made by the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), that industry would be secured in his constituency which would have gone to either Germany or Holland without that inducement, are now scattered to the winds. Any Member of Parliament who makes a similar approach to a Department of Trade and Industry Minister will get naught for his or her pains. Investment of a major nature for special projects cannot now be induced to come to the United Kingdom in spite of the Government's proud boasts that they attract inward investment.

Assistance cannot be sought for a similar project which, on the admission of the constituency Member of Parliament, required a £20 million inducement—the same as the amount of grant in the motion before the House. We can no longer encourage investment in manufacturing industry in that way. That is a major change of policy. It is a matter of great regret that the Minister chose this underhand method. It is a way of withholding information from Parliament.

There is a great difference between tabling a motion about a single payment to a factory at Aylesford in Kent and announcing at just before 1 pm on the annunciator throughout the Palace of Westminster that a Minister will make a statement. A statement would have given everyone the opportunity to come to the Chamber. Members could not possibly anticipate from the narrow motion on the Order Paper that it contained a major change of policy.

Everyone would agree with the criteria in section 8. They are that any grant must benefit the economy; it must be in the national interest; and there must be no alternatives available to the Secretary of State than to pay grant assistance. Those three criteria are reasonable and straightforward. It is madness for the Government to say that they will no longer apply those criteria. Even if a project is in the national interest and will benefit the economy and even if there are no alternative ways of financing it, such a project will go out of the window for the United Kingdom by virtue of what the Minister has announced tonight. That is a matter of great regret.

The Minister said that the project will have environmental benefits. His statement confirmed that, and it supports the investment to recycle used paper to provide fresh paper. Other industries can provide environmental benefits in exactly the same way. As the Minister knows, the textile industry has had many concerns about the use of water, of which the paper industry is also a major user. If the textile industry had a plan to introduce carbonising and scouring, which involved significant capital expenditure—which I assure the Minister the textile industry could not reasonably afford—it would require grant assistance. However, it would be denied such assistance. That is extremely unfair.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's line, but it is going rather wide of the motion. It is one thing to make a passing reference, but the hon. Gentleman is beginning to develop a theme that falls outside the scope of the order.

Mr. Cryer: You were not in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, when that very point was raised with Madam Speaker. Because the Minister had referred to the suspension of the scheme, Madam Speaker agreed that it was no longer simply a debate on the narrow issue of this grant to SCA Aylesford but could go wider. I am speaking about the suspension of the scheme.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is a matter of degree. What I have described as a passing reference is one thing, but we cannot widen the debate so that the original issue becomes lost in the other issues of whether the scheme continues. I must draw the line there and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that. He has made his point cogently but should not continue with it.

Mr. Fatchett: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. When I responded to the Minister I was conscious of the fact that the motion referred only to SCA Aylesford. I asked Madam Speaker for guidance and she made it clear that we could comment on the Minister's announcement and its implications. *[Interruption.]* Despite the laboured French from the Conservative Benches, it was not en passant. Madam Speaker was clear that we could draw substantial attention to the Minister's announcement, and in his speech the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) said that the scheme relates to projects that are of national importance. I think that Madam Speaker intended to allow a much more general debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not my understanding.

Mr. Cryer: Perhaps I could extend the debate to consider the question of jobs. The Minister made it clear that 300 jobs would be safeguarded and that there would be 100 additional jobs, plus construction jobs on the project to which the grant relates. By virtue of the avoidance of payment of unemployment benefit and the tax revenue that the jobs will yield, surely the cost of the grant will be recouped over time. Has the Minister calculated over how many years the tax revenue and the unemployment benefit would be equivalent to the £20 million grant?

The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling said that if the grant were not available the paper-making capacity at Aylesford would be extinguished. Therefore, there is a possibility that jobs will be lost if the grant is not forthcoming. My question is therefore valid. The Minister's announcement of the suspension of the scheme means that the Government will pay more money than grant aid through the payment of unemployment benefit and the loss of tax revenue. That potential loss can be set against the amount of grant which would preserve jobs.

The Minister also mentioned suspension of the scheme, due to a desire to conform to the EC's much-vaunted but highly inaccurate claim of providing what is generally termed a level playing field, because state aids, he said, distort competition.

I find the statement from the Minister extraordinary, because the reality is that competition inside the EEC is distorted and until the EEC Commission makes it clear

beyond peradventure that other state aids in other countries are also to be completely removed, we are tying an economic hand behind our back without any economic advantage being provided.

It does not make sense. What, for example, has the Minister done in the textile industry? This is said by way of example and explanation, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The explanation is getting very full and lengthy so I remind the hon. Member again of the point I made earlier.

Mr. Cryer: The explanation is one that the Minister made in his statement, when he said that the scheme was suspended because, in his view, it helped to distort competition. I am commenting on the Minister's statement.

I am saying that, in the EEC, nothing was done about the Lana Rossi scandal in which £4 million was given to a private company, in the Prato region of Italy. There was a 10 per cent. competitive advantage because there were no insurance payments.

That is what I am saying in comparison and explanation. The Minister is giving away, by suspending it, a scheme which could have been of benefit to British manufacturing industry. It is being scattered to the winds for no advantage.

Why did the right hon. Gentleman not go to the Common Market and say that if they made certain concessions about schemes which are giving advantage to other EEC countries he would suspend this scheme? Nothing like that happened. He came simply to the House and made this announcement without so much as a by-your-leave statement or anything of that nature. He tried to creep it past Parliament without any concentration on it.

This scheme is administered under section 8 of the Act and there is provision for advice and guidance from the Industrial Development Advisory Board. Has that board approved suspension of the scheme? Did the board consider all the 44 or so applications before the Minister, which, he said, were not successful? Did the Industrial Development Advisory Board reject them, or did they never reach the position of the board providing advice and guidance?

Lastly, because the board involves manufacturers, industrialists, merchant bankers, and so on, did any of the board members dealing with this scheme have any financial interest involved, and did any withdraw when the matter was under consideration?

I can recall, as a former Minister at the Department of Industry, that that policy was scrupulously followed: when members of the Industrial Development Advisory Board had financial investment, it was important that they should withdraw so that independent advice was seen to be continuous and clear for all.

I hope that, although the Minister was not listening, he will make some acknowledgement of the questions that I raised.

I conclude by saying that it has been very confusing for you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You came into the House and went into the Chair with a straightforward motion, not realising that the Minister had slipped through a much wider announcement. The confusion for you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is confusion for hon. Members on both sides of the House. We are faced with a typical example of the underhand way in which the Government treat Parliament. They tried to slip through a change of policy late at night when hardly anyone would be in the Chamber.

11.11 pm

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry knows of my interest in the Gartcosh plant, but I do not intend to talk about that plant this evening. Instead, I want to ask some questions about the recycling of paper. Earlier, I asked my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, who is sitting next to my right hon. Friend on the Government Front Bench, about the Government's target of ensuring that 40 per cent. of waste paper is recycled by the year 2000. I asked also what the Government were doing to encourage outlets to ensure that the target is met. I was told that SCA Aylesford Ltd's plant was an example of the encouragement that was being given to the recycling of paper. I am sure that the Government will accept that if the target of 40 per cent. is to be met, SCA will not be able to produce a sufficient market to ensure that the necessary uptake will be achieved.

I was glad to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister said about Gartcosh this evening, but what further encouragement will the Government give to ensure that in the south of England, the north and in Scotland there is a sufficient uptake of waste paper and a proper manufacturing outlet so that we can be sure that the Government's sound environmental target is achieved?

11.12 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): We are here because we want to extend our congratulations to SCA Aylesford and to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), who has fought hard to get the project grant-aided. Our congratulations and our acceptance of the part that the right hon. Gentleman has played are tinged with regret and annoyance because the Minister has chosen to abuse and confuse the House and do untold damage to relationships with industry. The motion refers to SCA Aylesford and nothing but SCA Aylesford, but it has been announced that section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 is being scrapped. That section has been on the statute book for 20 years. It is not some fly-by-night, temporary provision. It is— *[Interruption.]* If the Minister is telling me that it is only part of section 8 that is being scrapped, perhaps he will elucidate now. Is that why he is shaking his head?

Mr. Sainsbury: It may be of assistance to the hon. Gentleman and to the House generally if I explain that what I announced was the temporary suspension of a scheme that is operated under the provisions of section 8. That has no effect on section 8 itself.

Mr. Morgan: I hope that the Minister will be able to say more about that.

What proportion of total section 8 money is being removed by the suspension of this particular AEP—assistance for exceptional projects to the national economy? Hon. Members on both sides of the House are confused—no doubt industry is similarly confused—in the absence of a proper democratic procedure. There is nothing before us save the motion, and we have not been given proper notice. The Government wish sneakily to slip

[Mr. Morgan]

the motion through the House. If the Minister's family grocery store, of which he is a proud scion, tried to sell an SCA Aylesford order while suspending part of section 8, the local trading standards department would be down on it like a ton of bricks. Such behaviour is not acceptable in an advanced and civilised western democracy.

I am pleased that some of us have been in the Chamber this evening to see what the Government are up to. If their behaviour is any indication of the chiselling that they intend to do to regional aid when section 7 is finally reviewed—several months late—by the President of the Board of Trade, there is a pretty poor outlook for those of us who represent constituencies in the assisted areas.

The Minister's excuse is extremely thin. The scheme was being suspended, he said, because it did not get sufficient use and there was always money left over at the end of the year. He is forgetting that those of us who have worked in the field and have tried to obtain section 7 and section 8 assistance for projects in our areas—in my case, before and since coming to this place—know that section 7 and section 8 budgeting is almost impossible. It is the most difficult area of prediction for any Government to say how much industrial demand there will be in the next budget year for section 7 assistance, if it is under the regional aid budget, or for section 8 assistance, if it is under the non-regional aspects of industrial assistance.

It is always pitched high because of the problems that can arise if one needs to return to the House three quarters of the way through the financial year. So an over-estimate is nearly always done because it is demand-led from industry. If there is a great deal of industrial investment, there tends to be a high level of demand, and one tries to allow for that when setting the budget for the following year. In my experience, section 7 is always wildly over-estimated in the Department of Trade and Industry budget and is rarely used. The same probably applies to section 8.

But that is no reason for suspending—I call it scrubbing—the scheme because the chances of it being revived are slim in the light of the £44 billion public sector borrowing requirement and the Government's attempts to save money here, there and everywhere. We regret that it is happening without proper discussion. Almost by accident—simply because some of us take an interest in the paper industry, since we have paper mills in our constituencies—the matter is being raised. We regret that the Government should be making such an important announcement in a behind-the-hand manner. In his reply, the Minister should apologise to the House and explain the matter in more detail.

In relation to section 7, particularly during a recession when there is less industrial investment, it is inevitable that the target of the previous year will be undershot. After all, the budget of the year before, particularly in an election year, will have been set in the hope that industrial investment will pick up. In the event, it has not, so there is less call for grant. The same is true of many other industrial aid schemes, but that is no reason for closing them down.

The Minister's behaviour tonight has been appalling and discourteous to the Chair, to hon. Members and to industry as a whole. If this is part of a new spirit of partnership, I fear that, until the Government are removed, we shall continue to have the problem of Ministers announcing unpopular news late at night without making proper provision for the matter to be discussed. It represents an abuse of the House. It may be on a small matter, but in terms of the grossness of the abuse, it is the worst that I have witnessed in my five and a half years' membership of the House. I appeal to the Chair to protect our rights in the future.

11.18 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I echo the remarks of the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) and the concerns that have been expressed about Gartcosh. I took part in the vigil when the rolling mill at Gartcosh was closed. I know well the people—I come from there—I lived within a mile of that plant. They have been looking forward to some activity in the paper recycling business.

I regret that I was not in my place for the Minister's opening remarks. I gather that he announced the suspension of the scheme but that the scheme will still be in existence and could be applied to Gartcosh. That is a non sequitur, in terms of grant availability, if ever I heard one. Is it not a fact that if a scheme is suspended, nothing can be available under it? How can a scheme that is being suspended temporarily still be available for one project? The people of Scotland will be confused when they read about it in tomorrow's newspapers.

It would have been better if the Minister had made a special announcement about the decision to suspend the scheme, explaining precisely which applications would be processed, how the procedure would apply and when the suspension would come into being. The people of Scotland will not be satisfied about what is proposed until a full explanation is given.

11.19 pm

Mr. Sainsbury: First, may I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) for his kind remarks. He was modest about his own contribution to the success of SCA Aylesford. Some of his remarks about major manufacturing investment in non-assisted areas were perhaps a little wide of the mark. Two projects currently coming on stream and greatly to the benefit of the areas involved and the country are the Toyota factory in Derbyshire and the Honda factory in Swindon—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) will contain his sedentary remarks for a moment and allow me to develop my point.

My right hon. Friend was suggesting that it was not possible to get major manufacturing investment outside a non-assisted area and I was pointing out that there are a number of major investments.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was decrying our ability to get inward investment and suggesting that somehow a modest change to one scheme which has assisted only two projects in five years would mean that any prospect of attracting inward investment was for ever destroyed. As we might expect from the hon. Gentleman, that is a gross exaggeration, because, after all, Britain gets a larger share of investment from the United States of America and from Japan than any other country in the European Community—something like 40 per cent. of that investment.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: I shall just finish one point arising from the remarks of my right hon. Friend.

We support the European Community in its efforts to create a level playing field; those efforts include monitoring the schemes that are available in assisted areas. My right hon. Friend made some valid points about what occurs, but we are hopeful that the situation is being improved. His rather splendid suggestion that any amount of grants were available in some countries is not precisely the position and I think that matters are improving.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister, in turn, is exaggerating my remarks about inward investment procedures. Will he confirm that no other SCA Aylesford-type investment projects will be induced to come to Britain because of the suspension of the current scheme?

Mr. Sainsbury: That scheme has helped only two projects—this being the second one—in five years. A great deal of money has been made available over the years. Since 1972, more than £1·7 billion has been paid out under section 8 and, including the £20 million that we hope the House will approve this evening, only £30 million has been paid out under the AEP scheme. I hope that puts matters in perspective.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Is my right hon. Friend aware of how important the project is to two companies in an assisted area in my constituency? The first is Davidson Ratcliffe Ltd., a leading waste paper collector and merchant, and the second is Beloit Walmsley Ltd., a very large manufacturer of paper-making machinery, which I understand is in contention to win orders under this project. I welcome the motion.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not familiar with the firms to which my hon. Friend refers, but I know how energetically he pursues the interests of his constituent companies and we hope that one, if not both, of them will be successful in gaining work from this project.

I began to regret what I had hoped was a courtesy to the House. Let us be realistic and recognise that the normal arrangement for announcing the suspension for one year of a scheme which has produced two grants in five years would have been for a written answer to appear on the Order Paper. If Opposition Front-Bench Members were honest with themselves, they would recognise that. I thought that it was a courtesy to the House, given that we had the opportunity to debate the grant, to announce its temporary suspension in a debate rather than a written question so that right hon. and hon. Members would have the opportunity to comment on it. The Opposition's reaction is more than a little unrealistic.

Mr. Fatchett: Does not the Minister realise that that is a specious argument? If the response had been through an answer to a written question, it would have been on the Order Paper. My right hon. and hon. Friends would have had the opportunity to study it and to make whatever comments they wished about local schemes. The simple fact is that the announcement was not on the Order Paper —and in that sense it is a gross discourtesy to the House and to the Chair.

The Minister has taken the opportunity of this debate to sneak through an announcement without having a word with the Chair and getting its support and permission. Out of courtesy to every Member of the House, the right hon. Gentleman should have made his announcemenmt at some other time. He should apologise rather than make a specious argument.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refute the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. All that he has succeeded in doing is to encourage the Government to proceed on such matters by means of a written answer. If the next time that happens we get protests from the Opposition, I shall know to what to draw attention.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if he had made his announcement by written answer, the Opposition would have complained equally vociferously?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not too sure about that. The comments of Labour Members this evening suggest that they would rather have such matters dealt with by means of a written answer—*[Interruption.]* Their suggestion that this matter merits a statement is, as I said earlier, quite absurd. Labour Members—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Many allegations of discourtesy are flying about. I remind hon. Members that it is an elementary courtesy that when someone is speaking he should not have to do so with a chorus of seated interventions.

Mr. Sainsbury: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall move on to one or two of the more important observations that were made.

The point about the AEP scheme is that it is for projects that carry exceptional national benefits. As I emphasised in my opening remarks, there are exceptional national benefits relating to this scheme relating to environmental policy objectives. I stress that it is not like the regional selective assistance scheme, which is job related. That point was made by several Opposition Members. The number of jobs actually created or safeguarded, or those created during the construction process, is not in itself one of the objectives of the scheme. The exceptional national benefits have to be something beyond merely job creation. In this case, it is the use of a new technology in de-inking that meets those important environmental policy objectives.

A point was made about energy consumption. The energy generation on the site is small compared with national energy consumption. The existing mill takes its electricity from the national grid and is derived from coal and oil. One could say that moving to a combined heat and power gas-fired plant would result in lower CO_2 emissions, which would meet another environmental objective.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) referred to the further encouragement of the collection of waste paper. We certainly intend to meet the targets and we will consider all measures that ensure that market mechanisms achieve that work.

Points were raised about the Gartcosh scheme. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) was not in the Chamber when I made my opening remarks. For his benefit and that of others who may not have been listening as closely as they might have done, I shall repeat what I said. I said:

"I can confirm that we shall consider against those criteria the application currently being pursued by North British Newsprint in respect of the Gartcosh project."

[Mr. Sainsbury]

Now that I have announced that AEP is to be suspended, the company will need to develop its application by the end of February so that the appraisal may go forward.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister has omitted an important point. Several hon. Members asked whether the European Commission had indicated its objection to this scheme and whether that was why the Government were suspending it. Can the Minister clarify the position in respect of that matter?

Mr. Sainsbury: We did not discuss the scheme as a whole with the European Commission. We share the Commission's desire to keep firm control of all schemes that can distort competition in the Community. Such schemes can, of course, be outside or inside assisted areas. In referring to this matter, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling talked about any amount of money being available. Schemes within assisted areas are also subject to the scrutiny of the European Commission. That is something which we welcome, as we believe that distortion of competition does not benefit either this country or any other part of the Community.

Mr. Fatchett: Am I right in construing the Minister as saying that he thinks that this scheme distorts competition and that its suspension has, therefore, been volunteered to the European Commission?

Mr. Sainsbury: I believe that in my remarks there was a reference to relaxation of the criteria for this scheme. Such relaxation might result in success for more applicants. As I pointed out, in five years only two applicants have been successful. This would be a move towards more overtly flexible schemes—schemes of just the sort that can be used by others to distort competition and might, therefore, understandably, find disfavour in the Commission. There have been several alleged instances of aid in other countries giving rise to complaints from British industry.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Minister has said that the scheme at Gartcosh will now have to be developed before the end of February if it is to go forward. Why the end of February? Does the Minister know that that will give the company sufficient time to develop its application? Or is it a purely arbitrary date that the Minister has conjured up out of thin air?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman may not have been in the House when I made my introductory remarks and, therefore, may not have heard my reference to the suspension of the scheme from the end of February until April 1994. I said that North British Newsprint ought to get its scheme registered before the end of February so that it might be subjected to the appraisal process.

Mr. Connarty: This matter continues to worry me. What notice of the Minister's announcement was the company given? Is it to get its information from tomorrow's papers?

Mr. Sainsbury: The company has been in contact with the Department for a considerable time. Since July we have been waiting to hear from it. We do not know whether it will come back to us. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman was not in the House when I dealt with this point. We have discussed it at length.

This scheme will bring considerable benefits.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: As the hon. Gentleman, unlike some hon. Members, has been in the House for the debate, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Wallace: Can the Minister be more explicit? When is it intended that those putting in the application for Gartcosh will be told about the suspension and informed that the application will have to be received by the end of February? Have they been informed already, or will this come as news to them? Has the Minister any indication that what he is asking of them is feasible?

Mr. Sainsbury: To the best of my knowledge, it is entirely feasible. Whether they will actually do so, I do not know. We will, of course, communicate with the company.

It is occasionally suggested—not infrequently, I suggest, by hon. Members on the Opposition Benches—that it is a courtesy to come and tell Parliament things first, and that I have done. I have provided an opportunity for debate, and all I have received in exchange is brickbats. Perhaps we can draw a conclusion from that.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. There is considerable noise in the House. As you will recollect, a few seconds ago the Minister started a sentence about the company being unable to bring the scheme forward by the end of February; in the noise I lost the second half of that sentence. Perhaps the Minister could complete it for us now.

Mr. Sainsbury: I may have to read *Hansard*, which is not immediately available, to find out what I said. Perhaps I could recommend that the hon. Gentleman read *Hansard* himself. It may be that the sentence to which he referred was when I said that the company would need to develop its application by the end of February so that the appraisal could go forward. Perhaps it was those words that he did not hear clearly; I hope that it was and that we will have it doubly on the record.

The motion is to approve a grant to a project which I think has exceptional national benefits. It enables environmental policy objectives to be met. It maintains and improves the operation of a company which, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling has said, has operated with distinction in his constituency for a long time. I hope that the House will approve the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House authorises the Secretary of State to pay, or undertake to pay, by way of financial assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, in respect of the installation of new and the refurbishment of existing machinery to manufacture newsprint from recycled fibre at Aylesford, Kent by SCA Aylesford Ltd., sums exceeding £10,000,000 but not exceeding £20,000,000.

Public Health

11.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I beg to move,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Oil and Chemical Pollution of Fish) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 17) dated 8th January 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th January, be approved.

In the statement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland made on 11 January about the Shetland tanker incident, he told the House that an exclusion zone had been declared under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, within which fishing and harvesting of farmed fish is prohibited. The emergency order which set up the exclusion zone requires the approval of Parliament if it is to continue in force, and that is the purpose of tonight's motion. Copies of the map of the area are available in the Vote Office.

The purpose of the order was to ensure that, in the light of the Braer incident, there was no danger of fish or fish products reaching the market if they could be hazardous to human health. No sensible fishermen would have fished in the area after the incident—in the light of the weather conditions, I do not think that they would have tried—and fish farmers affected by the spread of oil could similarly have been relied upon voluntarily to keep their product from the market. The fishermen imposed a voluntary ban before the order was made. I pay tribute to the Shetland Fishermen's Association and the Shetland Salmon Farmers Association, and particularly to their respective chief executives, John Goodlad and Jimmy Moncrieff, for their excellent and impressive response to all these difficulties. I pay tribute also to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) who, in his capacity as constituency Member, has been very helpful and constructive throughout.

Nevertheless, my right hon. Friend and I thought it right to use the power that was available to give legal force to a ban on taking fish from the area. We did this after full consultation with, and with the agreement of, both the Shetland fishermen and the fish farmers. The imposition of the order was part of a three-pronged strategy which also included the establishment of arrangements to sample and test fish being landed on Shetland markets, and the setting up of longer-term monitoring arrangements covering both fish and water quality.

That background to the order is important. In setting up the arrangements, we had in mind the vital importance to the Shetland economy of both the fishing and the fish farming industries. They faced an obvious and immediate threat to their businesses. There was also the danger of much longer term damage if those industries should lose market and consumer confidence.

Therefore, the order, and the other arrangements that I have mentioned, seemed to me of the greatest importance in assuring commercial buyers and consumers that special care was being taken over the quality of Shetland fish products and, correspondingly, that the public should have every confidence in the products when they reach the shops. I know that that approach has the full confidence and support of the industries in Shetland, and with regard to salmon it is reassuring that a number of supermarket chains which have now visited the islands are remarketing Shetland products. I have emphasised the consultation because some newspapers implied that the Government had slapped on an order without considering the interests of the Shetland fishermen when, in fact, the reverse was the position.

Against that background, we must proceed cautiously in considering the future of the ban. It may be helpful to say a little more about the arrangements which underpin the ban. Those are based on a continuous programme of water and fish sampling. The first test is the state of hydrocarbons in the water. If the water is polluted, the pollution will get into the fish. The critical test, from the point of view of food safety, is the fish itself and the accumulation of hydrocarbons in their edible tissue.

The sampling programme has been hampered by extreme weather conditions, but a clear enough picture has emerged which requires a continuing exclusion of fishing and fish harvesting activity in the zone as presently defined. I confess that I had hoped to be able to inform the House this evening that it would be possible to remove the ban on the east side of the mainland. My feeling is that this may be possible soon, but the latest results indicate not yet.

On the west side of the zone, readings remain high, and the unhappy news is that I have had to decide to extend the western boundary of the zone by 5 nautical miles, from 1 deg 30 west to 1 deg 40 west. This is in response to most recent results of tests on water quality, and on sea fish caught in the new area. The new area will not extend the present zone any further north or south. Thus it will not bring the salmon farms at Vaila Sound and Gruting Voe into the exclusion zone.

I recognise that that is not encouraging news for those concerned. However, I thought it right to tell the House at the earliest opportunity. I also emphasise that, while the news in itself is regrettable, it should nevertheless reassure both consumers and the local fishing and fish farming industries that the monitoring arrangements are working effectively, and that fish and fish products reaching the market are safe and are of good quality.

Nevertheless, I am keenly aware of the problems that the situation creates for the salmon farming businesses. I am anxious that, as soon as the evidence warrants it, we should move to more flexible arrangements which will allow fish to be harvested from within the current exclusion zone when it can be demonstrated that they are free of taint and hydrocarbon contamination. We shall be in continuous touch with those concerned to see what progress can be made as further test results come in.

Meantime, only one claim from a salmon farmer has so far been received by the claims office in Lerwick. I understand that the insurers and the international oil pollution compensation fund have today agreed a substantial advance payment in this case to mitigate economic hardship. That will be paid to the producer by the insurers direct. The speedy reaction of the insurers and the IOPC fund to a claim submitted only at the end of last week should encourage other salmon producers to bring forward their claims. I am sure that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland will have something to say on that.

Additionally, the Government have made available to producers a bridging fund which will be operated for the Government by the Shetland Islands council. Details of the fund's operation were announced in the House on 21 January by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The purpose of the bridging fund is also to prevent economic hardship to fish farmers and other primary producers facing temporary cash flow difficulties

[Sir Hector Monro]

pending settlement of compensation claims. The first payment of £1 million to set up the fund will be made to Shetland Islands council this week.

It is also important for us to assess the ecological effects of the incident. My right hon. Friend has announced his intention of setting up an ecological steering group to consider strategies, in both the short and the longer terms, to deal with the impact of the incident on the local environment.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is the Minister satisfied that there is no danger that oil from the tanker will drift into areas fished by fishermen from other ports in the European Community?

Sir Hector Monro: As I have said, we are monitoring every development extremely carefully, and taking all possible steps to establish where the oil is now. We feel that the only area where it is unsafe to fish is the current exclusion zone, along with the small extension that I have announced today. I think it important for us to continue the detailed monitoring now being carried out so that we can keep a close check on what is happening.

As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland knows, my right hon. Friend today announced the terms of reference of the steering group, and the appointment of Professor Ritchie as chairman. The group's initial purpose will be to take an overall view of the various ecological and environmental initiatives that are now getting under way, or are likely to be established on the group's initiative.

I trust that hon. Members on both sides of the House will recognise that the order forms part of a pattern of effective Government action and is in the best interests of the fishing industry and the consumer.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I welcome the appointment of the principal of Aberdeen university to conduct the local inquiry into the environmental ramifications. Is it not a little unfortunate, however, that the wider inquiry, under Lord Donaldson, will not take place in the area in which the incident occurred? Will the Minister give an assurance, on behalf of the Scottish Office, that any witness—or anyone who feels that he can contribute to the wider inquiry—will not be inhibited from doing so on grounds of cost or inconvenience, wherever that inquiry is held?

Sir Hector Monro: Lord Donaldson's inquiry is rather outwith the terms of the order. However, I am certain not only that it will be peripatetic and will take place in various centres but that everyone with important evidence to give will have the opportunity to give it. I hope that people will do just that: we want to ensure that the problems that we have faced in the past few weeks can, if possible, be prevented from recurring.

I hope that I have made clear how seriously the Government are taking the monitoring of the sea around the Shetlands—and, indeed, further afield if that becomes necessary. We are determined that the exceptionally good reputation of fish from the Shetlands—whether they come from the sea or from the salmon farms—is maintained, and I believe that the stringent measures that we have adopted provide the best way of doing that.

11.48 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I thank the Minister for the further information that he has given us. We do not necessarily thank him for finding it necessary to extend the area concerned, but we recognise that there is no point in trying to take short cuts, or in trying to pretend that something does not exist when it plainly does. I also welcome what the Minister said—and the written answer that I received from the Secretary of State earlier today—about the monitoring committee. It is recognised that the committee will have work to do for a considerable time.

Some may find it appropriate for us to debate the Shetland area on the last Tuesday in January. Traditionally, this is the evening on which my constituents celebrate Up-Helly-a'. For my own part, I confess that I would much rather be in Lerwick; even at this hour the evening is still young, and there is much dancing and singing ahead. I was in Lerwick this morning at the outset of the day's celebrations, where the strong community spirit that has served Shetland well in recent days was clearly evident.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable work and co-operation of the salmon farmers' association, the Shetland Fishermen's Association, crofters in the National Farmers Union and officials of the Shetland Islands council, who have conducted themselves with exemplary professionalism.

Perhaps the local mood might best be judged by the proclamation that was published this morning by the Guizer Jarl in Lerwick. Under the heading "Stop Press"—I think that the pun is probably intended—there is the following notice:

> "Contrary to some immediate predictions our outlook is less BLACK as various expressions would have it to be. Crude and slick exaggerations do us no favours and are unfounded, thanks to the 'rolling sea' and the 'foaming tide'. we are sure that raising the 'flaming brand' will help brighten our outlook once more."

Although that is humorously intended, it emphasises a clear need for balance in our approach to events since the grounding of the Braer on 5 January. It has been necessary to be alert to possible health risks but, equally important, not to overstate them and cause undue alarm. This order is necessary because there has been some contamination, but it is important to stress the determination of Shetlands' food industries, which the Minister has acknowledged, to maintain their reputation for high quality produce, which over many years they have justly earned.

In a way, the order reinforces that commitment because, as the Minister has acknowledged, fishermen and fish farmers imposed a voluntary closure before the statutory order was promulgated. The Minister mentioned the industries' co-operation with the closure orders.

It is in no one's interest that produce that fails to meet stringent quality tests should be marketed. The order is a safeguard, which I hope will reassure potential customers. The Minister referred to the monitoring conducted by some of the industries, including the salmon farmers' programme. Samples taken from fish harvested outwith the closed area have shown no traces of contamination. After inspecting that monitoring programme and visiting salmon farms last week, food technologists from Marks and Spencer expressed their satisfaction with what they found and lifted the temporary suspension on Shetland salmon.

The House should be in no doubt that in protecting the longer-term market integrity of our natural products there will inevitably be some short-term and perhaps medium-term pain, depending on how long it is necessary to keep the closure orders in force. I am told that, at this time of year, but for the ban, most Shetland fishermen would fish in the closed area. Most of the vessels involved are capable of going further afield, but that inevitably involves additional costs. They may have less knowledge of where stocks are likely to be, and for a number of smaller vessels, principally white fish or shellfish vessels operating out of Scalloway or Burra, there is no alternative but to tie up.

For a number of salmon farmers, crisis is imminent. It has not been possible to harvest because of the closure order, and cash flow problems quickly loom. Others may be missing a key window for bringing in smolts, and that problem will increase if the ban is maintained for some time. All in all, economic hardship mounts up, particularly on certain individuals.

It was against that background that the case for immediate Government assistance to tide over businesses and individuals pending settlement of claims was made.

I welcome the fact that in his statement on 11 January the Secretary of State for Scotland said that a bridging fund would be made available. Some might have quibbled about the timing, but the most important thing is that it was established. Some expressed disappointment that a figure was not mentioned, but I took some reassurance from that because I should have been rather alarmed if a cash-limited figure had appeared when no one could have been entirely sure—and still cannot be—how much would be needed.

On 11 January the Secretary of State also said:

"There is . . . understandable concern in Shetland about the cash flow problems which may face businesses, particularly the farming, fishing and fish-farming industries, in the period before claims are settled in full. In view of the significance of these industries to the Shetland economy, my Department is proposing to make resources available through a special bridging fund to help them with particular economic hardship pending the settlement of compensation claims." —[*Official Report*, 11 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 626-27.]

That was followed last week by a written answer from the Secretary of State in which he again referred to the bridging fund and said that it was designed

"to help in particular the farming, fishing and fish-farming industries in Shetland, and prevent economic hardship to primary producers facing temporary cash-flow difficulties pending the settlement of compensation claims."

My concern is that there may have been some initial difficulties in activating the bridging fund. The Minister said that, to date, there had been one claim. I understand that one of the reasons why claims have not been made more quickly is that the original form issued by the international oil pollution compensation fund contained a requirement for the claimant to state that it was a

"complete and accurate account of the loss suffered and costs incurred".

At this stage, no one—especially a salmon farmer—is in a position to say that he can offer a complete account. To be fair, the matter having being raised with IOPC representatives in Lerwick, there is some movement in the nature of the form to be submitted.

It is also a matter of concern that there were signs, certainly at the meeting I had this morning with regard to meeting the cash flow problems, that IPOC representatives were showing a certain unwillingness to act as bankers, as it were. As recently as yesterday, it was said that they claimed to know nothing about the bridging fund. Objectively, the idea is that claims should go through the claims office opened in Lerwick. The Minister said that a payment had been made today. As that relates to a cash flow problem, I hope that it means that that difficulty has been overcome.

I appreciate the fact that matters are developing from day to day, but in view of the fact that the purpose of the bridging fund was to meet cash flow difficulties, there was concern that that particular difficulty seemed to be causing a blockage. I shall certainly want to monitor what happens during the rest of this week because, although I do not want to overdramatise, we are talking of days rather than weeks before difficulties arise for some companies.

I know that the Minister has taken a close interest in events in Shetland as they have unfolded. Will he therefore satisfy himself that the bridging fund which the Government have set up and which they have said will pay £1 million to Shetland Islands council this week is operating as the Government intended. If it appears at some stage that there are inadequacies in the fund and that it is not meeting the need, will he assure us that there will be a willingness to show flexibility so that individual hardships can be dealt with?

Initial claims are to be channelled through the IOPC office. In the written answer to which I referred it was stated that claims

"from businesses which qualify under this scheme and which are, in the view of the club and the IPOC fund, likely to receive compensation in due course will be passed to the islands council".—[*Official Report*, 21 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. *411*.]

Will the Minister therefore confirm that persons submitting claims for assistance under the bridging fund are in no way excluding the possibility of taking other courses of action? I do not believe that it is for politicians, either as members of the Government or as constituency Members of Parliament, to give legal advice on whether people should pursue their claims through compensation funds set up under international convention or through United States attorneys. That must be a matter for legal advisers with the full range of knowledge about what the options are. However, I should like the Minister to confirm that options are not being foreclosed by those who wish to take advantage of the Government's bridging fund.

The reason why the order is before us tonight is the grounding of the Braer. I was grateful and interested when the Minister said in response to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) that the Donaldson inquiry may be peripatetic.

What is causing concern is that the inquiry into the circumstances of the grounding is being undertaken presently by the marine accident investigation branch. As a result of the way in which the branch works, the inquiry is being carried out in confidence and in secret. People want openness about how the vessel ran aground in Shetland. I have looked through the statutes, and I find that it is open to the Secretary of State for Transport to order a formal investigation by a sheriff under section 56(1) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1970. I hope that he will take the opportunity to do so.

On the economic impact that will flow from the order and from what has happened in Shetland, I was also interested by a comment by the Secretary of State for Scotland in his statement on 11 January. He said:

[Mr. James Wallace]

"Once the extent of the damage is more fully known, Shetland Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise will work with Shetland Islands council to assess the impact on the island's economy. I shall consider carefully any recommendations made to me as a result of this assessment. —[*Official Report*, 11 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 627.]

We should like to hear more commitment than just a reference to a consideration of any recommendations. It will be necessary to have a longer-term economic impact assessment of what the effects will be. A closure order, such as this one, could apply for some time. It could have implications for the economy in terms of having to regain markets. That will not necessarily be easy and may not be covered by any compensation fund supplied by the insurers.

We want to be satisfied that Shetland businesses and Shetland individuals will not be out of pocket at that stage. Shetlanders are well aware of the importance of the marine environment to their economy. The Select Committee on Agriculture, when examining fish farming, commended Shetland salmon farmers on the environmental controls they had introduced. The Minister knows from his own experience that Shetland fishermen tend to be at the forefront when it comes to promoting technical conservation measures in the fishing industry.

The Government have recently announced environmentally sensitive area status for Shetland, which shows that, after a difficult start, harmony has been built up between crofting and farming interests and environmental interests. We in the isles understand the importance of a clean environment for our economic prospects.

People have felt badly let down for a number of years. Shipping safety measures were not taken at national or international level to protect the environment. Shetlanders must not have to pay for what has happened. A Government commitment in the longer term to the economic well-being of the islands, apart from the announcements already made, would be very welcome.

12.2 am

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I concur with the comments of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and I commend him on his industry and his work since the unfortunate accident.

The Opposition will support the order, for a number of reasons. The Minister has mentioned that the exclusion zone will be extended westwards. We support that because the Shetland people themselves wish the zone to be extended, despite the hardships they will face.

The Minister mentioned John Goodlad and Jimmy Moncrieff. I spoke to both of them today on the telephone. The Shetland Fishermen's Association said that, although it recognised that the introduction of the zone was causing serious problems to fishing and farming in Shetland, the industry remained of the view that the objective must remain the protection of its quality reputation for producing some of the best fish and fish products in the world. With that and the maintenance of quality and consumer safety in mind, the industry fully supports the continuation of the ban. We concur with it on those points.

The economic problems caused by the incident must, of course, be addressed. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland mentioned that. My comments will focus on compensation and monitoring. The fishermen and the salmon farmers have mentioned to me that the marine laboratory in Aberdeen has done excellent work in sending 25 individuals to Shetland to work alongside those in the islands. Scottish Office personnel have also done excellent work. I pay tribute to them.

I was in Shetland last week with my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who has the shadow environment portfolio. We were impressed by the good work that was being done by Scottish Office and marine laboratory representatives and environmental personnel in the Shetland islands. I pay tribute to Shetland Islands council. We are all aware that Members of Parliament are often criticised. But district and regional councils are also criticised. There was not one criticism of Shetland Islands council among all the comments made to me by people on the island that day, including farmers, crofters and fishermen. Shetland Islands council has stepped in and written an open cheque for the farmers and fishermen to go ahead and do what they think is necessary.

While good work has been done on monitoring from scratch and in terrible conditions, there is anxiety about the Government's commitment to long-term monitoring. The headline in the *Shetland Times* last week when I was there was "The cruel sea cleans it up." The fact that the water is clear does not mean that the problem is removed. The latest press reports say that oil has been found in the flesh of some farmed salmon in the south of the Shetland islands. Volunteers from British Divers Marine Life Rescue have discovered what they term as an ecological disaster in Spiggie bay four miles north of Quendale bay. Those reports show that both short-term and long-term monitoring is essential.

I visited the wildlife co-ordinating rescue centre in the south part of the island on the day of my visit. It did a tremendous job. It was up and running within 48 hours, not because a Government scheme was in operation or the Scottish Office moved fast but because of the existence of Sullom Voe. Monitoring arrangements were already in place. Indeed, Sullom Voe has a budget of £200,000 per year for monitoring. The existence of that body meant that the response to the incident was instant and something could be done.

I suggest that if Sullom Voe had not been in existence, the position could have been entirely different and more detrimental to the interests of people on the islands. While we are glad that the wildlife co-ordinating committee responded so quickly, we have to recognise that the Government had no system in place. If, God forbid, another accident happened, perhaps we should not be so fortunate in the location of that accident close to facilities such as those at Sullom Voe. That is worth remembering.

The fishermen and others agree with the Secretary of State that the polluter should pay. I do not think that anyone would disagree with that. But the problem is that a time scale is associated with it. If a benign view is taken of the polluter—pays principle, we could be talking about a time scale of five to 10 years. That is far too long for salmon farmers, because the problem for them is immediate. I said that they had imposed a voluntary ban. They imposed it 12 hours before the Government did so, simply because of their recognition that their worldwide reputation had to be maintained. They have also monitored outwith the exclusion zone and taken flesh samples of salmon harvested in that zone. The industry is paying for that itself to reassure the trade—firms such as

Marks and Spencer, Asda, and Tesco, which have sent their food technologists to the area. They are satisfied with what is being done. The exercise is being paid for by the industry. The Minister should direct his attention to that, so that the fishermen's expenditure can be recognised and the Scottish Office will act quickly.

In a statement earlier this month, the Secretary of State for Scotland said:

"the Government strongly uphold the polluter-pays principle. There is every reason to believe that the resources available for compensation from the international fund will be sufficient to meet all eligible claims."—[*Official Report*, 11 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 626.]

Not one person to whom I or my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury spoke believes that resources will be available from that fund. As we all know, the fund has a limit of £50 million. Jimmy Moncrieff said to me today that the compensation for the salmon farmers could run into tens of millions. That could be mirrored by the comments of the farmers themselves. Therefore, the £50 million limit is insufficient, and recognition of that fact by the Minister would reassure people in the islands that the Government will not rely solely on the £50 million.

I know that the Government will have claims on the fund. In order to reassure farmers and others, will they consider being last in the queue to claim from it? Such a commitment would be some comfort to the salmon farmers and others. The Secretary of State spoke about the special bridging fund, but no mechanism has yet been established, despite what the Minister said, for payments from that fund. I was assured today in my discussions with the salmon farmers and fishermen that, despite the Secretary of State's announcement on 11 January, not one penny has been paid to any of the farmers. I shall give an illustration of the effect of that on the salmon farmers.

Salmon farms range from those with 500,000 fish and a value of £8 million to those with running costs of, say, £40,000. I was told today that such a small firm could take out an overdraft of £90,000 to £100,000. That firm's exposure to the banks will already be at a maximum, with personal guarantees and mortgaged houses. As of today, some of the banks are telling the smaller salmon farmers that they cannot issue any more cheques. That means that those farmers are currently experiencing a cash flow problem. Because it is an intensive cash flow industry, farmers need to harvest or they will go bust. Farmers, such as the hypothetical one with running costs of £40,000, are only days away from the bank pulling the plug on them, so the need for that money to get to the islands is urgent. It has to be addressed now. The Minister has to take away from this debate the feeling that these farmers have to be assisted almost immediately.

I agree with the Minister about the testing taking place in salmon farming areas, and salmon farmers and fishermen are content for the tests to take place.

I also realise that the test for hydrocarbons, as the Minister mentioned, is an elaborate one, taking about two days, but there is concern about the future for sand eels, which spawn at this time of the year, and it is unclear at present whether they will be affected. Some reassurance about that should be given to farmers and fishermen. I am also aware that the herring will come down for spawning in two or three months' time. Those concerns have to be kept in mind.

On the extension of the exclusion zone on the west coast, may I ask the Minister to comment further on the east of the Shetlands? It has been mentioned that very little oil has reached there and it might be possible to relax the restrictions if the scientific tests are favourable.

Lastly, I mention the comments that have been made about the public inquiry. We welcome the inquiry which Lord Donaldson will conduct.

We stand here tonight in sorrow because there was no mechanism about tanker transportation in place. There is still no mechanism, and I note from the papers today that the European Community had a meeting yesterday in which systems such as the obligatory routeing of ships were put forward, with stiff penalties for transgressors. I am dismayed that it says that the Netherlands, Denmark, Greece and Britain are among the countries that are slow to support tougher legislation, and that the Secretary of State said in the paper today that, while a tightening of safety standards would help, "we have to realise we cannot prevent everything".

Those who live on the Shetland islands know that the Braer disaster is not preventable now. It is in the past, but they are looking for reassurances for the future. They are looking for reassurances about tanker transportation in Fair Isles and The Minch. It has got to stop.

While that is not totally germane to this debate, we shall be back to debate it at another time if the Government and the Scottish Office do not make their views known to the Department of Transport. That is the message we want to get across. Do not let us come back in a few months' time because there is a disaster waiting to happen now. Let the Minister tell us exactly what the Government are going to do, so that we are not back here again, debating in sorrow. Let us have legislation in place so that we do not have anything like this catastrophe occurring again.

12.18 am

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I intend to speak very briefly because I certainly endorse in full many of the points that have already been made. The Minister will understand that right across the House there will be substantial cross-party feeling that we want to see the concerns which the local Member, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), expressed tonight fully met in the ministerial reply, if that is at all possible.

I would also mention in particular the points made from the Labour Front Bench on the long-term environmental assessment because I suspect that no one knows what the knock-on effects of the disaster will be on the environment. Some assurance tonight that there is to be effective monitoring over the medium term will be very welcome.

I want to restrict the burden of my remarks to two features which perhaps require some amplification. First, what will be the Government's approach to the medium and long-term economic damage that the accident may cause? Perhaps the Minister will be able to give me an interim answer. Billions of pounds have been spent internationally on media exposure that has given negative publicity to the Shetland islands. The islands have been associated internationally with a major environmental disaster. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland rightly said, we are talking about a community that prides itself on the quality of its produce—sea fish—and the products of its fish farming. The economic damage over the medium term is potentially seriously damaging.

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

The Government may be able to reintroduce confidence—restrictions are to be extended—that produce from the Shetlands is 100 per cent. all right in environmental terms and that quality is being secured. The vigour of the environmental assessment is important. We hope that Government action will contribute to mitigating the economic consequences. There is bound to be an economic impact on the Shetlands—at what level we cannot say—because of international exposure that associates Shetland with a major environmental disaster. Images are still fresh in our minds of the disaster, but less publicity will be given to the measures that are being taken to ensure that Shetland produce meets the highest health regime standards.

Will an assessment be undertaken and a judgment made? The problem could be tacked by a reinforcement of the Shetland marketing effort internationally. Would that come within the context of the assistance that the Government might be prepared to make available to the islands in future? I accept that it would be difficult to make such an assessment. It would be difficult also for the Minister to give us a guarantee this evening. I hope to hear, however, that an assessment will be considered. If it were found that an intensive marketing effort from the Shetland islands was necessary to secure the position in the markets that their produce held, I hope that the Government would be forthcoming with assistance. I hope that the Minister will comment on how often these measures will be implemented or called into question.

Early-day motion 1177 was tabled by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). It reflects the great concern of Greenpeace and other organisations that at least one major international oil company appears through its internal documents to be extremely reluctant, to say the least, to discuss the safety of tanker transportation. I would like the Minister to indicate that he shares the concern that is felt widely throughout the parties, which is reflected in support for the early-day motion. As I have said, the internal documents of a reputable company suggest that it wants to avoid a public debate on tanker-route safety. I hope that the Minister will respond.

The motion states that there is a great deal of support for routeing and for some interim action——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Tanker routeing is pretty wide of food and fisheries.

Mr. Salmond: I appreciate that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am bringing my remarks to a close.

We are all concerned that we might regularly be faced with measures such as the order in the absence of an assurance from the Minister that interim action will be taken while we await the results of the inquiry.

12.25 am

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I wish at the outset to add my praise for the attitude of the Shetland Fishermen's Association and the Shetland Salmon Farmers' Association and to congratulate them on the professional and thorough way in which they acted in dealing with the disaster.

It should be remembered that the Shetland Islands council has for a long time had a contingency plan to deal with disasters of this kind. It is clear that that plan was put into operation effectively, professionally and quickly. That is a tribute to the council and, in particular, to its environmental health department, which is closely involved in the monitoring exercise.

It is right that we should have the order, not only to protect the health of consumers but to guarantee the quality of produce from the Shetland isles. That aspect has been emphasised in the debate. Some major retailers, such as Marks and Spencer, have begun to buy again from the areas which have not been affected by the disaster. It is clear that there are parts of Shetland from which quality produce can still be marketed, even though the order applies to the affected area.

I draw the attention of the Minister to the state of the fishing industry and the fact that although it has backed the closure order—and has brought forward its own voluntary ban—the industry faces a series of problems. The ban is yet another problem that it must bear, in addition to the restrictions imposed by the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992, fish quotas, and so on. Knowing that the Minister is aware of those problems, I hope that he will take them into account when considering the strains on the industry and that he will listen carefully to the industry's representations. They will include an appeal for support in the coming months.

There is the question of salmon stocks now in the cages. Will the Minister consider consulting the industry about whether those stocks, having been contaminated, may be difficult to sell? Bearing in mind the points that have been made today about the quality of Shetland produce, it may be necessary to consider whether those contaminated stocks might compromise that quality. Accordingly, they may have to be destroyed and the farmers compensated.

The Minister should also consider the effect of the disaster on shore-based industries which rely on the salmon breeding industry. They have been greatly affected by the lack of trade and supplies. Although some industries are not directly involved in salmon farming, the knock-on effect on them has resulted in financial hardship. Are they eligible to submit claims for compensation?

The long-term monitoring aspects of the disaster must be borne in mind. It was a unique disaster in that it was a very light crude; never before had there been a spill on that scale in the weather conditions which prevailed and the crude mixed in with the water and penetrated the water column.

Perhaps the Minister will also comment on the effects of the dispersants. After all, the fact that dispersants were used is one reason for the closure order. May we be assured that the dispersants currently being held in this country for use in such disasters are modern and not old stocks which have been stored for years waiting for disasters to occur? Are they internationally approved chemicals, including those approved by the Ministry for licensing purposes?

Long-term monitoring may be necessary for perhaps 10 years. Who will pay for it? The cost should not become a burden on Shetland Islands council or the local communities. The oil industry should make a contribution on the principle that the polluter pays.

The Minister will be aware of the three-year project, now reaching its conclusion, being carried out by Glasgow university and the Natural Environment Research Council. He will be aware that I have asked him some written questions about whether the project could be

extended to study the relationship between the biology of sea birds and sand eels. If he cannot reply tonight, will he give the matter serious consideration, given the commercial effects of the spill and the fact that the Shetland islands are of international importance in terms of the ecology they support?

Can the Minister confirm that the Shetland consortium of conservation groups has now been disbanded and, if it has, whether it is being replaced by the ecological steering group? What time scale does he envisage for monitoring?

The Minister will be aware that there has been a ban on the industrial catching of sand eels in Shetland waters. When will he be able to give us a statement on whether the ban will continue in relation to the disaster and its effect on the long-term ecology of sand eels in terms of the fish which prey on them and the local wildlife?

The oil spill is a tragedy which could have been avoided. It is right that we should implement the order to guarantee consumer confidence and safety. I know that it has the full support of the fish producers in the Shetlands who have acted in a responsible and professional way. However, the disaster raises issues which go beyond the scope of the order, such as the tragic decline of our merchant fleet, flagging out, tanker routes and coastal policy. I hope that those issues will be thoroughly addressed in the forthcoming inquiry.

I hope that the Shetland Islands council and its community get the help and support that they have every right to expect to overcome this disaster. Above all, I hope that the lessons learnt in this tragedy will be applied so that we do not have another one in British waters.

12.31 am

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Although I have no knowledge of or expertise in the salmon fishing industry, as a former member of the Salmon Fisheries Board I know a little about wild salmon.

I am pleased that we are supporting the order as it is obviously necessary. My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) touched on one of the concerns I wish to express. The contamination from the oil will take a long time to disappear, but the contamination caused by the chemicals was a cause of concern when they were being used. It will be much longer before we know whether it will have affected the salmon stocks and the other fisheries.

It is a great tragedy and I pay tribute to the stalwart way in which the people of the Shetlands and their representatives have shown determination to win back markets and not to have their lifestyles and the quality of their lives destroyed. It is a pity that the order provides only for public health and food issues as it is quite clear that the matters of tanker routes that are not for discussion tonight will hang as a cloud over the Government who will be criticised for not laying an order to deal with those matters.

I also wish to ask a naive question that other mainlanders and people in the industrial sector who have watched the tragedy with amazement will be asking. Where is the rest of the oil going now? The monitoring that we have discussed seems to be taking place in a small area close to the Shetlands, but 80,000 tonnes of oil do not disperse without landing somewhere and causing more pollution. The Minister mentioned monitoring far and wide and I hope that he will say something about how it will be carried out.

The amendment of the designated area for the order five miles further west makes it clear that there was some miscalculation or lax monitoring when the original order was placed. It must be a matter of concern that the original order was insufficient to cover the area that now seems to be affected.

I was one of those who asked about compensation. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) thought it better to leave the figure unstated, in the hope that it will increase in line with needs. Those in the Shetlands who are probably reaching the bottom line in their calculations are beginning to worry whether it will be sufficient.

The ecological steering group, which will deal with the local area, will be welcomed. However, the people on the mainland are wondering whether the monitoring will be sufficiently rigorous and whether the ecological damage that may occur further afield will be properly monitored and made public. People still have in mind the long-term effects of a much larger disaster, Chernobyl, where the emissions continued to leak out. Indeed, I believe that leakage has not yet stopped. People are worried that the Government might not want to talk about ecological damage because they would, first, have to admit to it and, secondly, have to deal with it.

I hope that the Government will take account of the fact that five million people in Scotland are concerned about the long-term damage that may be caused outwith the Shetlands. I ask the Minister to do me the courtesy of explaining the technical detail of the monitoring operation. We need to ensure that a lack of proper monitoring does not lead to long-term and long-distance effects on other fishing stocks which, perhaps, have just been fed into the food cycle of the people of Scotland and elsewhere. I should be grateful for reassurance on that point.

The hon. Gentleman must realise that there are many people on the mainland who do not have the special knowledge of the Shetlanders and of my hon. Friends on the Front Bench. Those people are looking for answers, but they are not getting them from the Government. We need to know where all that oil has gone and which other fishing areas we need to be concerned about. Although the order covers only the Shetlands, the concern stretches much further afield. No one believes that 80,000 tonnes of oil can be dispersed without damage to some other parts of Scotland's ecology, not just that of the Shetlands.

12.36 am

Sir Hector Monro: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad to reply to the debate, which in general has been welcomed by all hon. Members who have spoken. However, I was a bit disappointed with the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty).

Everything that I said tonight demonstrated that our maximum effort was on monitoring, in particular on what we have been doing in difficult circumstances during recent weeks and what we will continue to do. It has been difficult to get boats out to sea west of the Shetlands, but we managed to do it and they caught fish. We are grateful to the Shetland fishermen for catching fish for us to monitor. It is because we have been monitoring effectively that we

[Sir Hector Monro]

have to extend the exclusion zone. That shows that we are taking the correct action, which will continue for as long as is necessary.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) gave a warm welcome to the order. I want to express my appreciation for all that he has done regarding his constituency since the wreck. The hon. Members for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) referred to the economic problems of the salmon farmers. I, too, recognise the problems, which is why we have introduced the facility of a bridging loan, to be paid this week. The Shetland Islands council, which is responsible for the administration of the claims, today paid out a large sum to the first salmon farmer who put in a claim. I hope that that will encourage others to apply if their cash flow requires that. I am sure that a significant number of farmers are affected.

It is good news that the vast majority of the salmon farms are not in the exclusion zone. We are dealing with a small number of farmers, but the scheme is important for their cash flows. We hope that, in the end, the situation will be brighter—that the damage will not be quite so long term as some hon. Members have implied. In the meantime, monitoring will continue. There is virtually continuous contact between the Scottish Office and the salmon farmers. We welcome that contact, and we shall continue to provide all possible assistance until the whole situation has been sorted out. I do not know whether that will take weeks or months, or even years, but general monitoring will continue, as will monitoring of the long-term ecological implications.

There is no firm knowledge about how long the oil will linger in the area. We do not know what will happen. However, the Government give a categorical assurance that there will be monitoring in all directions, where it is thought to be necessary, to allay the fears of anyone in the United Kingdom. There may have been much more evaporation than some people believe. In any case, there will not be any complacency. We shall be working full time and as hard and fast as possible to make certain that the situation is fully dealt with.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, talked about the longer-term economic problems. Most hon. Members will agree that that matter is a little wide of the subject of this debate. However, I assure the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland that we are considering it. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, hopes to go to the islands at an appropriate time in the not-too-distant future—a time when it is felt that the islands council would like to meet him and have a discussion involving Highlands and Islands Enterprise and everyone else concerned.

Mr. Salmond: May I take it from the Minister's reply that he is not ruling out the possibility of longer-term economic aid in such areas as reinforcement of the Shetlands marketing effort internationally if that should be judged to be necessary?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman is a great man for trying to widen issues and get Ministers on the hop. We shall do all we can to help the economy of the Shetlands. It has been amazingly robust and effective over the years, and we want that to continue. Help will be provided. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will be able to talk to the Shetland Islands council about the economic aspects.

But all hon. Members must realise that we are in a somewhat grey area. Nobody knows quite what the future holds. The situation may resolve itself in the medium term, but no one can be certain about the long term. However, I hope that we can be optimistic about the economy of the Shetlands—whether fishing, agriculture or other pursuits. I do not want in any way to run down the opportunities of the Shetlands. They have rightly emphasised the importance of regaining the quality reputation of their products, and I am optimistic about their ability to do just that.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton implicitly criticised us on the ground that we were unprepared for a major shipwreck. The hon. Gentleman must give credit for the fact that the marine pollution control unit was present on the day of the accident and that on the following day aircraft were spraying dispersant. Because of Sullom Voe, the Shetland Islands council had outstanding preparations. The operations room was put in place extremely quickly. It was a highly commendable effort by all concerned.

Mr. McFall: Just to correct a point that the Minister made, I paid fulsome tribute to the fact that the wildlife rescue co-ordinating committee was in place because of Sullom Voe and because it already existed in the Shetland Islands council. What I am saying is that perhaps on another occasion—which God forbid—the Government will not be so well prepared. It was quite fortuitous that we had that organisation there on the ground and up and running immediately. That is my point.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman went on to talk about compensation. I give him the assurance that the Government are last in line for the payment by the polluter.

The hon. Gentleman then raised the issue of the ban that was put in place voluntarily by the fishermen. The only reason why we were not ready at exactly the same time is that it takes a certain amount of time to lay an official order, but discussions were going on at the same time and we were in entire agreement—and I am glad about that.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the waters to the east of the islands and about monitoring. We are monitoring that area as well as the west and the south. It is encouraging, but it is too soon at this stage to reduce the exclusion zone to the east of the island. I should think that it will, however, come earlier than in the west.

I cannot go into too much detail about the Donaldson inquiry because that is where the future of oil transport and routeing of tankers will be discussed. Recommendations from that in line, I hope, with what took place in Brussels yesterday will produce legislation which may well have to be international to make certain that tankers do not sail in vulnerable waters such as those in the Shetlands. We are also most concerned about the Minch.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) talked about the economic damage. Again, we are watching the situation as closely as we can, but it is more

a medium and long-term problem rather than getting over the immediate problems that we are dealing with at present. Scottish National Heritage is co-ordinating what may be required in the longer term for ecological monitoring, and the steering group is in place and will give wise and helpful advice on how we should proceed, so there is no question but that the Government have acted very quickly in setting up these organisations to look after the future of the ecology of the whole area. It is absolutely vital, and we will not let up on it.

I welcome what the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe said about the Shetland Islands council and everyone involved. I said that we are having continuous consultations with the salmon farmers. The hon. Member asked about the dispersant. It was approved for use at sea. Through an unfortunate accident, a certain amount was sprayed on the rocks—not an approved use, but on this sort of occasion one must accept that accidents happen. I do not think that it will have caused lasting damage to any person, and again it is being monitored by the health officers on the island.

All in all, I am very pleased at the tremendous efforts that have been put in by the Shetland Islands council, by the fishermen and by everyone concerned. We hope that the order will not have to be in place for too long, but it must be there while there is any doubt about the quality of the fish landed in the area concerned.

Mr. Morley: Before the Minister reaches his conclusion, I wonder if he would deal with the point about the fish that have been contaminated in the cages. He quite rightly said that it is difficult to know how long the order will apply because of unknown factors, and people accept that; but he must also accept that if the fully grown fish are held in cages, the whole cycle of salmon farming as regards replacement of the smolts is disrupted, and the disruption will go right down the line of production. Will the Minister consider talking to the industry about the present situation of the fully grown fish?

Sir Hector Monro: I cannot say tonight whether any of the salmon in the cages have been contaminated. There was talk about a light sheen over one or two of the cages. Some are in the exclusion zone, so the fish cannot be sold. I am well aware that the fish farming cycle is crucial, and that must now be discussed with the Shetland Islands council and the insurers.

The insurers' initial payment shows that they are willing to accept their responsibility and I hope that no salmon farmer will be out of pocket as a result of this serious incident, which to them will be catastrophic if they cannot sell their fish. I hope that they will be able to do so in the future and that the order will be lifted as soon as the water is clear and the fish are uncontaminated. I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Oil and Chemical Pollution of Fish) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 17), dated 8th January 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th January, be approved.

Postal Services (Valley and Rural Areas)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

12.50 am

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I am grateful for this opportunity to draw the attention of the House to the Government's misguided and doctrinaire policies which mean that a sword of Damocles now hangs over the Post Office, threatening the future of services in rural and valley areas.

For example, the Government's policy of blocking Post Office Counters' desire to offer new business and services has resulted in the closure since 1979 of 2,072 sub-post offices and 561 Crown post offices, making a total of 2,633 local post offices.

Desperately at risk because of the Government's privatisation threat are 10,000 rural offices which form half the Post Office Counters network but provide just 4 per cent. of its volume and are subsidised by nearly £30 million, so they are extremely vulnerable.

In addition, the Government have forced huge negative external finance limit payments from the Post Office of more than £1 billion at constant prices since 1979, and that extra penalty tax has stopped investment to improve quality in postal services, especially in rural and isolated areas.

Because the Government are refusing to allow the Post Office, which is entirely self-financing, to raise finance for its investment and modernisation, that, too, is delaying improvements in quality of service.

In short, the Government's cost-cutting and privatising mania ignores a series of critical questions. For example, if they proceed with their privatisation objectives, who will fund the £200 million rural letters subsidy? The profitable inter-city parts of the Post Office Royal Mail network subsidise the outlying rural deliveries and collection boxes.

Do the Government plan to restrict deliveries in outlying areas to boxes at the bottom of gardens or drives, or do they propose to ensure that residents will have to go to collection points at the centre of villages or outlying areas to collect their mail, rather than have it delivered to their homes?

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Is my hon. Friend aware that what he has outlined so well is already happening in my rural areas? The village post ladies are being taken to the nearest town and are being replaced by a service from out of the village, coming in by van. Parcels will no longer be left at the village post office but will have to be collected from the nearest town or alternative arrangements will have to be made. That seems to be part of the rationalisation which is linked to the privatisation proposals that my hon. Friend outlines.

Mr. Hain: I agree with my hon. Friend. The point that he makes should be answered by the Minister who is directly responsible.

For example, in Wales, the Post Office is rapidly losing its distinctive relationship with the Welsh people. We have seen substantial cuts in services and jobs. For example, 100 small post office closures have occurred in the past five years, often depriving valley villagers of the last remaining service. In addition, 22 urban and Crown offices have closed—and, more recently, about 600 of the 1,200

[Mr. Hain]

remaining rural post offices' opening times have been cut substantially: instead of being open throughout the week, they are to be open several hours weekly.

Moreover, the closure of Post Office Counters headquarters in Bangor and Bridgend will take effect by the summer. Those headquarters will be shifted—to Bristol and Manchester. The move will involve the loss of 120 jobs in Wales; in addition, about 500 postmen's and sorters' jobs will be lost over the next five years as part of Royal Mail's reorganisation and introduction of new technology in Wales.

Parcel depots are being merged as a prelude to privatisation, and 50 jobs in Wales will be lost as a result. Depots in Swansea, Newport and Cardiff are being merged, and some jobs are being transferred to Bristol —again, out of Wales into England. Those 50 job losses exclude future job losses that will occur as a result of the privatisation of Parcelforce. A total of 670 Post Office jobs will be lost over the next five years as a result of the Government's policies, and that excludes the consequences of privatisation.

A monument to the Government's folly is their proposal to privatise Parcelforce. It has been sloppily planned. Characteristically, the President of the Board of Trade was shooting from the hip when he announced the privatisation in July. If I were charitable, I would suggest that he had been set up by his Svengali, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State—a Minister who is obsessed with privatisation, regardless of the consequences to the public.

I ask the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to deal with the central issue. Services to rural areas will undoubtedly be threatened by privatisation: 20 per cent. of parcels traffic, worth £50 million, is now handled by Royal Mail Letters on behalf of Parcelforce. That is unprofitable and extremely costly, and the aim of the Government's privatisation proposals seems to be to dump it back on to the public sector.

I hope that we shall receive some straight answers from the Under-Secretary of State about the issue with which the Government are now grappling—the question of VAT. Under schedule 6(3) to the Value Added Tax Act 1983, which implements article 13 of the European Community's sixth directive, the postal services are exempt from VAT, but, as a result of the privatisation of Parcelforce, there will be an immediate price increase of 17·5 per cent.—nearly a fifth—because VAT will be levied.

Businesses registered for VAT will be able to reclaim the money, but that does not apply to the estimated 1·3 million small businesses that are not VAT-registered. Even more important, it will not apply to the ordinary citizens who posted 11 million parcels to one another last year, worth £40 million.

In valley and rural areas, there are effectively no competitors. TNT, Securicor, United Parcel Service and all the other predators waiting in the wings for a privatised parcel service are not interested in delivering to a remote Welsh mountainside, or to a remote village—in the valleys or anywhere else in Britain. Residents will be faced with a price increase of 17·5 per cent., because they will attract VAT. That means that a typical 1 kg parcel charge of £2·50 will jump by 42p to £2·92, while the charge for a large parcel costing £7·80 will jump by £1·36, to £9·16.

On 2 December, at column *282* of the *Official Report*, the Minister told me that he intended to maintain a uniform tariff for parcels. He dodged the issue on 15 December, when—as can be found in column *147*—I asked about the impact on VAT. There will no longer be a uniform tariff, because the businesses that are able to reclaim VAT will be charged 17·5 per cent. less than ordinary individuals who have to pay VAT alongside small businesses. The uniform tariff will no longer exist.

How will charities be affected by this proposal? What about the small businesses that purchased expensive metering and franking machines, because they will not be able to use stamps once Parcelforce has been privatised?

I understand that, because of the intractable problems raised by the VAT issue, the Minister has canvassed the idea of ring fencing parcels posted by individuals across Post Office counters and somehow making them VAT exempt. I do not know whether it can be done without a change in the law. Is the Minister planning to introduce such a change in the Finance Bill after the Budget on 16 March? If he does so, no doubt competitors will protest about unfair treatment. Alternatively, is the Minister's real agenda to privatise the whole of the Post Office, including Parcelforce?

I have seen advice to the Post Office that the £1·4 billion surplus in its pension funds cannot be transferred. Parcelforce's share is worth about £84 million. Parcelforce's employees are entitled to that money because they contributed to the surplus. Will the Minister confirm that it is not possible to transfer that surplus if he privatises Parcelforce?

Will the Minister confirm that the Queen and royal family currently send parcels free—what one might call the royal mail prerogative—that the Government will require a privatised successor to provide those services free and, if so, who will pay for it?

Will the Minister address the question of customs clearance? These matters are central to services in outlying areas and the viability of a future parcels service. Will he confirm that, after privatisation, Parcelforce will operate on the same level as private operators? Its operations may be speeded up as a result, but it will have to be charged extra costs, as the Post Office is currently not charged for customs clearance.

Then there is the perhaps small matter of yellow lines. I am told that guidance is given to parking wardens not to book Royal Mail vans that are parked on single or double yellow lines. Will the Minister confirm that that special privilege will apply after privatisation?

What about the employees, whose legally contracted employer is the Post Office? In 1989, when Parcelforce was separated from the Royal Mail, staff were given the option of transferring to Parcelforce. Many did so on the clear and written understanding that they would remain Post Office employees. The Government propose to break that pledge—to dishonour it or to rat on it. Will the Minister confirm that?

Another example of the overall effect of privatisation on outlying areas is the Government's investment freeze as part of their privatisation of Parcelforce. They have frozen £200 million of Parcelforce's planned £250 million investment in a modernisation programme. As a result, the Coventry hub, a new regional centre linking air to network services, has been postponed. I understand that the

£2·5 million needed to purchase the site—a critical part of Parcelforce's new planned network—has been disallowed and that therefore the programme will not go ahead.

The biggest scandal is perhaps the public subsidising the privatisation of Parcelforce. Parcelforce lost £155 million pounds in the years 1990-92. That amount was absorbed by the Post Office—principally by the highly profitable Royal Mail service—but that was our money, which we have paid into the Post Office as a result of using its services. It is public money. In addition, a further £80 million was spent establishing Parcelforce as an entirely separate business, ripe and ready for privatisation. It is outrageous that a total of £235 million has been spent to set up Parcelforce for privatisation. Are the Government suggesting that any new private operator taking on the business will pay that money back to the public? Incidentally, what will happen to the £187 million of outstanding loans that Parcelforce owes the Royal Mail? Will a privatised company pay back that money? The public are subsidising Parcelforce with a total of £422 million in setting it up for privatisation. It should be remembered that the business is worth only half that amount.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Will my hon. Friend raise with the Minister the fact that current Post Office Counters legislation restricts what it can sell and does not allow it the full freedom of any other shop in a rural environment or town?

Mr. Hain: That is an important point. The Government have not allowed Post Office Counters to compete on a level playing field with other businesses. It would very much like to extend its services by operating ticketing, travel and financial services and to undertake the national lottery if that is established. All those initiatives are being blocked by the Government, which puts local post offices under enormous pressure because they are not economically viable.

What guarantee can the Government give that a privatised successor to Parcelforce will always be able to fulfill its duty under the law to maintain a universal service? They can give no such guarantee. What would happen to services in valley and rural areas if the company went bankrupt? Someone will undoubtedly be willing to pick up the profitable but not the unprofitable parts.

It is crystal clear that the proposal to privatise Parcelforce is a dog's breakfast. I urge the Government and ask the Minister specifically to invite the Select Committee on Trade and Industry to investigate it before he and the President of the Board of Trade finalise it and make an announcement to the House.

1.6 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) for raising the important issue of the future of postal services in valley and rural areas. I am especially grateful to him for having given me a preview of his speech in *The Observer* last Sunday. It proved most useful in informing me that various demands would be made of me. I apologise in advance if I am not able to answer all his questions, but I shall try to cover as much ground as I can in the time available.

The House respects the hon. Gentleman's great knowledge of postal matters, which is based on his 15 years as director of research for the Union of Communication Workers. However, I must say that he approaches these issues with a particular political bias, but I forgive him for that.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced on 29 July 1992 that there was to be a review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office. We are considering a wide range of options, including private sector options, for the Royal Mail and Post Office Counters. We must recognise that the Post Office is first and foremost a commercial business and that our first duty in this matter is to consider what is best for customers of the business, and that is what we shall do.

My right hon. Friend has emphasised that the Government remain committed to a nationwide letter service with delivery to every address in the United Kingdom, within a uniform and affordable structure of prices, and with a nationwide network of post offices. He said when he announced the review, and I repeat now, that these commitments are not negotiable and will remain at the heart of public policy towards the Post Office. All the alternative ownership and structural options are being examined with this in the forefront of our minds. Any reform must satisfy these non-negotiable commitments.

The Post Office is made up of three separate businesses —Royal Mail, Parcelforce and Post Office Counters. I shall speak about each in turn, starting with Parcelforce.

As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade said in his announcement last July, Parcelforce operates in a fully competitive parcels market. The majority of its traffic is business traffic. For that reason, my right hon. Friend announced his intention to privatise Parcelforce. I believe that Parcelforce can flourish in the private sector. It has a distinctive brand image and a large customer base which are strengths on which it can build.

Energetic commitment and support from the work force have already contributed to Parcelforce's improved financial performance. Such attitudes are vital to the future of the business. Parcelforce needs its employees as much as it needs its depots, its sorting offices and its vehicles.

My right hon. Friend said that he would take advice on the best way to privatise Parcelforce and that he would involve the Post Office board. I am not able to say anything more at the moment about the results of the studies. We are considering the many issues involved.

Mr. Hain: Will the Minister confirm that the Post Office board has made representations to him, and has said that it does not want Parcelforce privatised separately but wishes to keep the whole Post Office together, either as a fully privatised operation or in the public sector with the commercial freedom that he now denies it?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I have had a series of meetings with all interested parties, not only with the Post Office board on a number of occasions, but with the trade unions involved, with interested parties in the public sector and with the Post Office Users National Council. They have given me their advice in the review on the basis of confidentiality. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me at this stage to reveal what the various parties have said to me, but I note the hon. Gentleman's question. We are considering the many issues

[Mr. Leigh]

involved, some of which the hon. Gentleman has touched on, including the best way to secure the universal parcel service. That is not a process that can be rushed.

The hon. Gentleman has questioned the future of rural parcel services once Parcelforce is privatised. He made some personal comments about me in his speech, but I forgive him for that. However, this is a debate about rural services. He will appreciate that I have one of the most rural constituencies in the country, covering about 750 sq miles. As I am charged with looking after the Post Office, not in terms of operational matters, to which the hon. Gentleman referred in his intervention, but in terms of overall policy, I assure him and give him the commitment from the Dispatch Box that whenever I am considering matters appertaining to the Post Office, it is rural areas, and the needs of rural consumers, of those who live in villages and of those who attach great importance to the village post office, which are uppermost in my mind. The other point that is uppermost in my mind is ensuring that the Post Office has a bright, competitive future.

Mr. Morley: My point concerns the village of Winterton where I live. The jobs of the three village post ladies are under threat in the reorganisation. The service is deteriorating in the sense that people can no longer collect bulky items from the local sub-post office. Having raised the matter with the Minister, will he use his influence to make representations to the Post Office board to reconsider the matter?

Mr. Leigh: I know the village of Winterton. The hon. Gentleman is quite entitled to raise the matter. It is an operational matter, but following the debate I will contact Mr. Mike Heron, the new chairman of the Post Office, and convey to him the deep concern of the hon. Gentleman and his constituents in the matter.

I can assure the hon. Member for Neath that the service to rural communities is not in doubt. My right hon. Friend said clearly in his announcement to the House on 15 July that the continuation of a universal parcel service at a uniform and affordable tariff—I emphasise the word "uniform"—was not negotiable. That means that users of the standard parcel service can still expect to have parcels delivered anywhere in the country within a few working days. The general public use Post Office Counters to send parcels. They can leave parcels to be collected at any of the 20,000 post offices in the country, however remotely located. Charges are based on a simple weight-related tariff so that it costs no more to send a parcel 300 miles than 10 miles. It makes good sense for each aspect of the service to continue, because that is what the public are familiar with and find convenient. Of course, it has been a traditional part of our Post Office.

Mr. Hain: What about VAT?

Mr. Leigh: In the time available to me I shall reach that point.

We are still looking at how the Parcelforce pension surplus should be dealt with. It is a complex and highly technical issue. The options need to be identified and clarified. I cannot say what the conclusions will be.

Another issue that we are considering is the value added tax position of a privatised Parcelforce. The hon. Member for Neath has been speculating that a privatised Parcelforce will be obliged to charge VAT. He has made that point several times before. He has said that that would put up the price by 17·5 per cent. Such speculation is idle. We have not yet decided on the appropriate VAT treatment for Parcelforce in the private sector. There are many issues to be addressed and we are looking closely at them all in consultation with the European Commission, which obviously has an interest in the matter. It is foolish to wring our hands and speculate about price rises when no decision on the matter has yet been made.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): The Minister has said several times that the matter is complicated in the context of VAT and a chain of other issues and that it must not be rushed. When the President of the Board of Trade announced the possible privatisation of Parcelforce in July, he promised a statement in December. Can the Minister give us some idea when the matters which at the end of January still cannot be rushed may be brought to a conclusion?

Mr. Leigh: We have had a Post Office for some three and a half centuries. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we will not take three and a half centuries over the review, but I cannot give him any more information than that. This is a serious and complex issue. Both my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I are determined to ensure that we get it right and that we consider all the options. In good time, my right hon. Friend will come to Parliament when he and his senior Cabinet colleagues have made a decision. The process will not be rushed, so I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a firm date when a statement will be made. It will be made at the right time. It will be made at a time which will allow us to introduce legislation at a suitable point, if that is what we have to do.

Mr. Cousins: Is the Minister saying that the privatisation of Parcelforce alone—separate from the rest of the Post Office—is a matter that will require legislation?

Mr. Leigh: I did not say that. Our advice is that if we decided to privatise Parcelforce alone, it would not require legislation. I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that already.

Royal Mail provides the fastest and best value—for—money postal service in Europe, and it is not resting on its laurels. In each of the last four years the Post Office has recorded a significant improvement in its delivery performance, as measured by independent researchers. In the first six months of the financial year, Royal Mail's quality of service climbed to record levels, with 91.5 per cent. of all first class mail reaching its destination the following day after posting. This compares favourably with other EC countries. Since 1990, the British Post Office has led Europe for quality of service and value for money in terms of speed of delivery. Royal Mail is, indeed, the only postal administration in the world to conduct independent end-to-end monitoring of service quality.

In the Swansea postal district, which covers the constituency of Neath, 93 per cent. of all first class letters are now delivered by the next working day. Indeed, Wales as a whole, even in the most rural and remote of areas, has a service which is better than the national average. My own constituency is in the Lincoln postal district, where 95 per cent. of first class letters are delivered the next working day. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that those are excellent performance figures.

The figures show Royal Mail's commitment to service in rural areas and there is no reason to believe that this will change. However, the Royal Mail faces change in many other respects. It no longer has a monopoly over express products and unaddressed mail, its direct mail services face competition from other forms of advertising, and competition from the telecommunications sector is ever growing. Now is the time to consider the potential impact of these changes on Royal Mail.

The reason for the review is to explore ways in which the organisation and structure may need to adapt to enable Royal Mail to face new challenges and benefit the consumer. I stress that no decisions have yet been taken, but in terms of Parcelforce, the hon. Member may be assured that the manifesto commitments to a universal letter service and a uniform tariff structure are non-negotiable and will be maintained.

With regard to Post Office Counters and the network of post offices, I remind the hon. Member of the clear, unfettered commitment in our manifesto to a nationwide network of post offices. I do not recall seeing any such commitment in the honourable Member's party manifesto. Post offices and their customers throughout the country can therefore rest assured that whatever solution we adopt for the Post Office and its constituent parts, whether in the public sector or in the private sector, our manifesto commitment will not be compromised.

That does not, of course, mean a guarantee that no post office will ever close. That would be an absurdity. The precise number and location of offices has to adjust to shifts in population, and to changes in the requirements of clients and customers. Our commitment is to maintain a readily accessible network which fully satisfies the social, industrial and commercial needs of the United Kingdom.

I echo the hon. Member's sentiments about the importance of the rural sub-post office network. These small post offices play a vital role——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty minutes past One c'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

DAWAT-E-HADIYAH (ENGLAND) BILL

PWLLHELI HARBOUR (AMENDMENT) BILL

Read the Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Renovation Grants

1. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance he is giving to local authorities to help them with the cost of housing renovation grants.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): A total of £386 million has been allocated in 1992-93 to support local authority expenditure on private sector renewal work, including house renovation grants.

Mr. Hutton: Is the Minister aware that that figure represents a cut in the value of renovation grants over previous years and that many local authorities are still struggling to meet the demand for such grants? In my constituency, 4,000 properties could benefit from renovation grants—yet my constituents are having to wait 15 months before their properties can be inspected. Is the Minister satisfied and, if not, what does he intend to do about it?

Sir George Young: On the first point, more resources will be available to the hon. Gentleman's constituents next year for improvement grants. What really matters is the totality of expenditure, from the Government and from local authorities, and next year £1·5 million will be available to his constituents as opposed to £1·3 million this year. That is good news.

On the second point, we recognise that a growing number of authorities face increased expenditure on mandatory grants. I have announced our intention to consult on options for change, and we hope to issue a paper by spring.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that as important as the amount of money give to local authorities is, it is also important to consider their efficiency and whether they are corrupt? Is he aware that the *Evening Standard* has pointed out that a third of the homeless families in Lambeth are fraudulent? Has he read about the incompetence of that authority, and will he compare it with its competence when he was a member?

Sir George Young: It is, of course, an affront to any families in bed and breakfast if access to permanent accommodation is denied them because of inefficiency or corruption.

Energy Efficiency

2. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the planned expenditure in the current financial year on the Green House programmes to promote energy efficiency work in local authority housing; and what is the planned expenditure in each of the next two years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): A total of £45 million is being spent on this demonstration programme in 1992-93, and £5 million is available to complete the programme in 1993-94.

Mr. Marshall: Does the Minister accept that early results of the programme show that it can lead to substantial energy savings and be of direct advantage to the environment? Should not the conclusion be that, instead of running down the programme, we should develop a nationwide strategy which would be to the long-term financial advantage of the domestic energy consumer and the physical environment? Does the Minister intend to bring to the House revised building regulations to take into account the lessons already learnt from that programme?

Mr. Baldry: The results of the demonstration programme are, indeed, exceptionally good and show that reductions in fuel costs of up to 40 per cent. and in carbon dioxide emissions of up to 50 per cent. can be achieved. However, it was a demonstration programme and now all local authorities must learn the lessons and ensure that they take them into account in their mainstream housing renovation programmes. In the coming year they will have a wonderful opportunity to do so because they will not only have the money from mainline housing investment programmes but the opportunity to invest the proceeds of their capital receipts. Their estimate—not ours or the Treasury's—is that they will this year raise £1·75 billion in capital receipts, well over £1 billion of which they can invest in housing. I hope that much of that investment will go on renovating and maintaining their stock.

Yes, we are introducing new building regulations. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State yesterday announced proposals that will substantially improve existing building regulations.

Mr. Ward: Does my hon. Friend agree that this country still lags a long way behind some of our continental friends and that it would be a good investment if, when he introduced new building regulations, he looked ahead 10 or 15 years and introduced the energy efficiency regulations that we think might apply then, so as to avoid large capital expenditure on improvements in the future?

Mr. Baldry: The proposals that we announced yesterday do exactly that. We estimate that the total effect

of the whole package will be a 25 to 35 per cent. improvement on current building regulations in terms of energy performance. That is a substantial improvement.

Ms. Short: If the Government would move in this policy area, it would benefit everyone. If we go for a big national insulation programme that will generate jobs, cut people's bills and reduce carbon dioxide emissions, that will be the right thing for the country. The Government are cutting the small programme that they had, and proposing new building regulations of a low standard.

Mr. Baldry: Clearly, the hon. Lady has not listened to a word that I said. The demonstration programme proves that local authorities can make substantial savings in terms both of costs and of improved energy efficiency. I hope that local authorities will take their opportunity this year for a substantial housing investment programme, using the released capital receipts to invest in their housing stock. The hon. Lady's city of Birmingham owns about 3,500 commercial properties—I still wonder what it is doing owning those. I hope that Birmingham will consider its asset base, decide what can be realised and apply some of the capital receipts to the city's housing stock.

Autumn Statement

3. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate has been made of the effect of the housing measures announced by the Chancellor in his autumn statement on the housing market since then.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): The Housing Corporation now estimates that these measures will allow housing associations to buy about 17,000 properties in England by the end of March. A further 3,500 purchases will be made possible through cash grants to tenants. Taken together with the recent substantial fall in interest rates, this package should certainly have a very positive impact on the housing market.

Mr. Martin: Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider further measures to encourage rented family housing? Will he examine again the Rent Acts and Housing Acts, which, over many generations, have kept for shelter the rationing and queues which, for food and clothing, were swept away years ago by private enterprise?

Mr. Howard: We have made substantial progress in sweeping away those restrictions that have so long impeded progress in improving and increasing the rented sector in the housing market. I confirm to my hon. Friend that I am always anxious to consider further measures.

Mr. George Howarth: When the Secretary of State reconsiders the package, will he pay attention to the plight of people who bought former council houses, such as the "no fines" houses. Such people often now live in totally unsatisfactory, damp and inadequate properties, and have no means whereby they could afford to bring those properties up to proper standards. Will the Secretary of State consider extending the programme, perhaps to include mandatory grants?

Mr. Howard: Of course, in certain circumstances grants are available and people in those circumstances can apply for those grants, which will help them to improve the conditions in which they live.

Sir Michael Neubert: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that welcome as the measures in the Chancellor's autumn statement are, they tend to give the greatest benefits to major contractors and large-volume house builders? What help can he offer small and medium-sized building businesses facing not only the ravages of recession but unequal competition from the legal activities of those who operate below the VAT ceiling and can charge 17·5 per cent. less on bills, and the illegal activities of the black economy where it is a case of "cash down and no questions asked"?

Mr. Howard: I am, of course, anxious that any illegal activities such as those referred to by my hon. Friend should be brought to an end. Any information that my hon. Friend and those to whose complaints he referred possess will be carefully considered by the appropriate authorities.

The purpose of the autumn statement package was to improve the condition of the housing market in general, and I believe that it is having a positive impact on the market.

Mr. Battle: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is a bit premature to talk about a housing market recovery on the day we learn that mortgage arrears have shot up by 28 per cent. and more than 147,000 families with arrears of more than 12 months are staring eviction in the face? Will he confirm that the Prime Minister is to introduce cash handouts for mortgage deposits to get the housing market going? Would it not be better for him to address the real problem? People fear that they are a pay check away from redundancy, so they dare not risk long-term commitments. Rising unemployment is undermining the housing market. Will the Secretary of State confirm that every working day since 1989 more than 600 building workers have lost their jobs? Without tackling unemployment by investment, the Government have no hope of tackling the housing crisis.

Mr. Howard: I am astonished by the hon. Gentleman's question. He began by referring to the increasing numbers of people who are in arrears on their mortgages. Does he not understand that if we persuade the building societies not to evict people and not to go for repossession orders, the inevitable consequence is that the number of people in their properties but in arrears will increase?

Why does the hon. Gentleman not refer to the news out today that the number of repossessions has fallen by 9 per cent. over the past year? Why does he not refer to the views of the director-general of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, who has said that the worst is now over? When will the Labour party stop its deliberate campaign of obstructing recovery and driving our recovery into recession?

Local Government (Corruption)

4. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will launch an initiative to cut corruption in local government.

7. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about local government corruption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I am extremely concerned about recent reports of corruption in local government. I have every

confidence that they will be investigated thoroughly by the Audit Commission and by the police. My officials have today written to Lambeth council in respect of breaches of competition legislation. I shall consider what action to take in the light of its reply.

Mr. Riddick: Nepotism in Monklands, a £10 million fraud in Lambeth, mismanagement in Sheffield, a £40 million fraud in Hackney and yet more probably to come out—yet the same councils for ever demand more money from the Government. Is that not a disgrace? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that grossly incompetent management by Labour authorities is not only ripping off local poll tax payers, but hitting and betraying the poorest people in society who so depend on the services provided by those local authorities?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is, as usual, absolutely right. At the very time those practices were rife, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) was telling the Labour party conference:

"In Labour Local Government we are the voice and the face of the Labour Party in practice."

Mr. Batiste: Is not the root cause of the catalogue of scandals described by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) the fact that in too many Labour councils full-time officers are being undermined by councillors trying to take over the day-to-day running of their departments, thereby undermining the officials and destroying good working practices? Is not meddlesome incompetence the reality of the face of the Labour party in power?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend makes a typically shrewd and important point—*[Interruption.]* What he says is entirely accurate. I should have thought that on this one question today we might see some signs of humility in the Labour party instead of the reaction of the past few minutes.

Mr. Fraser: The Secretary of State will be aware that our interests are those of voters, of tenants and of consumers. First, will he confirm that the allegations in the chief executive's report on Lambeth are not principally against councillors? Secondly, what on earth has the audit service been doing for the past 10 years? It was quick enough to surcharge councillors over political acts. Why on earth has not the audit service, with a growing budget, been able to deal with the matters contained in the chief executive's report? Will the Secretary of State look at the way in which the audit service has considered these matters as well as at the principal issues involved?

Mr. Howard: I shall look at all relevant aspects of the matter. The hon. Gentleman might have done better to ask what he, as a Member of Parliament for Lambeth, was doing for the past 10 years.

Mr. Keith Hill: Will the Secretary of State accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) and I recognise that the initiative that he has taken is inevitable, and that Labour Members will not tolerate fraud and maladministration, wherever and whenever it may occur? Can he ensure that, in all inquiries which may be undertaken, full protection is afforded to the many Lambeth employees who have sought to do an honest day's work for an honest day's pay in difficult circumstances? Does he recognise that the paramount concern is for firm and fast action by both the Government and the council in co-operation, because both agencies have allowed the matter to persist for far too long?

Mr. Howard: I welcome the first part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I am sure that the police will give careful consideration when protection is necessary and appropriate. As far as responsibility for such matters is concerned, it was the Labour council of the London borough of Lambeth which got into this mess, and it is that council which must get out of it.

Sir Paul Beresford: In the light of 10 years of allegations and rumours of corruption and incompetence from members all the way down to the lowest workers at Lambeth, and in the light of a recent article about the chief executive of Lambeth saying that he has known of the problems for some three years, will my hon. Friend agree that the review set up by Lambeth council already smacks of a whitewash? In addition, will he agree greatly to strengthen the Audit Commission and to move into councils such as Lambeth to look across the board and from top to bottom, including the elected members?

Mr. Howard: I would not want to prejudge the outcome of the inquiry which Lambeth council has said that it is setting up. It is certainly of the utmost importance that the Audit Commission should have all the resources that it needs to carry out a proper investigation. I am concerned that no one should be excluded from the remit of that investigation.

Mr. Caborn: Does the Secretary of State agree that misleading the House through early-day motions, in particular early-day motion 1242, is disgraceful, especially in terms of the allegations against Sheffield which have been raised by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick)?

Madam Speaker: Order. If I could give the hon. Gentleman a little guidance, the Secretary of State has very little to do with that particular early-day motion. The question should be addressed to the Leader of the House. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) should rephrase his question.

Mr. Caborn: Does the Secretary of State agree that misleading the House is a serious allegation? On the subject of alleged corruption in Sheffield, the hon. Member for Hallam—one of the Secretary of State's Conservative colleagues—wrote a letter to Sheffield city council on 21 August 1987 asking for accommodation as a Member of Parliament? Would the Secretary of State like to comment on that?

Mr. Howard: I certainly have a keen interest in, if no responsibility for, the way in which the money of community charge payers in Sheffield is spent. My understanding of the letter to which the hon. Gentleman referred is that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) wrote to the city council asking on what terms accommodation was made available to Members of Parliament.

The hon. Gentleman made allegations of misleading the House with regard to the early-day motion, but he chose not to suggest the extent to which those allegations are misleading. All I can say is that I heard with great dismay the extent to which he and his hon. Friends are prepared to freeload at the expense of charge payers.

Mr. James Hill: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the district auditor in the Southampton area is taking the local Labour-controlled council to court? The council has illegally moved £5·3 million from the housing revenue account to other accounts. I am sorry to inform the House that the chairman of housing at that time was the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham), who can probably give my right hon. and learned Friends more facts and figures. Will my right hon. and learned Friend keep an eye on the matter, because there is a smell of corruption in the air?

Mr. Howard: I am sure that the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) will want to co-operate with the Audit Commission in its investigations to the fullest possible extent.

Mr. Denham: Is the Secretary of State aware that the housing committee of Southampton city council, with the unanimous support of Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative Members, agreed that transfers should be made between the general revenue account and the housing revenue account to enable the tenants of Southampton to benefit from the 50 per cent. reduction in the limit on capital spending applied to capital receipts, as opposed to the 25 per cent. reduction in the limit on HRA spending? Does he accept that it is appropriate for local authorities to seek to maximise their resources in the interests of local people and that members of his party supported that? Does he further accept that there is no indication as yet that the district auditor will take the city council to court?

Mr. Howard: I confess to being mildly surprised that the hon. Gentleman made no reference to the importance of acting within the law in making those adjustments to the accounts of the housing committee in Southampton. It may not be of great significance to the hon. Gentleman, but I venture to surmise that it will be of considerable significance to the Audit Commission.

Mr. Straw: First, may I associate myself with the remarks made to the Secretary of State by my hon. Friends the Members for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and for Streatham (Mr. Hill)? I hope that the Secretary of State will applaud the fact that resolute action by the new Labour group after the expulsion of 13 former Labour councillors led to the investigation and to no action by the district auditor. When will the Secretary of State show some statesmanship and balance on this? Is he not aware that corruption knows no party boundaries, that there have been 22 examples in the past two years of serious allegations of corruption and fraud in central Government involving in total £1,400 million, and that there are endless examples in Enfield, Bromley, West Wiltshire, Rochester upon Medway, Thanet and Westminster of serious corruption in local authorities run by the Conservatives?

On the issue of freeloading—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order and hear all the exchanges.

Mr. Straw: On the issue of freeloading raised by the Secretary of State, will he condemn the freeloader former members of his Cabinet who have had their hands in the till and their snouts in the trough of privatised industries? They privatised companies and then sought directorships without any serious distance between them—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. How can I hear what hon. Gentlemen have to say? *[Interruption.]* Order. I will not be shouted down by hon. Members. The House must come to order.

Mr. Straw: Is not there one difference——

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall have to use the authority that is given to me by the House if hon. Members will not come to order. I am listening extremely carefully —when I am allowed to—to what the hon. Gentleman has to say. I am sure that he will watch his words carefully.

Mr. Straw: As we all understand, Madam Speaker, they do not mind giving it, but they do not like taking it.

Is not there one difference between Labour and Conservative: that while Labour has taken resolute and tough action to deal with corruption, as we have in Liverpool and Lambeth, Conservatives have been extremely reluctant ever to condemn miscreants in their own ranks? For example, 10 months after Westminster was found guilty of acting unlawfully in selling three cemeteries for 15p, its then leader, Lady Porter, ended up with a damehood.

Mr. Howard: After that intervention, I can understand why the hon. Gentleman has taken to spending his time making speeches about the monarchy. It was a disgraceful intervention. His remarks were quite appalling. They were in no way fitting for the Front Bench of the party which was responsible for those councils at the time of those events. May I simply draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention the remarks of the spokesman for the London borough of Lambeth:

"We are dealing with potentially unlawful malpractice on a scale unprecedented in local government."

The hon. Gentleman would have done well to bear that in mind without seeking to muddy the waters in the pathetic way he did.

Urban Programme, Coventry

5. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the urban programme in Coventry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): The urban programme has supported, and will continue to support, some excellent projects to improve the quality of life for those who live and work in Coventry. In addition, Coventry city council has bid for urban partnership fund resources for 1993-94 to boost the extra spending power that it will have as a result of the change in the capital receipts rules.

Mr. Cunningham: Does the Minister realise that his statement is made against a background of diminishing resources? Did he carry out an evaluation before he announced a reduction in the urban programme over a period of years? Did he, along with his colleagues, also take into consideration the consequential effect of a reduction in the urban programme and, at the same time, the abandonment of the safer cities project? What hope can he offer people in inner cities, not only in Coventry but

in the rest of the country, bearing in mind the serious disturbances last summer? Equally, will he take into account the effects on organisations such as community relations councils and CREDO, which do a tremendous amount of work in the inner cities, not only among the unemployed but in the black community?

Mr. Squire: Of course, all proper consideration was given before the announcement, but programmes must evolve in response to changing circumstances. It would be quite wrong to look at the urban programme in isolation from all other resources that the Government put into inner cities. In 1993-94 the Government will spend some £90 million more over the full range of our programmes in the inner cities than we previously intended.

Mr. Butcher: Will my hon. Friend keep a close eye on urban programmes in Coventry, some of which have been put to good use, and see to it that the accounting officers ensure that they get value for money? Will he also point out that good use has been made of the safer cities programme? When he visits Coventry next week, will he take some of the leaders of the council to one side and tell them that it might help their case if they stopped blaming the Government for all their ills and looked at the pattern of overspending for the past eight years which has led to some rather brutal decisions having to be made in recent months?

Mr. Squire: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. He speaks with great knowledge of Coventry. It is certainly the case that authorities throughout the country—many of which have not benefited from urban programmes and will not benefit from them next year—have been able to fund precisely the sort of projects that concerned the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) by efficient management of their resources.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to the remarkable work in Coventry of the Foleshill and Hillfields task force, led by Brian Laughland? Is he aware that when the task force completes its mission shortly—as was always the intention—it will have assisted more than 800 businesses and trained more than 4,000 people and that the beneficial effects of its initiatives in Coventry, taken in partnership with the city council and local community groups, will continue?

Mr. Squire: I commend to the House my hon. Friend's excellent words. He mentioned one task force. There are 16 and they are making significant inroads into inner city problems, creating jobs and improving training. Hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber know that and would applaud it in terms similar to those used by my hon. Friend.

Sulphur Dioxide

6. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of sulphur dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom; and what the level was two years ago.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): In 1990, the latest year for which the information is available, total United Kingdom emissions of sulphur dioxide were 3·77 million tonnes. Two years before, in 1988, the figure was 3·81 million tonnes.

Mr. Davidson: Does the Minister agree that while any move downwards is to be welcomed, that is not sufficient, given that German industry has installed desulphurisation plant in all its power stations, yet the United Kingdom has not? Will he confirm whether it is Government policy to move to desulphurisation by importing more low-sulphur coal from abroad to replace good British coal mined by British miners? Will he confirm that it is his intention to reduce the sulphur emissions of British manufacturing industry by continuing the Government's programme of destroying that industry?

Mr. Maclean: No, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. Since 1970, our SO_2 emissions have decreased by 40 per cent. and we have signed up to a further 60 per cent. reduction by the year 2003. The figures that I have just revealed show that we are well on target to meeting those reductions. All coal is high in sulphurs, but a mix of various energy sources will continue to be available to generators. I assure the House that we can adapt our plans and solutions to meet our targets, even if a slightly different mix of fuels is used.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and EC directives have added a lot to the demise of the United Kingdom coal industry, because gas-fired power stations and nuclear power stations do not emit sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere? The environmentalists cannot have it both ways—one either has a clean atmosphere or not.

Mr. Maclean: I can certainly agree unequivocally with the last part of my hon. Friend's question. Every energy source has certain environmental benefits and disbenefits at different points in the use cycle. We have signed up to various international agreements on CO_2, SO_2 and NO_2. I am confident that we shall be able to adjust our plans and make use of whatever technical solutions are necessary, so that we continue to honour our international commitments whatever decisions are made—but a cost is always involved.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Minister must accept that there was an increase in sulphur dioxide emissions in Britain in 1990, at a time of severe recession, when, in logic, such emissions should have been decreasing. He must also be aware that the most recent report shows that more than half Britain's trees have been damaged by acid rain. Is not it high time that the Government decided to have a proper programme of desulphurisation for our power stations and started arguing the case for clean coal, rather than doing down our domestic coal industry at every opportunity?

Mr. Maclean: There were some extraordinary assertions there. The hon. Gentleman cannot look at the emission figures for one year only. We have signed up to targets on sulphur dioxide emissions to the year 2003—that will mean a 60 per cent. reduction following a 40 per cent. reduction. That is considerable by any standards. There is a programme to fit flue gas desulphurisation to three of Britain's largest power stations. Those three stations, operated by National Power and PowerGen,

account for about 600,000 tonnes of SO_2. That is between one quarter and one fifth of SO_2 emitted by all power stations generating more than 300 MW of electricity.

The programme is massive by any standards and it does not come cheaply—FGD costs £400 million a throw. Before the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends suggest that we should automatically fit FGD to every power station, they had better tell the public the cost and make it clear that we are meeting our target without that compulsory restriction.

Water Quality, Bassenthwaite

8. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to visit Bassenthwaite to inspect the water quality.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have no plans to visit Bassenthwaite lake officially. However, we are totally committed to preservation of the quality of the English lakes and rare species such as vendace. I therefore welcome the National Rivers Authority's detailed study of water quality in the lake to assess the impact of discharges. The NRA has full power to seek improvements in the light of the results of that study.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Would not it be prudent, before designating Bassenthwaite a national nature reserve, to establish the cause of the pollution indicated by the algae blooms that float on the surface of the lake? Is not it up to North West Water, recognising that the lake, which is in the heart of the Lake District, is dying, to bring forward its investment programme from 1998? Should not it invest now to end the pollution from Keswick sewage works?

Mr. Maclean: I assure the hon. Gentleman that water flows and levels in the Derwent catchment area are being examined and that this new and very thorough examination of water quality will look for links between sewage discharges, nutrient levels and fish populations. Whether or not Bassenthwaite is designated a sensitive area, the NRA has power to order North West Water to upgrade Keswick sewage works at any time if it regards such action as justified. But it is right that we should first get the results of the study. I am sure that the NRA will explain all this to the hon. Gentleman at their meeting on 5 February and I look forward to a personal invitation from the hon. Gentleman to go fishing with him on England's second most beautiful lake, after Ullswater.

Council Housing (Repairs)

9. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for improving the right to repair scheme for local authority tenants.

Sir George Young: Provisions for revising the right to repair for council tenants are included in the Housing and Urban Development Bill. My Department is today publishing a second consultation paper, which sets out in detail how the new scheme might work.

Mr. Page: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Does he accept that that represents a dramatic improvement in the level of service to council tenants? No doubt he, like me, speculates as to why certain councils believe that only they have the ability and the skills to provide services to their tenants, even though some authorities, such as Camden, can leave a tenant dead in an apartment for over a year before discovering him. What are the time scales involved here? Within what time does a local authority have to repair a council house before the tenant can take action himself? In addition, what is the position of housing associations?

Sir George Young: On the last point, we have asked the Housing Corporation to introduce a parallel scheme for housing association tenants. We envisage that the local authority will have seven days in which to respond before a tenant is able to go to an approved contractor and have the work done. On my hon. Friend's first point, we want to carry out further improvements to the existing scheme and to work with the grain of the ambitions of the citizens charter.

Mr. Betts: Does the Minister remember that the current right to repair scheme was introduced by the Government against the advice of every local authority association, whatever its political complexion? Bearing in mind the bureaucratic nature of this scheme, may I ask him to inform the House how many—or how few—right to repair applications have been accepted this year? Does he accept that the views and representations of local authority associations should be taken into account to ensure that he does not make the same mistake a second time?

Sir George Young: The existing scheme has changed attitudes among tenants and local authorities and raised expectations. Often the threat to use the right to repair scheme has had a dramatic effect on local authorities. If the Government did everything that local authority associations wanted them to do, a number of improvements for tenants and ratepayers would not have occurred over the past few years. We are consulting on the details of the scheme. We believe that it will bring dramatic benefits to tenants and I hope that we have the support of all hon. Members in introducing such an important reform.

Oil Pollution

10. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to meet the Government's commitment to prevent further oil pollution in the sea as stated in the paper entitled "This Common Inheritance".

Mr. Howard: We are continuing to promote more effective international rules against marine oil pollution from all sources and to encourage co-operation in their enforcement. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has set up an inquiry into further measures that are needed to protect the United Kingdom coastline from pollution from merchant shipping.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will my right hon. and learned Friend co-operate fully with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Transport when looking into the use by the marine pollution control unit of dispersant spray and its toxicological effect on the environment? Will he ensure that the long-term environmental effects of the Braer disaster are minimised? In line with the stated aims of the Command Paper "This Common Inheritance", will my

right hon. and learned Friend encourage our international partners to uphold the provisions in annex I of MARPOL, the marine pollution convention, relating to oil spills at sea?

Mr. Howard: I can give my hon. Friend assurances on all those issues. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has set up an ecological steering group to examine the long-term consequences of the Braer incident. We are determined to learn all the lessons that we can from that event.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Secretary of State aware that, even as we speak, a row is continuing between civil servants in Whitehall on whether the Minches constitute an internal waterway or an internationally recognised navigable channel? While that dispute is going on, tankers continue to go up and down the Minches and at some stages only four miles separate the coastlines on either side. Will the Secretary of State give a commitment to the House that he and his colleagues in other Departments will go and bang together the heads of the civil servants in Whitehall—I can name them if necessary—to ensure that the International Maritime Organisation designation of "area to be avoided" is agreed and we can prevent the risk of further disasters affecting the west of Scotland or St. Kilda?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the decision whether waters are internationally navigable is not one to be taken by this country alone, but must be taken in accordance with international law. We have to decide on the interpretation of international law. It is not a matter of banging together the heads of civil servants in Whitehall, but of interpreting the provisions of international law on what areas should be avoided. That issue is being considered by the inquiry that has been set up by my right hon. Friend. We shall be keen to examine carefully the recommendations of that inquiry when they are available.

Mr. Harris: Although I accept everything that my right hon. and learned Friend said, is not it a fact that the Government can take a lead in such matters and should do so when it is necessary to have an exclusion zone or a recognised route for tankers? Is he aware that I have taken up with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport requests from the isles of Scilly in my constituency, which suffered from the Torrey Canyon disaster some years ago, that there should be a sensible exclusion zone for bulk tankers and ships carrying dangerous cargoes in the vicinity of the isles of Scilly?

Mr. Howard: I am aware of my hon. Friend's concern for his constituents and the steps that he has taken to safeguard them. Although we can take a lead—and have done so in a number of respects—decisions on such matters have to be taken internationally, through the International Maritime Organisation. We shall be keen to pursue such issues when we receive the report of the inquiry set up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mandatory Repair Grant

11. **Ms. Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about waiting lists for mandatory repair grant.

Sir George Young: Local authorities must deal with valid grant applications within six months of the date they are made.

Ms. Coffey: Is the Minister aware that in Stockport, 600 householders are waiting to apply for mandatory grant? In 1989-90, before the mandatory grants system, 200 houses were improved under block schemes and 650 under individual grants, but in this year, to date, only 40 houses have been improved through block grant schemes and only 300 through individual grants? Does he agree that the present system is not only not achieving its objective of improving private housing stock, but has all the makings of a disaster? Will he introduce proposals under which the problems of private sector housing in Stockport and the north-west can be dealt with more effectively?

Sir George Young: I do not agree with that analysis. For the first two years of the new scheme, there was an underspend on the provision that we made for local authorities. There is good news for Stockport in that, next year, £3·3 million will be available as against £3·1 million this year. As I said in answer to Question 1, we are looking at longer-term implications to see whether there are yet better ways to spend the improvement grant money. As to effectiveness, more and more of the money is going to the homes that are unfit and to people on lower incomes, so there has been much greater success in targeting the system on the properties and people who need it most.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my hon. Friend look at careful housing authorities, such as Calderdale, which wish to cap the amount of mandatory grant that may be given? The amount of money needed to repair houses in one part of the country may be different from that needed in another. Such authorities know the proper limit and such a scheme would alleviate fraud by the claimant.

Sir George Young: There is good news for Calderdale as well, in that, from 1 April, there will be a cap of £50,000 on any individual improvement grant. We did that as a result of listening to representations such as those from my hon. Friend.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that many local authorities are unable to deal with the grant applications, not only because the £386 million to which he referred in his reply to Question 1 is insufficient, but because of the implications for local authorities' capital programmes arising from the portion of the grant that they have to meet? He says that he will consult on the options for change, but what is needed is a quick decision. If not, rather than being improved, the only option for some houses will be demolition.

Sir George Young: I do not agree. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said in answer to an earlier question, authorities will have much greater access to receipts over the next year. They will be able to use those receipts to make receipts to make further progress with home improvement grants. It is no good Labour Members grumbling about that. They have asked for capital receipts to be released for housing. That is what will happen—they will be used to fund home improvement grants.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that there would be more money for people whose houses need repair if Labour councils did not waste money by throwing it away

on firms that have not done the work or on paying firms twice for work that they have done once? Is he aware that that is one of the areas of corruption named by the chief executive of Lambeth council, of which the Pontius Pilate Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) sought to wash his hands?

Sir George Young: The real victims of corruption and inefficiency are the people to whom my hon. Friend referred—those who look to local authorities either for good housing or for improvement grants. We are determined to root out such corruption wherever we can.

Water Charges

12. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to reduce the level of water charges for low income families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No, legislation is not necessary. The director general of the Office of Water Services is responsible for protection of customers' interests generally, including those of low-income families. My Department, together with Ofwat, will be considering ways to alleviate the hardship difficulties experienced by a small proportion of customers who are metered.

Mr. O'Brien: One can only describe the Minister's response and attitude as abysmal. Is he aware that water charges by the 10 water companies have increased by 9·4 per cent. on average in the past year and will increase by 10 per cent. on average in the coming year, which will mean an increase of 60 per cent. since the privatisation of water in 1989? In the five years since privatisation, standing charges have risen tremendously. Does not the Minister feel that the regulator has failed in his duty to those in lower income groups—particularly old ladies who live on their own? Given that Conservative Members have referred to poor people twice this afternoon, does the Minister agree that his answers were abysmal and that something should be done to protect such people?

Mr. Maclean: No, I do not think that my answers were abysmal. If the hon. Gentleman had done his homework, he would know that systems exist to protect such people. Lower-income families may be entitled to social security benefits, such as income support. Last year, the cost of water services was added to the index used for uprating social security benefits, so they are taken into account now.

Mr. Mans: Will my hon. Friend examine the circumstances in which water companies compulsorily fit meters to mixed usage premises that are used both for business and domestic purposes? Where that has occurred in the north-west, firms have often been put out of business as a result of extra charges. Small firms have no comeback on water companies. Will my hon. Friend inquire into that matter?

Mr. Maclean: Yes. I shall be happy to receive more details from my hon. Friend, which I shall naturally pass on to Ofwat and its director general to consider.

Mr. Clelland: Will the Minister investigate the practice of connecting meters in respect of domestic water consumption? Does he agree that although meters may help to conserve water, now that water companies are in private hands, they will increase the unit price because they need to maintain their profits? Totally in line with Conservative party policy over the past 14 years, the consumer will end up paying more for less.

Mr. Maclean: I am sorry to disagree with the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question, but it was absolute nonsense. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware of the high standards and regulations that apply to all aspects of our water supply, which are the result both of British controls and EC directives. The quality of our water is improving all the time—it was never as good in the past as it is today—but there is a cost involved in that, which is why water companies are investing £30,000 million improving our water and sewerage systems. The Director General of Water Services has a general obligation to look after customers and consumer interests and I am very content with the way in which he is doing his job.

Market Testing

13. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for extending market testing to white-collar local authority services.

Mr. Howard: My officials are discussing with local authority associations and other interested parties the implementation of my decisions on the extension of compulsory competitive tendering announced in November 1992. The new regime will be rigorous and challenging for all authorities—extending to local authority white-collar services the benefits of competition already demonstrated in respect of manual services.

Mr. Amess: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Conservative-controlled Basildon district council will, over a period of time, subject all its services to market testing? Is it his judgment that that process will assist in sorting out the terrible financial legacy left by the socialists, who were thrown out of office last May—when every one of their 15 candidates was defeated?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I am convinced that market testing of the sort to which he referred will make Conservative-controlled Basildon council a beacon to the rest of local government.

Mr. Olner: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Attorney-General told the Committee considering the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill that, in his opinion, there was no need to change the legislation and that local authorities should certainly enjoy a level playing field with commercial organisations? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman take that into account when he extends CCT to other local authority activities?

Mr. Howard: I made it clear that any local authority that invites tenders on the basis that the regulations do apply—which is not the view taken by my Department—will risk action by my Department.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the predecessor of market testing—compulsory competitive tendering—brought out much of the evidence that exposed corruption in local government? As the relevant legislation—on everything from the publication of information to compulsory competitive

tendering—was opposed by Opposition Members, should not they now support market testing, to root out corruption in their own councils?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Every advance that we have made in local government has been opposed by the Opposition. But they will never learn and I cannot hold out any hope to my hon. Friend that we shall obtain their support for market testing or compulsory competitive tendering, obvious though the merits of those policies are to my hon. Friend and all dispassionate observers.

Mr. Henderson: In view of the confusion in the law to which my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) referred over the transfer of undertakings and the European acquired rights directive, will the Secretary of State give an assurance today to local authorities that seek to meet their obligations in that regard that he will now alter his guidance to those local authorities about so-called anti-competitive behaviour issued under the Local Government Act 1992? If he will not give that assurance, can the House assume that his motive for introducing market testing has nothing to do with local authority quality or efficiency and everything to do with cutting the wages of local authority employees?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman will prepare his question in advance in such detail, he must be prepared to adapt it in the light of answers that have already been given. I gave a comprehensive answer on that point to the hon. Member for Nuneaton, who asked the same question just a minute or two ago. I explained to him that there is no confusion whatever about the law on this subject and I told him what advice my Department has given and will continue to give.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your advice and guidance on a particular matter which is for the Chair. During this afternoon's proceedings, the shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), accused a Cabinet Minister of dishonesty. That disgraceful unsubstantiated allegation is wholly unworthy of a Member of the House. Do you not think that the hon. Gentleman should be made to withdraw it?

Madam Speaker: Nothing that was said this afternoon sounded to me anything like a reference to a Member of either House of Parliament. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Member has asked for my guidance and advice, and I am giving it to him.

Nothing that was said sounded to me like a reference to a Member of either House of Parliament. However, I remind hon. Members on both sides of the House of the wise words of "Erskine May":

"Good temper and moderation are the characteristics of parliamentary language."

I hope that the entire House——

Mr. David Shaw (Dover) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Sit down, please. I am taking no more points of order on the matter.

I hope that the entire House will take to heart the wise words of "Erskine May".

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My point of order arises as a result of last night's debate on an order relating to a grant scheme for companies which are attempting to manufacture newsprint from recycled fibre, when the Minister for Industry suddenly announced the abolition of the scheme. Thank you for allowing those Members who were present to debate the wider issue, but would it not have been more appropriate for the Minister to announce in advance on the Order Paper his intention to abandon the scheme? That is particularly important as Gartcosh intends to apply for a grant under the scheme and last night's announcement means that it will now have only 28 days to make a final grant application. Would it not have been more appropriate if that announcement had appeared on the Order Paper, so that hon. Members who were interested could have debated the matter fully?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and the House might have seen what I hope were my wise words last night, when I allowed a wide debate on the motion. However, the Chair was placed at a disadvantage in so doing, as was the House, because hon. Members were not notified. I hope that those on the Government Front Bench have taken notice of what I said last night and in this exchange today.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You mentioned "Erskine May" a moment ago. Has "Erskine May" anything to say about the length of ministerial answers in Question Time? Today, we got as far as question 14. A number of us have observed that a considerable part of Question Time—perhaps an increasing proportion—is now taken up by extremely long, filibustering responses from Ministers.

Madam Speaker: I cannot remember what is on every page of "Erskine May", or refer the hon. Gentleman to an appropriate page. I doubt that "Erskine May" has any comment to make on that point, but I assure him and the House that the Speaker has.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. There have been a number of references to "Erskine May", which is a very important document: it is the bible of the House of Commons. Will you protect it from Maastricht?

Madam Speaker: There are a good many documents around the House that I seek to protect, in more than one way. Some I may have to protect from the ravages of the hon. Gentleman. Now, perhaps we can move on.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

Food Protection (Dioxins)

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Dioxins) (England) (No. 2) (Revocation) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3188) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

Community Care

That the Social Security Benefits (Amendments Consequential Upon the introduction of Community Care) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3147) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

Genetically Modified Organisms

That the Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3217) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

That the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3280) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

That the Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 15) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question agreed to.

Tobacco Advertising

3.35 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make illegal the advertisement of tobacco and products containing tobacco other than at the point of sale; to make illegal the promotion by other means of tobacco and products containing tobacco; and for related purposes.

The case against tobacco is easy to state. Each year, according to the Government, 111,000 people die from smoking—26,000 from lung cancer, and the rest from other diseases caused by tobacco. Smoking is by far the biggest public health hazard in Britain. The Government say in their "Health of the Nation" White Paper that, of every 1,000 smokers, one will be murdered, six will die in road accidents and 250 will die before their natural time from smoking.

For the tobacco industry, 111,000 customers are a lot to lose each year, so the industry seeks to replace them—to recruit new smokers to take the place of those who have died—by advertising. Nearly all adults who smoke started smoking before the age of 20: I was one of them. For that reason, despite the advertising code of conduct, tobacco advertising is directed at teenagers and children. Those are the only age group in which the number of smokers in the country is not falling.

For the tobacco industry, advertising itself is big business. The industry spend, £100 million a year on advertising cigarettes. It claims that it is simply promoting brand switching—persuading smokers of one brand of cigarette to switch to another. But people cannot be persuaded to switch brands if they have not already been persuaded to start smoking.

In the White Paper, the Government have set an ambitious target: to reduce the number of cigarettes sold by 40 per cent. by the end of the decade, from the 100 billion cigarettes sold in 1990 to just under 60 billion by the year 2000. The Government should be commended for the bold goal that they have set; the question is, are they going to achieve that goal? They are already using price regulation, health warnings, voluntary codes of conduct —which are frequently circumvented by the tobacco companies—and health education, and the number of smokers is indeed falling; but it is falling more slowly now than it has fallen in the past. It is falling by 1 per cent. per year among males, and by 0·5 per cent. per year among women.

The "Health of the Nation" target is to reduce the incidence of smoking by 40 per cent. by the end of the decade. It is evident that, if that target is to be reached, more needs to be done. One major step that the Government could take, but to which they are not yet committed, is the banning of tobacco advertising.

A ban has been imposed in other countries, with positive results. The chief economist at the Department of Health, Dr. Clive Smee, recorded in a recent report that, in New Zealand, an advertising ban reduced tobacco consumption by 7·5 per cent. In Canada, consumption was reduced by 6 per cent.; in Finland, by 7 per cent.; and in Norway, by 8 per cent. Dr. Smee's figures take account of the other factors, such as price changes, that would also have affected consumption in those countries.

The Select Committee on Health considered the Smee report, and took evidence from Ministers and from many other people, including representatives of the tobacco industry and lobbying organisations on the tobacco industry's side.

Having considered all the evidence, we agree with Smee's findings. Before I became a Member of Parliament, I was a health economist. I think that his methodology is sound. The British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing and the Health Education Authority agree that there should be a ban on tobacco advertising. So who is on the other side of the argument? The tobacco industry itself, of course.

What are the arguments put forward by the tobacco industry? First, it points to the revenue that would be lost to the Treasury if advertising were to be banned. That suggests that the tobacco industry agrees that a ban would reduce the number of cigarettes consumed. The Government have already agreed, however, to seek a 40 per cent. cut in the number of cigarettes smoked. I presume that that policy objective has been costed, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been told and that his revenue plans therefore take account of that fact.

Secondly, the people who oppose a ban argue that there should be freedom of choice. In her evidence to the Select Committee, the Secretary of State for Health said:

"If cigarettes were introduced today, their production and sale would probably be banned."

In other words, the Secretary of State agrees that in some cases the public interest is more important than the interest of personal freedom of choice.

I am not seeking in the Bill to ban smoking. I am not even proposing, as the Minister for Health did yesterday, that smoking in public places should be restricted. Smokers must choose for themselves whether to smoke. My Bill aims only to ban the promotion of tobacco and to prevent tobacco companies from persuading more people to buy their brands. The majority of people they persuade to smoke are young people—people under the age of 20, the only age groups among whom the incidence of smoking is not falling.

There is a freedom of choice issue, but the question that the House should address is whether the freedom in question is freedom to do good or evil. Is tobacco advertising in the public interest, or against it? Tobacco is a unique product. It is the only product which, when used in moderation and as the manufacturers intend, kills people. In Britain it kills more than 100,000 people a year. It is a unique product and, as a unique product, it requires a unique response.

Among the arguments against a ban are those put forward by the Euro-sceptics—I see one sitting opposite me—who dislike the idea of yet another European Community directive. But the Euro-sceptics have a choice. If they vote for the Bill, it will mean that a British law takes the step that needs to be taken in this area.

Public opinion clearly supports a ban. Yesterday, the Health Education Authority revealed the results of a survey of 5,000 people who had been randomly selected, of whom 75 per cent. said that they supported a total ban on tobacco advertising. Most surprisingly, 64 per cent.—almost two thirds—of smokers supported a total ban on tobacco advertising.

The Bill has support in all parts of the House, from smokers and non-smokers in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. I commend it to the House.

3.44 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: I see that the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) is on his feet. I take it that the hon. Gentleman opposes the Bill?

Mr. Rathbone: That is right, Madam Speaker.

I should like to make one thing clear before speaking against the Bill. I have no connection with the tobacco industry or with the advertising industry, although I have spent much of my business life in advertising and perhaps understand it a little more than the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) who introduced the Bill. I agree, however, with 75 per cent. of what he said. The Government must do more to reduce the incidence of smoking, particularly smoking among the young. They must concentrate more than they have so far on controlling the illegal sale of cigarettes to the under-18s. They must also do much more in terms of health education to persuade not only children but their parents of the harm which, as the hon. Gentleman said, naturally comes from smoking cigarettes.

However, it is self-deception and a deception of the people of this country to suggest that banning advertising will achieve the ends that the hon. Gentleman suggests. It is a tempting and attractive short cut, but it is not working. The hon. Gentleman cited instances from New Zealand, Norway and Canada. He said that the gentleman in the health service who gave opinions on them drew into his assessment the fact that cigarettes had increased in cost in those countries, while at the same time advertising had been banned. A rational and careful analysis of the research there provides a direct link between the price of cigarettes and the drop in consumption. Therefore, the Bill, if correctly drafted, would call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to tax tobacco even more, because it would have an effect on the consumption of tobacco, especially among the young.

Another point which is seldom made but which is crucial is that, in a market such as that in the United Kingdom, where the advertising of cigarettes is the best developed and done with great creativity, we have the greatest incidence of the smoking of low tar cigarettes. If you are going to smoke—I am sure, Madam Speaker, that you are not—you would be wiser to choose low tar rather than high tar cigarettes, because they reduce the chance of getting cancer from a nauseous habit. It is only because of advertising and promotion that low tar cigarettes have penetrated the market as they have.

Therefore, banning advertising would do a disservice to the health of the nation and would work against the aims of the Bill and of the Government. For that reason, I humbly beg to oppose the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):——

The House divided: Ayes 206, Noes 61.

Division No. 126] **[3.47 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Harris, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shersby, Michael

Shore, Rt Hon Peter	Tipping, Paddy
Simpson, Alan	Turner, Dennis
Sims, Roger	Tyler, Paul
Skinner, Dennis	Wallace, James
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*	Walley, Joan
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*	Wareing, Robert N
Spearing, Nigel	Wigley, Dafydd
Spink, Dr Robert	Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John	Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David	Winnick, David
Steinberg, Gerry	Wise, Audrey
Stevenson, George	Wright, Dr Tony
Straw, Jack	
Sweeney, Walter	**Tellers for the Ayes:**
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*	**Mr. Malcolm Wicks and**
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*	**Mr. Malcolm Chisholm.**

NOES

Adley, Robert	Luff, Peter
Alexander, Richard	Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Mills, Iain
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Neubert, Sir Michael
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes	Nicholls, Patrick
Carttiss, Michael	Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Cash, William	Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Pickles, Eric
Colvin, Michael	Rathbone, Tim
Congdon, David	Redmond, Martin
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*	Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Cormack, Patrick	Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Couchman, James	Skeet, Sir Trevor
Dickens, Geoffrey	Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Duncan, Alan	Speed, Sir Keith
Duncan-Smith, Iain	Sproat, Iain
Dunn, Bob	Stern, Michael
Dykes, Hugh	Sykes, John
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*	Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*	Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Gardiner, Sir George	Trend, Michael
Gorst, John	Trimble, David
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*	Watts, John
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*	Whitney, Ray
Grylls, Sir Michael	Whittingdale, John
Hardy, Peter	Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Hawkins, Nick	Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Jenkin, Bernard	
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Lait, Mrs Jacqui	**Mr. Tony Marlow and**
Legg, Barry	**Mr. Ronnie Campbell.**
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*	

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Hugh Bayley, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Dr. Joe Hendron, Ms. Tessa Jowell, Sir James Kilfedder, Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, Ms. Liz Lynne, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Roger Sims, Rev. Martin Smyth and Mrs. Audrey Wise.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Hugh Bayley accordingly presented a Bill to make illegal the advertisement of tobacco and products containing tobacco other than at the point of sale; to make illegal the promotion by other means of tobacco and products containing tobacco; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 30 April, and to be printed. [Bill 122.]

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 20 January]

[Mr. Michael Morris *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

Treaty on European Union

Amendment proposed [20 January], No. 7, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

"(except Article 123 on page 31 of Cm 1934)".—*[Dr. Cunningham.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): I remind the Committee that we are considering at the same time the following amendments: No. 127, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

"(excluding Article G D(10) on page 12 of Cm 1934).".

No. 129, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

"(excluding Article G D(12) on page 13 of Cm 1934).".

No. 186, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

"except Article 3(i) on page 9 of Cm 1934".

No. 58, in page 1, line 10, after "1992", insert

"but not the Protocol concerning Article 119 of the Treaty establishing the European Community".

No. 27, in page 1, line 13, after 'Community', insert

", with the exception of the Protocol on Social Policy".

4 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As a new Member, I admit to being somewhat bewildered by the procedure adopted in dealing with the Bill. Having talked to other hon. Members, I am sure that I am not alone in that. I have had the benefit of a brief seminar with the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). *[Interruption.]* I can assure the Committee that it was relatively brief. I think that I now understand the procedure being adopted and the strange reason for the order of the amendments printed on the amendment paper. I also think that I understand why we debate amendments and then vote on them some time later.

My point of order relates to making the whole process easier for hon. Members to understand. We have a selection of amendments before us, but there is no information on the list as to where the amendments are on the amendment paper. I have asked the Library to give me that information, and it has done so. Unfortunately it gave me the information with the page numbers from last Wednesday. For example, amendment 7 was on page 1425 last Wednesday. On today's amendment paper, amendment 7 is on page 1515.

I ask you whether a brief explanation of the procedure, and perhaps information on which pages the amendments are on the amendment paper, could be given to hon. Members to make our lives a little easier.

The Chairman: Like the hon. Lady, I have to go through the amendment paper every morning. As I do not make the final selection until about 12 o'clock each day, I suggest that she do the same homework as I do and find

[The Chairman]

the amendments on the amendment paper. I hope that the inclusion of subject headings, which is an innovation, will help her to find what we should be debating.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. On behalf of the Committee, I thank you for all that you have done to date to make things as intelligible as possible. Would it be fair to say to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) that it is the intention of all Community institutions that all Community legislation should be as unintelligible as possible?

The Chairman: We are lucky that the Committee is dealing with legislation which is intelligible.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): Last Wednesday, we were discussing the social chapter. When the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) opened the debate on this group of amendments, he said that he and his hon. Friends were offering the Government an opportunity to embrace the social chapter which had overwhelming support throughout the European Community. He went on to castigate the Government for what he claims to be covering up the real impact of the provisions of the social chapter. That is an invitation which the Government should refuse, and the hon. Gentleman's description of the Government's conduct must be denied.

It must be recognised that the other 11 member states have agreed that they wish to be bound by the provisions of the social chapter. Equally, it must be recognised that those other 11 countries, represented by responsible and accountable political leaders, have agreed that they and not the United Kingdom should be bound by the social chapter. It is not a case of Britain forcing something on its EC partners but an example of all 12 countries unanimously coming to a single agreement—the Maastricht treaty, which contains provisions that affect the contracting parties, sometimes uniformly.

All the 12 countries have agreed that the social chapter will not apply to the United Kingdom. I am sure that it is recognised by all hon. Conservative Members that common social objectives and minimum standards should not be imposed artificially from above.

To adopt that approach is to invite interventionism and over-regulation and to threaten the competitive edge of the European Community as a whole. There is a danger in being over-prescriptive of adopting pan-European solutions which conflict with the traditions of each domestic market or the circumstances of individual companies.

Our decision not to be a party to the social chapter, which was taken with the assent of the 11 other countries, is not an example of our refusing to play ball and taking our bat home but the result of reasoned unwillingness to allow our country and its economy to be shackled by what we see as the dead weight of prescriptive interventionism, international employment legislation and the tendency to strengthen the role of trade unions.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): While the hon. Gentleman is—understandably, from his point of view—so much against the social chapter, will he bear it in mind that, if the treaty goes ahead, many employees in Britain will not need much encouragement to go to the European Court of Justice, despite Britain's opt-out? People may say, "If the other member countries have the provisions and facilities of the social chapter, why should we be denied them?" With respect to the hon. Gentleman, he should not conclude that, because the treaty will go ahead with the British opt-out, that will be the final say. His best bet would be to vote against the treaty.

Mr. Garnier: I never thought that I would hear a member of the Labour party encourage the creation of work for lawyers.

The social chapter and all that flows from it would push up industrial costs, inhibit job creation and blunt industrial competitiveness. It would have been a grave dereliction of duty for the Government to sacrifice the achievements of the 1980s in freeing the individual from the trade unions, creating a climate attractive to foreign investors and increasing the efficiency and productivity of British industry, by simply swallowing the social chapter with all the collectivist policies of welfare and employee rights which other European countries will increasingly find that they cannot afford.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As my hon. Friend has obviously studied the issue with great care and is an expert on the subject, will he give the House one example of a piece of legislation which he believes could come from the social chapter which could not come from article 100, or, indeed, from the health and safety provisions of the Single European Act? In view of what he has said, will he consider what happened only yesterday in Standing Committee F? EC-based legislation was passed which gave extra powers to the trade unions on wages, working conditions and takeovers.

Mr. Garnier: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that the matter to which he refers flows from the Single European Act.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Give me one example.

Mr. Garnier: My hon. Friend will have an opportunity to catch the Chair's eye in due course.

Increasingly, the standards to beat in global manufacturing are being set in the east rather than on the continent of Europe. I am talking about higher labour costs. Those productivity pressures, coupled with the decline in the dollar against the European currencies in the late 1980s, have brought into sharp focus the high cost of labour in many European countries. That reflects the high non-wage elements in labour costs, such as social security payments and holiday entitlements. Such elements amount to almost 50 per cent. of total labour costs in Germany, France and Italy. By contrast, the United Kingdom appears to be much more competitive in terms of labour costs, despite similar levels of pay for time worked.

Two problems are highlighted by labour costs. The first is the impact on competitiveness relative to comparable industrialised economies, in particular the United States and Japan. The second is that, as the 1990s progress, EC producers are likely to face a twin competitive challenge from low-cost producers in the far east and on the eastern fringe of the EC. We all know that labour costs in the newly industrialised economies of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Korea are between one third and a fifth of those in EC countries.

Similarly, low labour costs will be enjoyed by companies producing in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. An uncompetitive Europe increases the threat of protectionism which will damage the United Kingdom, with its widespread international links. If European industry as a whole is allowed to remain or become uncompetitive, Britain more than most will not be able to escape its consequences.

Has the Labour party, which advances this attraction —that is to say, the social chapter—considered the cost of its imposition on the businesses that we seek to protect in this country? Of course they want to give back to the trade unions the powers that they gave them over the years, powers which we in the Conservative party have recoverd for the individual. They want us to return to the days of good old beer and sandwiches at No. 10.

When blanket wage deals are giving way to locally agreed wage settlements, when commitment and productivity are being rewarded, when profit sharing, employee shareholding and personal pensions increasingly find favour with the public, when flexibility and mobility are the watchwords and when self-employment and small businesses are becoming increasingly popular, the proponents of these amendments are attempting to burden us with collectivism.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will my hon. Friend not also confirm that it is the decentralised nature of many of the arrangements that we make in British industry which adds to the possibility of Britain making a similar move towards consultation but in a different manner from that on the continent? Given that the overall objective in the Community is for employees to have greater consultation in the firms for which they work, the main thing is to decentralise it so that each firm, not just each nation, can find the best way of achieving it.

Mr. Garnier: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. Those of us who had the opportunity of attending this morning's conference organised by the Anglo-Japanese parliamentary group will have learnt that lesson.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): Is the hon. Gentleman arguing that, to be competitive, working conditions and social costs in the United Kingdom should be the same as or lower than those in, say, Taiwan or Korea?

Mr. Garnier: The hon. Gentleman is seeking to rehearse the old canards about social dumping and social tourism. I will not go into it now; it is old stuff.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): My hon. Friend has made an excellent point about the need for decentralisation and for variety between different countries and so on. The trouble is that the treaty before us, particularly article 2, which we discussed last week, says the opposite. It says that we must have something called social cohesion and solidarity, Community harmonisation and balanced development. They are built into the treaty. So all these wonderful arguments which my hon. Friend puts forward, and with which everyone on the Government Benches would agree, rather break down when we look at the treaty itself.

Mr. Garnier: My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) voted for the Single European Act, out of which those very words emerged. What I am complaining about is the increase in bureaucracy and in centralism which would come from the adoption of the social chapter. The United Kingdom labour market is largely a decentralised one, with a strong emphasis on local cultures and traditions—my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) will accept that. It neither lends itself to centralised regulation nor can such regulation readily accommodate the wide dispersion of individual practice.

Its industrial relations structures are also atypical—especially, for example, with multi-union workplaces. Directives framed in Brussels and seeking to give new rights to unions would, if implemented, fall more heavily on establishments where many unions are involved than on single-union ones.

We must face up to the realities of global competition. This means that a new approach to social policy in the European Community must be adopted. It will mean taking steps which allow companies flexibility to improve productivity and cost-competitiveness. It means reducing burdens on business rather than increasing them. This approach does not imply lower living standards or less protection for employees; rather, it is the only way to raise living standards and provide a sound basis for higher social welfare. On that basis alone, I invite the Committee to reject the amendment.

4.15 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I should begin by thanking the hon. Member for Cunningham——

Dr. Cunningham: Copeland.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sorry, for Copeland. I am relieved that I did not call him the hon. Member for Sellafield.

I should thank the hon. Member for Copeland on behalf of the Committee for making it clear that the Opposition do not intend to press amendment No. 7 to a Division. So far, the Committee's debate has concentrated almost entirely on amendment No. 27, which, to my surprise—as I told the hon. Gentleman when he spoke —the Opposition intend to press to a Division.

The debate has been interesting and important and I am grateful to have caught your eye, Mr. Morris. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) moving nervously in his place. I hope that he is not going to move a closure. Although we have had a long debate, the extension that you have kindly given us, Mr. Morris, by exercising your judgment not to accede to my hon. Friend's request, will enable me to respond to some of the important arguments voiced.

Mr. Marlow: I was not surprised when the closure motion was not granted, but I am interested to establish the circumstances under which it is likely to be. One had drawn the conclusion that most closures happen at times that are convenient to the Government, when their support is here in strength. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way because he said that the debate "has" been interesting. As many of my hon. Friends and many Opposition Members wish to speak, what does he mean by "has"? The debate is interesting and I presume that there is much more to be said. Will he give an undertaking to the House that, when other hon. Members on both sides of the House have spoken, he will come back and refer to their remarks?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend and I came to the House together and I would not want to teach him to suck eggs. The decision on when closure motions are moved and whether they are accepted is for the Chair. I know nothing of such matters.

As the debate has developed—it will no doubt continue, perhaps even after I have resumed my place—it has generally been a good debate and a good Committee stage. It has reinforced my view—if reinforcement were needed—of the importance of the House. Many of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members have aired points of view on this group of amendments and on others with which I disagree, but the House can take credit for the way in which the Committee is discussing the Bill and its implications for our country and I hope that other Parliaments in Europe will look to that example.

Mr. Winnick: The Minister said that the debate on this group of amendments has been interesting. Perhaps he will agree that, by and large, the debate has been interesting all round. Does he understand that the reason why some hon. Members on both sides of the House are so critical about the implications of the Bill is that if the treaty becomes law many matters of great importance will be decided elsewhere? It will not matter what sort of debates occur on the Floor of the House or in Committee; they will not have much relevance because the decisions will be taken elsewhere. That is why we believe that the treaty is crucial and why so many of us are determined that we shall do whatever we can to ensure that the Bill is not passed.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I understand and respect the hon. Member's sincerity. What I shall seek to demonstrate—as I have done during debates on other groups of amendments—is that the Maastricht treaty improves the position of the United Kingdom in comparison with that which pertains under the Single European Act.

If the Committee will allow, I shall reply to the debate in three parts. First, I shall address some brief remarks to right hon. and hon. Opposition Members. Secondly, I shall deal with the well-crafted and thoughtful speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) and finally I shall address some general remarks to my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The Minister said that he is replying to the debate. But the debate has not finished. Many hon. Members have waited for two days for an opportunity to take part. The Minister may intervene at this stage, but surely only a later contribution could be regarded as a reply.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have to intervene in these debates as and when I can. I have already explained—to the incredulity of some of my right hon. and hon. Friends—that I make a point of not seeking to discuss very carefully, with people about whom the Committee knows, what the tactics of those people may be. I simply seek to intervene when it seems to me convenient to do so. Indeed, I have intervened more than once in some debates. I also do my best to give way to hon. Members. But the hon. Gentleman knows how the Committee works. I am not directly concerned with procedure. Such matters are for your judgment, Mr. Morris.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I understand the Minister to have said a couple of minutes ago that this treaty in no way diminishes the stature of the British Parliament. That is at the very least arguable. Will the Minister concede that certain articles of the treaty at least strengthen to a considerable extent the role and function of the European Court of Justice in such a way that it will in every sense become a supreme court for the 13 legal systems of the 12 nation states?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall not reply directly to that question at this stage as it concerns a matter that will be the burden of my speech.

I should like first to direct a few remarks mainly at Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Copeland indicated that the Opposition intended to press amendment No. 27 to a Division. He said that it was his wish to fold the agreement between the Eleven into the treaty. Thanks to the hon. Gentleman's courtesy in giving way to me, I tried to make clear what Her Majesty's Government believe would be the consequences of carrying amendment No. 27. I have made our position clear and I do not want to labour the point. However, I should say to Labour Members and to other Opposition parties that, if I am right, there would be very serious consequences, not just for Britain but for the entire European Community. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) took my point.

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. The Minister is indulging in boring repetition. He has already replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). What is the point of replying a second time, especially as some hon. Members have not had a chance to speak once?

The Chairman: That is not a matter for the Chair. I did not notice any repetition.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have the greatest respect and affection for the hon. Gentleman, but I do not think that any of us need lessons from him in boring repetition.

As I said, the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber clearly took the point that I had made. I hope that he and other Opposition parties, and, indeed, other individual hon. and right hon. Members, will take their own advice on this matter. They know where to go for advice that is independent of what I am saying to the Committee. I hope that they will take such advice and will reflect very carefully. I am content—certainly in the case of Liberal Democrat Members—that, in the light of that advice and of their reflection, I shall be able to rely on their judgment in this matter.

Dr. Cunningham: Whatever the Liberal Democrat Members and other Members do, I hope that they do not rely on the advice of the Minister as what he is saying is complete and utter claptrap. I have just—literally, within the hour—returned from discussions with the federal German Government, including the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, a lady whom I think that the Minister knows well, Ursula Seiler-Albring, and the Minister of State in the Chancellor's office, Friedrich Böhl. They clearly said that they would be delighted for Britain to reverse its decision on the social chapter and that such a reversal would not occasion the reopening of the German ratification of the treaty. That view is held throughout the Community as a whole. It is shared by socialist colleagues in other Governments in the Community. For the Minister to raise that red herring for a second time is simply to mislead the House.

For good measure, I also took the opportunity during my brief visit to the federal republic to speak to the leaders of the chambers of commerce—the employers. I asked them if they believed any of the nonsense that we have heard from Ministers—and have just heard repeated by a Conservative Back Bencher—about the threats to industry from the social chapter. The employers do not believe it. When I asked them if they had considered asking the federal German Government to opt out of the social chapter, they said that they had not done so for a moment.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have two observations to make. First, at the rate that we are going, there will not be any socialist Governments left in Europe. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman is not telling me or the Committee anything new when he says that the 11 partners would welcome it if the protocol and the agreement did not exist and the British Government were to go back on the negotiating position that they took in Maastricht. That is not the burden of my argument. We all know that—the wretched protocol exists because we refused to go along with the social chapter.

I am issuing an invitation to the hon. Gentleman—albeit with no hope or expectation, as we have all seen the Labour tactics on the Bill and will make our judgments, as will the country, on the party's new-found commitment to Europe and the treaty. I am not fishing for votes from the hon. Gentleman, but inviting those who take such matters seriously, and have some scruples and principles, to seek their own advice. I have described the position as we see it. It is for other right hon. and hon. Members to use their own sources. We were once given the opinion of the hon. Member for Copeland on what Mr. Cot thought. The following week, in this very country, Mr. Cot repudiated what the hon. Gentleman had said.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool) *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall give way to the reformist wing of the Labour party.

Mr. Mandelson: Talking of principles, I do not think that the Minister is being absolutely scrupulous when he describes the position of the other 11 member state Governments. If they were as weak in their commitment to the protocol that contains the social chapter and would find so much difficulty in making the adjustment to which my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred, they would have caved in at the eleventh hour when the British Government were making so much fuss about the social chapter during the final moments of the Maastricht treaty negotiations. They did not cave in; they stood their ground and agreed a protocol. Surely 11 member state Governments who feel as strongly about the protocol containing the social chapter as they did at Maastricht will hardly create many obstacles to allowing the speedy adjustment that would be needed in the wake of our amendment being carried by the Committee.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not want to labour the point, but I shall try to cover the ground once more. I am not placing in any doubt the enthusiasm of the other 11 member states for the protocol attached to the treaty and the agreement of the eleven that flows from it.

When talking about European negotiations, I do not like to speak in terms of cave-ins or collapses by anybody. Our 11 partners would have wished the content of the agreement to be included in the Maastricht treaty, but the United Kingdom resisted. That is why there is that separate agreement. One can say that they caved in or that we caved in, but the agreement is not in the treaty; it is an agreement of the Eleven which flows from the protocol.

4.30 pm

I suggest that hon. Members take advice about my next point. When the Irish Government sought a minor amendment, relating to abortion, to a protocol in which everybody wished to accommodate them—no one had any disagreements about that—the partners refused to allow an intergovernmental conference because of their fears of what that would open. There must be an intergovernmental conference, but even if one of 30 seconds could be arranged—that is debatable—the consequences that would flow from it under article 236 are clear.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not want to go any further into this, but I will give way to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy).

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I am sure that the Committee appreciates why the Minister is desperate to make progress, having got into this quagmire. As he was kind enough to mention the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), will he address the precedent mentioned by my hon. Friend, that of Norway in 1972? When it chose not to join the Community, the alterations resulting from that were agreed not by an IGC but by a decision in Council. Is not that a more valid precedent than that of Ireland?

Mr. Garel-Jones: That is quite a good try and I have written to the hon. Gentleman about the matter. It is not a more valid precedent because, in advance of that intergovernmental conference dealing with accessions, arrangements were pre-made to facilitate matters in the event that one of the possibly acceding countries did not accede. It is a complicated legal point, but I believe that I have written to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber about it.

Mr. Mandelson: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Would it be in order to clarify whether the *Hansard* reporters correctly picked up the Minister's observation that an intergovernmental conference could be held within 30 seconds to enable our accession to the social chapter?

The Chairman: The *Hansard* reporters will record what they hear. It is for the hon. Member who has made the speech to check its delivery.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am happy to confirm that, but that is not the burden of my argument. Even if I go halfway down the road with the Opposition and say that everyone will accept the social chapter and will agree and be helpful —all that is possible—hon. Members should consider the other consequences flowing from that.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. I wish to make a little more progress.

We have heard some excellent contributions to the debate. He is not here now, but the Committee was not

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surprised to hear a distinguished and original contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden). My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) also made an excellent speech. However, those of us who heard my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) will agree that his carefully argued speech encapsulated many of the arguments touched on by a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends, and their anxieties. I shall try to deal with his speech in some detail and with the care that it deserves. For those who were not present, I will try to sum up my hon. Friend's argument fairly.

Like all my right hon. and hon. Friends, my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford abhors the thrust of the agreement on social policy by the 11 member states. He believes also—and I agree—that if that agreement produced the sort of actions that are presaged within it, that would bring about a huge competitive advantage for Britain. My hon. Friend goes on to argue that if that competitive edge became acute, others would seek to undermine it by quoting the treaty objectives set out in article 2 and the new competences set out in article 3—and, in conjunction with article 5, they would seek to draw back that competitive advantage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford fears that, on that basis, cases will come before the European Court of Justice alleging that Britain is enjoying an unfair competitive advantage and that the court would be likely to rule against Britain by importing the provisions of the agreement among the Eleven into the treaty—folding it in, as the hon. Member for Copeland would say, but by a different route. I hope that I have more or less summed up, in the form of a synopsis, my hon. Friend's speech.

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): For the purpose of clarification, I never made the point that such things would come in wholesale. I said that they would come in through specific areas of unfair competition.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that clarification.

It is not unknown for Ministers to dismiss from the Dispatch Box arguments with which they do not agree in a robust and even colourful way, knowing that there will be votes at particular times. As I said, I believe that the matter needs a careful exposition and I shall attempt to give one.

Let us be clear from the start—my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford touched on this—that the argument that the existing social provisions can provide a route to unwanted legislation is one against not the Maastricht treaty but the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act as it exists today.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: If my hon. Friend will allow me to develop this argument, I shall later give way as generously as I can.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford made quite a bit of the changes that have taken place in articles 2 and 3 of the treaty, relating to the Community's objectives. He suggested that those changes in some way alter the present position and would give the European Court of Justice greater leeway in interpreting the bounds of propriety in the use of article 118a for measures not strictly concerned with health and safety. I pause because that is an important point.

The Committee has already debated the point that articles 2 and 3 are not vires-conferring. They are not operational in themselves and contain no powers for the Community institutions to act. Before they can act, one must look to the appropriate and specific treaty provision that gives the power to act.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will give way in a moment. I wish to develop this point.

In this case, article 118a is the article to which we would look. I repeat that article 118a was included in the treaty under the Single European Act. It is even arguable—and lawyers argue this—that article 2 should have been changed at the time to reflect more accurately the objectives of article 118a.

If article 118a does not provide for a specific action that the Community has in mind, it would have to look—right hon. and hon. Members are very familiar with this—to article 235 as the legal basis for such action. My right hon. and hon. Friends will not need reminding that article 235 is a unanimity provision and one that has existed in the treaty of Rome since not the Single European Act but the treaty's inception.

I stress that articles 2 and 3 are not operational.

Sir Teddy Taylor: What happened to article 4?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am coming to the court. A long passage of my speech relates to the court, which I hope my hon. Friend——

Mr. Michael Spicer: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: If I may be allowed to finish this part of my speech, I will give way to my hon. Friends the Members for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Articles 2 and 3 are not—I repeat not—operational. The same is true of article 5. I shall return later to the court case to which my hon. Friend referred under article 5. Article 5 remains as it has been since it was included in the treaty of Rome in 1957. Articles 2 and 3 refer to the Community's objectives. We debated that earlier. They are general articles which inform the specific provisions elsewhere in the treaty. It is those specific provisions that give the power to act to achieve the objective. They are now amended to reflect more accurately the position in the new treaty.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As I understand it, my hon. Friend is making the point that general articles, sets of objectives, general contexts in which treaties and constitutions are formed, are not serious legal territory and, therefore, should not be taken into account. He may return to that point later, but will he at least accept that Roman textual law, with which we are now dealing, is alien to Britain but it has a history of and is specifically involved in taking a view about the context in which the specific text is to be judged? One of the great differences between our form of law and that law—it has proved historically true in the past 10 years—is that the European Court takes into account those generalisations or objectives. One of the problems that British negotiators have had in the past is

appreciating that. One of our mistakes may have been not to have taken that fully into account. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will return to that point.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall indeed return to it. My hon. Friend makes a fair point and I shall return to it when I refer to the European Court because I shall be seeking to demonstrate to the Committee that the relatively minor changes in articles 2 and 3 in most instances begin to address the very point that my hon. Friend is making. We all learn as we go along in the Community and articles 2 and 3 can inform a judgment that the European Court makes. However, it is not vires-conferring and it cannot be the basis on which action is taken, which has to be a specific article in the treaty.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend alleges that most of the troubles, as he repeatedly says, stem from the Single European Act. When we deal with the 48-hour working directive, the Government, rightly, are saying that the vires of that under the Single European Act is not justified. However, we are in the ludicrous, stupid and supine position where, instead of challenging that at the right moment, or sorting it out before the Maastricht treaty was negotiated, which was a complete failure of negotiation, we are waiting until it has all been decided in the rather absurd hope that we might be able to extract something from the Court of Justice later. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will accept the scale on which we let down British industry and explain his role in that.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall try to respond kindly to my hon. Friend. It was he who supported—I welcome his support—the inclusion of article 118a in the treaty under the Single European Act. I shall seek to demonstrate that some of the difficulties that have arisen—the one to which my hon. Friend refers is one—show that our position will be and is being substantially improved, not just by the Maastricht treaty but by the climate that it has created.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have given way to my hon. Friend once. I know that he wishes to move the closure motion and that he did not even wish me to speak. I must make progress.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way on article 5?

4.45 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, I am coming to article 5 as well. I want to make progress.

I wish to say something about the potential abuse of article 118a which lay at the heart of the concern of my hon. Friend. The Committee should remind itself of what the article says. It is by no means as vague and all encompassing as some would have us believe. It is brief. It says:

"Member States shall pay particular attention to encouraging improvements, especially in the working environment, as regards the health and safety of workers, and shall set as their objective the harmonisation of conditions in this area, while maintaining the improvements made."

I do not deny that, as with many other provisions of the treaty, there will always be someone who will try to make a case for interpreting the provisions of a particular article more widely than is immediately apparent from its language. That is why my hon. Friend has a good point. I accept that. However, I invite the Committee to consider what will happen. What is happening now under article 118a?

First, we can and we do vigorously debate any proposal in the Council. We change it. We change its shape. We change the detail and the content. We remove defects. We are securing derogations where we need them and we have been successful in that. Of the 40 measures tabled under the social action programme, 25 have now been agreed. In all cases we have not felt the need to vote against the end result. Many have been adopted by unanimity. Where a qualified majority vote was possible, Britain has never—I repeat never—been outvoted.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I wish that my hon. Friend would calm down for a minute and listen because I am trying, to the best of my ability—my hon. Friend may judge that I have not succeeded—to answer what I thought was a thoughtful speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford.

I simply put it to the Committee that that is hardly a devastating record of Britain being rolled over in any particular area. But if, having fought a proposal through the Council, we were to lose—it has never yet happened in the social field—and it was adopted against the United Kingdom's vote, we could challenge its adoption in the court as being ultra vires under article 118a. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment—this point has already been made—has already referred to that possibility in relation to working time.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Minister clarify, for those of us who are sympathetic to the Community, what happens when a proposal on the social chapter affects 11 of our partners but not us? What is the mechanism for British abstention? Will we not be there or not have a say? We shall be voting on matters that do not have any effect in our own country.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In the event that the 11 partners choose to use the agreement—I have no idea what their intentions will be—and choose to introduce a series of measures, the first thing that will happen is that the United Kingdom's competitive advantage will be increased daily. With regard to the mechanics of the thing—this is not the only area in the Community where this happens—the United Kingdom, if it finds itself in the chair, will move the chair on to the next person in the troika who will assume the presidency. I stand to be corrected by my officials, but I think that I am right in saying that we would not vote on or take part in any of the discussions relating to actions taken by the 11.

I want now to make two points about the European Court of Justice. The last part of the argument made by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford was that the motive will exist, the bridge exists, and the European Court will not be favourable for us.

First, the assumption that underlay my hon. Friend's remarks was that the court will find against us. Secondly, I want to make some general remarks about the European Court of Justice and what I believe should inform the United Kingdom's attitude to it. A substantial part of my hon. Friend's speech was based on the assumption that the

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European Court will find against the United Kingdom and that, in a centralising sense, that will expand the competence of the Community.

I want to test that proposition and illustrate my point with some examples of cases which are more recent than those cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford. The Committee will recall that he cited two specific cases. He very fairly told the Committee their dates. The first, the Defrenne *v.* Sabena case, was in 1976. That is quite a long time ago—nearly 20 years. The second was the Cullet *v.* Centre Leclerc case in 1985. Again that predated the Single European Act. I shall refer to both those cases later.

I understand my hon. Friend's fears, which I know are shared by many of my hon. Friends, and I do not claim for one minute that those fears are groundless. The European Court has, perhaps, traditionally been a centralising institution, expanding the powers and scope of the Community with what I might call purposive interpretations of the treaty. I contend, however, that there have recently been clear signs that the court is sensitive to the change of mood in the Community—even in advance of the ratification of the Maastricht treaty, which itself sends out a clear signal through article 3b; that article concerns subsidiarity, which we shall discuss later.

The court is showing itself to be increasingly sensitive to states' rights, and is giving increasing weight to the national arrangements. It is less inventive in its interpretation of Community law, and is demonstrating a welcome willingness to give greater scope to exceptions and derogations. I will cite three recent examples.

In July 1992, in the national insurance contributions case—a case, the Committee will note, in the field of social policy—the court upheld the maintenance of different state pension ages for men and women in the United Kingdom. In December 1992, in the most recent batch of Sunday trading cases, the court upheld the United Kingdom's Sunday trading legislation; many hon. Members may have regretted that decision, but in acting thus the court recognised the importance of national social, cultural and ethical traditions.

My final example concerns the environment. In the Wallonia waste disposal case, the court upheld a ban on the import of waste by the Belgian region of Wallonia. In so doing, it allowed generous derogations from article 30 of the treaty for waste, rather than adopting its traditionally restrictive approach to exceptions and derogations from the free-movement principles.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I cited the two cases that I cited to illustrate my theory that the real problem will occur where the market is destabilised—the market across Europe that we would destabilise by being more competitive. None of the cases that my right hon. Friend has just cited affect that. They can arguably be said to be isolated within the nation states, whereas my point was that we would now destabilise the whole market place.

Mr. Garel-Jones: That is a fair point, but let me make two observations. First, as I believe that my three examples demonstrate, the European Court of Justice—perhaps like the Supreme Court in the United States—will go through periods when its approach is centralising, and periods when it may be slightly more centrifugal.

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have not finished my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford.

My hon. Friend quoted the Cullet case in connection with article 5. I believe that that case was heard in 1985. Let me make two points. First, as I have said, the principle that it presupposes is the existence of Community law. If such a rule has been adopted, article 5 operates to require member states to support it, rather than undermining it. Britain is in favour of that. Secondly, in the Cullet case, the court went on to find that the national rules in question did not prevent the operation of competition rules, and did not contravene article 5. I shall deal with that in more detail later.

Sir Teddy Taylor: In his enthusiasm and optimism, the Minister is in danger of misleading the Committee by giving the impression that the European Court has been moving towards a more national approach. I could cite half a dozen cases, but I shall confine myself to a recent one. In 1992, the court said that a directive had

"the object of guaranteeing the rights of employees",

and that it applied

"to all employees, even if it is limited under national law."

Is it not dangerous for the Minister, by citing three cases, to give the impression that the court is moving in a certain direction when a multitude of cases might show the opposite?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am not seeking to make a sweeping, general point. I am merely saying that—especially in the light of recent European Court judgments—it is not fair to assume that the court will necessarily and at all times make centralising judgments. I do not know exactly what the case cited by my hon. Friend involved; perhaps it involved health and safety. I very much hope that, if the British Government have agreed to a directive to protect the health and safety of workers, it will be upheld both by our own courts and by the European Court.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I wish to make a little more progress. I shall give way to my hon. Friend later.

I put it no higher than this: I do not think that it can any longer be assumed that the court will automatically adopt a centralising or harmonising approach, even in the social field. I see clear signs of a change of emphasis, and I believe that that trend will be reinforced by the Maastricht treaty. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is wrong to assume that the court will adopt a negative approach to the arrangements in the social protocol, which were agreed by all 12 member states.

Mr. Dalyell: Is it not a question of the sensitivities of members of the court? I draw the Minister's attention to the dilemma of Judge David Edward, a distinguished QC and member of the European Court of Justice, known to many of us in Edinburgh for a number of years. He expresses extreme sensitivity about having to take part in judgments in the social field. He says, "When my country is excluded from the social chapter, how can I, with full authority, take part in judgments that relate to others, and not to the country that sent me to the court?"

Mr. Garel-Jones: That is a matter for the learned judge himself.

My second point is about the court in general, and about Britain's general attitude to it. I believe that it is wrong to suggest that the court is Britain's enemy; we need it, and we should not fear it. That is, perhaps, more true of Britain than of any other member state. The Community is a community of law, and we look to the European Court to enforce, and make a reality of, the single market for which we in Britain have fought so hard. We look to the court to check breaches of the rules by economic operators and member states. That is why we —the British Government—pressed so strongly in the Maastricht negotiations to extend the court's power to fine those who fail to comply with the law.

Britain plays by the rules in the Community, as all hon. Members expect it to. We have rarely been called before the European Court. In the past five years, Britain has appeared before it only nine times, compared with Germany's 34, Belgium's 47 and Italy's 87. Of course there will be judgments that we do not like—that is true of all courts—but it is overwhelmingly in Britain's interest for us to have a judicially enforceable level playing field.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford cited the Defrenne equal pay case involving article 119. That case simply states that a member state that breaches a rule of the Community, or a lawfully adopted directive, should be liable to court action. We strongly support that principle. It goes without saying, however—this goes back to the 48-hour week—that if we were to believe that any directive had been unlawfully adopted or that it had been adopted on a false treaty base, we should not hesitate, in a proper case, to test that proposition.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

5 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I should like to make a little more progress, so I will not give way. The next person to whom I shall give way will be my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord).

It is against that background that I hope that my hon. Friend will look at the words in the protocol, which could not be clearer. The protocol says:

"Acts adopted by the Council and any financial consequences other than administrative costs entailed for the institutions shall not be applicable to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland."

That protocol is annexed to the treaty of Rome. It is an integral part of the treaty. It was unanimously agreed by the 12 member states. The protocol has equal status with the treaty. For the reasons that I have given, I am confident that the European Court of Justice will give it effect. The Opposition are clearly confident of that, too. That is why they have moved the amendment and want the protocol to be removed.

I do not deny that some people will seek to challenge that, as our competitive advantage becomes more apparent. I do not underestimate for one minute the ingenuity of lawyers or, more importantly, the persistence of economic operators who believe themselves to be disadvantaged by this competitive advantage. I do not dispute that. There will be tests. But the protocol is clear. From what I have said about the European Court of Justice, it must be clear that my judgment is that we can look to it with confidence to enforce that protocol.

Mr. Lord: One of the big advantages of this Committee stage is that we are slowly teasing out some of the truths that some of us have suspected for a very long time, particularly the powers of the European Court as they have influenced this country in the past and as they may influence this country in the future. My right hon. Friend now admits that in the past the European Court has interfered where it should not have done and that, in his own words, it has been too centralised. Some of us have been saying that for a long time, but it is nice to have it admitted now. My right hon. Friend says that he detects a change in the attitude of the European Court. Therefore, we are supposed to pin our faith on this supposed change of attitude.

My right hon. Friend has also admitted in the debate today that if the Council of Ministers cannot get its way on a particular issue, it may go to the European Court and that at some time in the future the European Court may find against us. My right hon. Friend says that, so far, it has not done so, but that it may do so. In those circumstances, this country may have to put up with a rule or regulation which is very detrimental to our nation. That is what most of us are extremely worried about. My right hon. Friend asks us to pin our faith on this change of attitude that he detects in the European Court. Does he not see just how concerned many of us are, and why we are so concerned?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hope that I have made it clear to my hon. Friend, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford, that I understand these fears, but I do not think that I am being unfair in asking my hon. Friend to recall the fact that it was our party, under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), that led this country into the Community.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It was a grave mistake.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend acted in a perfectly honourable way at that time and he has continued to take that position. I respect him for it.

It should come as no surprise to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford, however, that in those areas where the member states, including ourselves, have given competence to the Community and to the European Court, the writ of the European Court runs. The European Community is a developing organisation. Under the terms of article 118a, attempts have been made to expand the treaty. Through the courts and by introducing article 3b, we must seek to influence the way in which the Community works, not to despair about it. Above all, we must remember that a great deal of this impetus comes from the fact that the European Court is the instrument to which we look to protect the single market that we have fought so hard to achieve.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I must make a little more progress. I do not know how long I have been on my feet, Mr. Morris —too long, I imagine, by now.

Article 118a of the treaty is unamended from the Single European Act. That is an important point. Secondly, article 5 of the treaty is unamended from the treaty of Rome. Thirdly, articles 2 and 3, though amended, are not vires-conferring, nor operational. Fourthly, the European Court is not the enemy of the United Kingdom, but the instrument for enforcing the level playing field in the single market that we fought so hard to achieve. Finally, the

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

European Court of Justice has in the past been a centralising institution and perhaps prone to purposive interpretations, but there is growing evidence—some of which I have put before the Committee today—that we are now in a new climate and that that tendency is being arrested.

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, I shall not give way to my hon. Friend. I am referring to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford. When I have finished this part of my speech, I shall give way.

The protocol is specific in excluding Britain. In my judgment, there is every reason to expect and believe that the European Court will uphold that exclusion. I understand the fears expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford. I hope that I have made that clear to the Committee. I do not dismiss them out of hand. The track record upon which my hon. Friend bases his fears is there. In this, as in so many other areas, however, the Maastricht treaty is an improvement on the position which pertained under the Single European Act. That is my judgment. That is the judgment that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Government made. I hope that my hon. Friend, to whom I shall give way now, will consider that we had good grounds for making that judgment.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: My whole argument was founded on the fact that we, and we alone, were absent from the protocol and the social chapter. What was clear, therefore, from the word go was the intention of the 11 other member states to go down this route. For the first time in the Maastricht treaty, in articles 2 and 3 we allowed clear indications of social policy to emerge as a steering route for the whole Community, yet we had absented ourselves from the social chapter. I was arguing that there was a real line from one place to another which took us, winding all these together, to an obvious point of confrontation with the 11 other member states. It must be logical that they would seek to challenge us.

Articles 169 and 170—dealing, in the treaty of Rome, with the European Court of Justice—clearly give another route, which I assumed that everyone knew, and I am sure that they do, to the European Court of Justice for a challenge. My right hon. Friend said that article 3 was not, therefore, all that powerful. He then cited the subsidiarity clause which, as we know, is in article 3. I shall be grateful, therefore, if my right hon. Friend will answer that point.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will try to pick up some of my hon. Friend's points. There is a strong body of opinion in the Community that article 2 should have been amended at the time of the Single European Act to reflect article 118a. In a sense, what the amendments to article 2 of the treaty are doing is reflecting the inclusion of the social chapter under the Single European Act. The essential point about that article is that it is not vires-conferring and that it is not operational. It can, of course, be prayed in aid to inform a judgment that action needs to be taken under the treaty. That is the distinction.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Can my hon. Friend confirm that there is nothing irreversible about the ways in which these standards rise and fall? I met a delegation the other day from the Christian Social Union in Germany. The members of that delegation were exceedingly anxious about the capacity of Germany to be able to continue to maintain the standards that they had forced upon themselves over the years. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that were a number of the 11 members states to discover that they could not maintain the conditions that at present they have agreed to force upon their workers, it would be possible for them to negotiate a change in the standards to which they had previously agreed?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sure that that is the case, but it remains to be seen what action, if any, our 11 partners decide to take under the agreement.

My final point is directed particularly at my right hon. and hon. Friends. There is another debate which lies underneath this perhaps rather technical debate on the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and amendment No. 27. That debate is about what has motivated Conservative Members in the battle of ideas in the past two decades. It goes to the core of what our party has been about in Government for the past 14 years; it goes to the core of the ideas that have brought about a better balance in the activities of the trade union movement and have, properly, moved Britain back on to the road of economic liberalism and away from the corporatism under which we were suffering.

We have fought that battle and won. Before I came to the House, I remember my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and Lord Joseph stomping up and down the country preaching the virtues of economic liberalism in polytechnics and universities. They were reviled and spat upon, no doubt sometimes—*[Interruption.]* Yes, reviled and spat on, no doubt sometimes by friends and supporters of the Labour party. In the end, the ideas that they were propounding emerged triumphant. I urge all my hon. Friends to consider the fact that the amendment seeks to put Britain back into the corporatist world from which we have now made our escape.

We have come a long way together in fighting that battle of ideas. We have stood shoulder to shoulder on the issues—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes, we have, and my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton has been with us.

The Chairman: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

Mr. Garel-Jones: I accept that reprimand from the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris). My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North was with us. It may come as a surprise to the Opposition that we stood shoulder to shoulder because we believed in our ideas. They are put at stake in amendment No. 27, but I am confident that when the Question is put, we shall again stand together and throw the wretched amendment back in the face of the Opposition.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I am glad to have the opportunity to say a few words at this point in the debate and to react to what the Minister has said and to the contributions made last week.

We have expressed strong and impressive support for the social chapter; we have outlined its importance for British citizens and shown the need for us to vote together on amendment No. 27. In addition to welcoming what my hon. Friends have had to say, I also welcome what

members of the Liberal party have said because it seems that we are all delivering the same message and have had similar assurances from other countries and our contacts within the European Commission that what we are seeking to do is feasible and desirable. I hope, therefore, that when we vote, we shall achieve victory.

The debate has been significant because, for the first time, many Conservative Members have disagreed with the view that they previously expressed about the Prime Minister's so-called triumph in negotiating the Maastricht agreement and the two opt-outs which were to apply to Britain. In this instance, we have been discussing the social opt-out. In the past year or so, especially during Prime Minister's Question Time, Conservative Members have repeatedly crowed about the triumph of the social chapter opt-out. However, in this debate we have heard Conservative Member after Conservative Member say that it was not a triumph, that it has all been an illusion and that, if we are not careful, we shall have the unpleasant social measures imposed on us in any case. That is a significant development, which will mean that the debate will be remembered for some time to come.

5.15 pm

Mr. Marlow: I do not think that the hon. Lady is quite right. It was a triumph by the Prime Minister. We might have some of the disastrous measures imposed on us by other means, but if we agreed to the social chapter, we would have them imposed on us.

Ms. Quin: Anyone who listened to the debate last week will certainly have got the impression that many Conservative Members were not at all happy about the deal obtained at Maastricht. Indeed, I can see quite a few nodding now. The argument was put most forcefully by the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), but it was echoed by the hon. Members for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) and others, who all appeared to believe that the social opt-out was not the triumph it was originally portrayed as being.

Of course, some Conservative Members——

Sir Teddy Taylor: In order to reassure the House and the country, will the hon. Lady make it abundantly clear that the measures in the social chapter cannot be used in any way to affect matters relating to

"pay, the right of association, the right to strike or the right to impose lock-outs."?

Will she therefore urge all hon. Members not to excite the public, because the social chapter cannot be used to affect pay, strikes or the right to union membership? Is it not a limited matter, which is already covered by the Single European Act and article 100 of the treaty? Is it not merely a non-event?

Ms. Quin: I do not agree that it is a non-event, but the hon. Gentleman is right about the items excluded from the social chapter. It is not a non-event because, by their refusal to implement the social chapter and their desire to be excluded from it, the Government sent a strong signal to people at home that they are not interested in working conditions and employment rights. They also sent that message to our European partners. It is a negative message which the Government will come to regret.

Some Conservative Members—although not as many as I am sure he would have liked—supported the Minister's view and the official party line. Although one would have to study coded sentences to realise it, I think that some Conservative Members secretly agree with us about the social chapter. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) is on record as believing that Britain should be a part of social Europe, and I have a feeling that other Conservative Members agree—perhaps they are consoling themselves with the argument of some Euro-sceptics that the social chapter will be imposed on us anyway.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): The hon. Lady has a strong and well established record of supporting European causes, and I am sure that she would not push the amendment if it were to disrupt the treaty of Maastricht. She and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) explained that they have had assurances from the German Government and the European Commission that the amendment to allow us to join the social chapter could be incorporated rapidly, but can she explain how she would get around the legal problem that that would pose? Either all countries must go through the ratification process or there would be a danger of a British employer being able to go to the Court of Justice and having the agreement scrapped. How would she get around the legal problem?

Ms. Quin: I do not think that the legal problems would be nearly as great as the hon. Gentleman seems to suggest. *[Interruption.]* Some of my hon. Friends are reminding me about 30-second intergovernmental conferences, and the interesting Norwegian example from 1972 has also been mentioned. If our amendment is accepted, we may save ourselves many future legal battles. Many Conservative Members are worried that, because of our so-called competitive edge, other European countries will embark on lengthy court proceedings against us. It would be simpler to accept the amendment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) spoke tellingly of the Government's isolation in Europe. He said that all the other 11 countries are against our position, and that all the other political parties in the European Parliament, apart from those of the extreme right, reject the Government's view on the social chapter.

Denmark is often looked upon as the odd one out in Europe, but it strongly supports the social chapter. I am sure that my hon. Friends would like me to say how delighted we are at the appointment of Mr. Rasmussen, who belongs to our sister party in Denmark, as Danish Prime Minister. Even the former Danish Government and Prime Minister strongly supported adherence to the social chapter.

I was interested in a letter about the social policy priorities for the Danish presidency, sent by the former Danish Government to members of the European Parliament Committee on social affairs:

"The main task of the Danish Presidency will be to find ways and means to tackle the problem of unemployment by giving the Community a more active role. Efforts to improve employment in the EC by—giving the Council (Ministers of Labour) a more active role in the negotiations of a long-term employment policy—giving the social partners a role in this important task."

The letter continues also saying that the Danish presidency will attach particular importance to the attempt to

"expand and further develop existing social dialogue, so that the social partners at Community and national level are given

[Ms. Quin]

increased possibilities to take an active part in the development of future labour market policy of the Community."

That interesting letter should give heart to the many people in Britain who wish the social chapter success, and want us to be part of it.

There were some interesting and unusual contributions to last week's debate by Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) seemed to think that the whole social chapter was the fault of "socialist Frenchmen". Sadly—from my point of view—he wildly overestimated the importance of socialist Frenchmen, and wildly underestimated the adherence to the social chapter of all the nations and parties in the European Community, apart from the British Conservatives.

The Conservatives' Christian Democratic partners in the European Parliament were mentioned last week. I was interested to read an article by Martin Rhodes of the department of government at the university of Manchester, which said:

"At the end of the 1986 British Presidency, employment minister"—

the writer gives the name of the Minister responsible at that time—

"was severely rebuked by the spokeswoman for the Christian Democrats in the European Parliament: 'we would prefer it if the UK co-operated closely in current Community programmes and stopped blocking social directives. My feeling is that you do not have much to teach us in the social field. But you do have a great deal to learn'".

That description of the attitude of the Christian Democrats in the European Parliament still holds true today.

It was good to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) say that Conservative Members of the European Parliament do not follow the same line as Conservative Members of the House. Indeed, since our debate last Wednesday, I have read a speech by a Conservative Member of the European Parliament who supported the directive on working time which has attracted much criticism from Conservative Members here during the debate.

The Government not only fail the test on the EC social chapter; they fail to live up to the Council of Europe social charter, which was adopted many years ago. To our shame, more workers in Britain than in any other EC country have wages below the Council of European decency threshold. That is a disgrace.

Subsidiarity has been mentioned in the debate—again, in a way reminiscent of clutching at straws. I had been puzzled by the Tory Government's interpretation of subsidiarity, but during the debate it became clear that the word refers to any European directive that the Government do not like. Apparently, anything that they like can be decided at European level, but anything that they do not like must be decided here at home.

What has been said about subsidiarity certainly contradicts the outcome of the Edinburgh summit. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland explained, it was stated in Edinburgh that the Community countries do not wish to re-examine the various social directives at this stage; they want to build on them in the future. They are considering such matters not under the heading of "subsidiarity" but in the belief that the social dimension is an integral part of the treaty.

The reason why other countries see the matter in that way was reinforced last week by the reasoning of some Conservative Members, who said that the social provisions were already in the treaty of Rome, so it was misleading for the Government to separate the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty and maintain that it was entirely different from anything else that we have encountered before in the EC.

Some of my hon. Friends have pointed out that there are many reasons why the Government should change their mind about the social chapter. Many companies in Britain will eventually change their minds on it, too. Surely it is absurdly inconsistent for us to argue for a level playing field in all other areas of the single European market yet seek to exclude from that internal market working conditions and freedom of movement for workers.

Many Conservative Members honestly believe that inward investment may be jeopardised if we accept the social chapter. I refer them to the findings of the recent Ernst and Young survey of companies, which showed that many companies felt that inward investors would look more worriedly upon the United Kingdom in future simply because we had opted out of certain key areas of European policy. We seemed semi-detached from the European market, so we might not be such a good base from which to conduct companies' European operations.

I should like to say a great deal more, but I know that time is short and many of my hon. Friends wish to speak, so I shall finish soon. I should have been greatly surprised if the Minister had announced a change of heart on the issue, especially in a week in which the Government are due to press again their outrageous policy of abolishing wages councils, in the Committee stage of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill tomorrow.

The Government's attitude to the matter shows indifference to the great problems of low wages, poverty and deprivation, and dependence on inadequate benefits, which are all too prevalent in Britain today. The Government are wrong; their attitude means that workers earn such low wages that they have to depend on state benefits to survive. In effect, the Government are giving massive subsidies to employers that pay very low wages. I appeal to the Government to look sympathetically on the approach to social matters of every other country in the EC. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Government will repent and end their foolish and damaging isolation on this important matter.

5.30 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who has just left the Chamber, entertained us with a courteous, lengthy and most constructive analysis of the Government's defence of their position on the social chapter in the light of the compelling analysis made last week by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith). I shall return to that in a moment.

I thought that my right hon. Friend's peroration did not entirely match the weightiness of the main text. It clearly showed that, in his retirement, he will become a pamphleteer for the Institute of Economic Affairs. I say that with some regret, because I do not believe that the issues under debate are essentially ideological in content.

Of course there are different attitudes about the collective nature of social provision and about how best it can be put into effect. If one is thinking in terms of continental countries, one may have to draw on Bismarck or on the papal encyclicals to understand a tradition that is significantly different from our own. However, I do not believe that the argument is enhanced by suggestions that there is a sweatshop zone in Europe which is occupied by some of the major European countries. That is not true.

We should be better advised to consider what has been proposed using the lack of inhibition that we apply to our own domestic legislation. What we see before us may not add up in competence and in general direction, but we must remember that it has always been a tradition of the Committee stage—I say this with great courtesy, as I do not wish to undermine the principle of Second Reading—to return the matter for further consideration. That is what the Opposition seek through amendment No. 7, and more especially through amendment No. 27.

My remarks will be directed entirely to amendment No. 27. The first point that we must establish is how significant the issue is and how big the battle is. What is the nature of potential victory or defeat? As the arguments have proceeded—here we owe a great debt to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford—the significance of the protocol is beginning to be reassessed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford pointed out in a compelling speech last week how much could be achieved otherwise through European legislation. The challenges that would secure that state would be mounted by essentially corporate interests that were threatened by an alleged British competitive advantage. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) talked about individuals going to the court to challenge the protocol.

I listened with great care to the erudition of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, although I, as a humble street politician, could follow his argument but indifferently. It was towards the end that the message became clearer and clearer. It was that our safety valve lay in the growing flexibility of the European Court. In our own domestic legislation, it would fill us with horror to think that the changing sentiments and instincts of the court were our safeguard. Normally in such matters, it is the resolute certainties of the judicial system which are our guarantee.

I understand the point made persuasively by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State in a week in which we have heard that the European Commission will look favourably—I am sure that the press reports are accurate—on a subsidy for coal. I remember that, when I was a humble apprentice Euro-sceptic, we used to be given little lectures by our elders and betters, who said that the great thing about the Commission, about the European Community and about its commitment to liberal economics was that the bad habits of national subsidy could not be practised. Everything moves on, and my right hon. Friend is right to remind us that the European Court also moves on.

I ask Opposition Members and my right hon. and hon. Friends whether this is a position of which we approve. When we view the evolution of the structures for Europe, do we want to place more emphasis on a structure in which the result lies ultimately with the determinations of the European Court, which is acquiring these more flexible characteristics?

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Biffen: I will not. I hope that the hon Gentleman will forgive me.

I reflect on that point because we must first determine whether we want a social dimension to European affairs. I am perfectly happy to conceive of a European Community whose ambit includes social affairs, but I believe that the method now being proposed is questionable, because it looks backwards. It looks backwards to the role of the Commission, to the role of the European Court and to the integrated structures which derive from the original treaty of Rome, and which are reinforced by the Single European Act 1986.

Maastricht is intended to be a pause and a means by which to redirect our affairs to deal with a position that will be overwhelmingly influenced by the collapse of Soviet power and by the enlargement of the Community to include not only the first line of enlargement countries, such as Sweden and Austria, but the countries of eastern Europe and, as the Prime Minister said, eventually Russia itself.

I should like the whole social dimension of European policy to be placed outside the rigidity that is now proposed, protocol or no protocol. I should far sooner that we adopted the device that was made available to the Danes at Edinburgh, although I do not suggest that particular device to the Committee. I suggest that, if we are serious and constructive in our approach to the problem—it is a problem because of the deficiencies in the protocol which have been identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford—we should start to consider the intergovernmental co-operative techniques that are embodied in the treaty, especially in titles V and VI, and we should see through the intergovernmental process the opportunity for social affairs to be considered.

What would be the advantage of that approach? First, we should have European co-operation without European uniformity. Matters would be left essentially to national Governments and national Parliaments, and there is no harm in including our Parliament in that. Secondly, the roles of the Commission and the European Court would be marginalised. That would be an immense advantage in matters of substance, such as the one under debate, in which European co-operation must turn on the ability of national institutions to strike up partnerships.

Such a structure is very much better for the prospective enlargement of Europe, because many countries, especially in eastern and central Europe, will come with traditions in the social sphere which are very different from ours. They still have to be accommodated within the wider and looser Europe that the future beckons. We should not now be afraid of trying to establish a pattern that looks to the future rather than to the past.

What role is there for the House? Let us suppose that we passed amendment No. 27. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has said very properly that it would make for great difficulties over ratification. I have said that my right hon. Friend could be sent to the conference chamber with a reasonable negotiating brief, which I have outlined. I believe that such a position would point to a far happier European Community than that contained in the present proposals.

The House must take its own chances and make its own decisions. My right hon. Friend has some time before the vote on amendment No. 27. The amendment raises real

[Mr. Biffen]

issues about the kind of European Community that we want to see proceed and, above all, about the kind of Europe in which, in political and commercial terms, the European Court would have an influence that we should like to avoid.

Mr. Leighton: It is a great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). On 24 July 1991, the Select Committee on Employment produced a unanimous report on the European Community social charter and I should like to make a brief reference to that.

I shall preface my remarks by saying that I support the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and I will vote enthusiastically for his amendment. Having said that, I think that one should add a word of caution. We should have a care, we should be realistic and we should not exaggerate what is in, and what will come out of, the social chapter.

There have been some illusions. For example, I have heard colleagues speak of harmonising conditions at the highest level, having a minimum wage Eurowide and having the right to join a trade union, for example, at GCHQ. None of those things is true. The Trades Union Congress embraced the social chapter enthusiastically, perhaps because it had had a decade of exclusion from the consultative process of British politics.

It is not surprising that the trade unions were enthusiastic when Jacques Delors hot-footed it from Brussels looking something like a saviour and promised them the renewal, by means of the social chapter, of all that had been denied during the Thatcher years. They were won over by the goodies that were dangled in front of them. They were promised that the 1992 process would give equal emphasis to the social dimension as well as the economic dimension. Both those dimensions were to come in tandem, in a balanced way and according to the same timetable.

The Select Committee visited Germany, Portugal, France, Spain and Greece. In each country we spoke to the trade unions, employers and the Minister of Labour. After meeting the employers and the Minister of Labour, the idea that they were falling over themselves to give extra rights to workers was not realistic.

The Select Committee report says that both dimensions were to proceed on the same timetable, so the social dimension should now exist. The economic dimension, the single market, has been completed. We must now ask ourselves: where is the social dimension? The trade unions were led to believe that it would not be simply a business man's Europe with fierce competition, restructuring of industry, mergers, closures, redundancies and winners and losers. Many of the losers will be in the United Kingdom because of the weak state of our economy. The trade unions were led to to believe that there would be a people's Europe that benefited workers, the elderly, children, the weak and the unions. The unions were to become valuable social partners, which was an attractive idea for them. They were to have obtained all sorts of advantages. As 1992 has been and gone and the social dimension should have been achieved and put in place, we must ask: where is the social dimension?

While the business man's Europe has raced ahead and the single market is in place, there has been little progress on the social dimension. Perhaps that is because the single market had a treaty, the Single European Act, which put it in place, whereas the social dimension merely had a social chapter that has no legal basis. I always value the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) on such matters and I am pleased that he is paying attention to what I am saying. I shall listen avidly to what he has to say.

5.45 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I always listen to my hon. Friend's speeches with great interest because of his reputation on such matters. He asked: where is the social dimension? If we were to get the amendment through tonight, would not we be able to get much of the legislation which many Labour Members want to see because we could invoke majority voting as opposed to unanimity? An example would be the protection of pregnant women at work. Legislation enabling women to receive full wages during the period of pregnancy has been blocked by Her Majesty's Government using the unanimity rule. That rule would disappear. Is not that an important part of the social dimension?

Mr. Leighton: As is usually the case, my hon. Friend has put his finger on an important point that we must examine. The Select Committee reported on the matter.

I shall deal with some of the matters which my hon. Friend raised because the social charter is replete with vague and grandiloquent statements and high-flying aspirations. The social charter was merely a solemn declaration; it had no legal effect. The Select Committee examined that matter. I should explain that social charters are not new. There have been many social charters. The social charter in the treaty is based on the social charter of the Council of Europe. It is similar. The Council of Europe has existed for a long time, as has its social charter. Where is its social charter? It is not there.

If the member states which had signed the voluntary social charter wanted to implement it, they could do so. There is nothing to stop them implementing it. However, the political will is not there to implement the Council of Europe's social charter. I fear that it is the same position with the European Community's social charter.

I shall turn directly to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland. I draw his attention to the fact that the social charter went through a number of drafts during which it was very much watered down; it was emasculated. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) will agree with me on that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland listed the headings. The first is "Fair and decent wages". Originally, fair and decent wages were to be implemented "by law". In the next draft, those words were struck out and in their stead were the words,

"in accordance with arrangements in each member state".

In other words, no legislation would be needed. The status quo would be maintained and there would be no change. That is the end of the naive idea that there would somehow be a Eurowide minimum wage.

The second heading is, "Improved living and working conditions". The reference to "maximum duration of hours" was deleted, as was the reference to

"weekend working, night shifts and shift work".

Instead, the formula,

"according to arrangements in each member state"

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was inserted. What does that give us? It maintains the status quo.

The next heading to which my hon. Friend referred is "Social security". The original draft contained the words: "minimum income for those excluded from the labour market".

Those words came out and in went

"resources in keeping with their particular situation",

and again, the magic words

"according to arrangements applying in each country."

So what will that give us? What change has been made?

Then we come to an important section of the social chapter entitled "Freedom of association and collective bargaining". It refers to the right to join or not to join a trade union. The Labour party accepted that and that was the end of any Labour party support for the closed shop. We never advocated the closed shop. In the past we said that if employers and workers wanted a closed shop, it was not for Parliament to interfere. But now we are positively against the closed shop.

The words

"freedom to negotiate and conclude collective bargains",

came out of the original document and in went the words

"under conditions laid down by national legislation and practice."

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Leighton: I hope that I have not upset my hon. Friend on the Front Bench. I am happy to give way to him.

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend never upsets me. However, to point out the deficiencies in the social charter and give its history does not undermine the argument that there is and should be a strong social dimension to the European Community. The social action programme was the fulfilment of the social charter in legislative form. Of the 38 measures in the social action programme, 21 have been implemented. Several of them have produced considerable benefits for British workers which they would not have enjoyed under domestic British law. I direct my hon. Friend's attention to just one such measure—the transfer of undertakings provision. It is causing much trouble to Conservative Members. It has been welcomed with open arms by trade unions involved in the wholesale privatisation process. It was achieved through European law. We could not have achieved it in Britain under a Tory Government.

Mr. Leighton: I am grateful for that helpful intervention. I emphasise to my hon. Friend that I intend to vote enthusiastically for his amendment. The transfer of undertakings issue goes back decades. There is nothing new about it. It is a matter of interpretation. It comes under not the social charter, but a previous measure. My hon. Friend agrees that such measures do not come under the social chapter. They are reinterpretations of legislation adopted a long time ago. I am glad to have my hon. Friend on my side because I intend to vote for his amendment.

It would be an outrage for the Labour party to vote for the Third Reading of the Bill without the social dimension and social chapter. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton that it is an important item, but I simply point out that we should exercise care and caution and be realistic and accurate. I shall come on to the social action programme.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman make it clear to his hon. Friends on the Front Bench that the transfer of undertaking provisions, which were dealt with yesterday in Standing Committee under clause 26 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, were not a reconsideration by the Government? Infraction proceedings were taken against the Government by the EC Commission. It was not a voluntary change of mind, but something which we were forced to do and which we did not believe was the legal position back in 1981.

Mr. Leighton: I think that that is right. I do not want to push my luck on this one, Dame Janet. We have said what needs to be said and I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Godman: My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) referred to a strong social dimension. Does my hon. Friend agree that the treaty, with or without a social chapter, fails to do anything for the 55 million citizens of the European Community who live in poverty, 17 million of whom are unemployed? Surely a strong social dimension should have as its major aim the elimination, or at least the diminution, of the poverty suffered by so many fellow European citizens.

Mr. Leighton: I am sure that that is right. I can only say that I have read and studied the social chapter and its adoption would not eliminate poverty. The words,

"minimum income for those excluded from the labour market"

in the section entitled "Social Security" in the original social charter were deleted and in their place were put the words

"resources in keeping with their particular situation."

I do not know whether my hon. Friend knows what that means. I do not know. That provision will not remove poverty. The social chapter has been weakened on that issue.

Dr. Godman: It means that nothing whatever will be done for the millions of people who live in poverty. The Minister has ignored that important issue. All those who are in favour of the treaty as it is drafted choose to ignore the important point that 55 million citizens will not be helped.

Mr. Leighton: That is right. It is now my pleasure to give way to my geographical neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Mr. Nick Raynsford.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): It is Mike Gapes, Dame Janet. It was a good try. It is the first time I have heard it suggested that south of the river and north of the river were geographically next to each other.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the European Trade Union Confederation, the British Trades Union Congress and many other organisations that represent working people and those who were made unemployed by Thatcherite and monetarist policies in recent years are in favour of the social chapter? Is he aware that the European employers' organisation worked out an agreement with ETUC before the Maastricht treaty was adopted and that that wording was incorporated almost entirely into the text of the Maastricht treaty?

[Mr. Mike Gapes]

Does my hon. Friend agree that the concept of social partners, which is so hated by the Conservative party, is the reason why the Government opted out of the social chapter? Others recognise that that model of co-operation is the way forward for Britain and the rest of Europe. Unfortunately, the British Government want to take us back into the past. They stand up against the co-operation that is so common in other European countries.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, may I point out that interventions are becoming longer and longer and it is important that they should be short.

Mr. Leighton: I was about to congratulate my hon. Friend on the brevity, succinctness and wisdom of his intervention. Representatives of ETUC appeared before the Select Committee and gave evidence. It grieves me to say that they were pretty incoherent. I hope that this meeting is in private. I do not want them to know that I said that.

In the five or six European countries that the Select Committee visited we met the representatives of the national trade unions. They expressed great disappointment at the limited amount that they would get out of the social chapter. They were all critical of the slow progress on implementing the social charter. I am happy to be at one with my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South because I am a great supporter of the social chapter. I shall vote for the amendment. I hope that the whole Committee will do so, including many Conservative Members.

Mr. Winnick: Of course, Opposition Members are all in favour of the social chapter. It would be amazing if the position were otherwise. But is not the social chapter undermined by article 104c, which places a limit of 3 per cent. of GDP on the budget deficit that a Government can run? That would entail the application of even more vindictive monetarist policies than those pursued by the Tory Government in the past few years. What is the point of one gain if it is undermined by all the reverses contained in article 104c? I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition has made some critical remarks about that article, albeit at the meeting in Paris.

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend is right. His point demonstrates that the Maastricht treaty is an old-fashioned and outdated document. It was conceived before the Berlin wall came down. It does nothing for eastern Europe. It did not envisage the recession with which we are now dealing. As my hon. Friend rightly says, a deficit of more than 3 per cent. of GDP would be regarded as excessive. Her Majesty's Government are running a deficit of 7 per cent. or more now. If we wanted to move to stage 2 we would have to reduce our deficit to 3 per cent. To do so, we should have to cut public expenditure by £20 billion to £25 billion. If we cut public expenditure by £25 billion, I suspect that it would lead to vastly increased unemployment and I do not think that the trade unions would be in favour of that. My hon. Friend has put his finger on an extremely good point and I am pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition has cottoned on to it in a strong way and has made a speech in Paris, saying that we cannot have this. I think that my right hon. and learned Friend may be leading us into the Lobby on Third Reading to vote against such a mad monetarist idea. I certainly hope so.

I want to get back to the question of freedom of association and collective bargaining which was one of the main features of the social charter. The words

"right to resort to collective action, including the right to strike"

were taken out and in went these words:

"rights . . . subject to obligations . . . under national legislation".

6 pm

So what does that give us? What is new? What is being added for British workers by those words? If we are talking about strikes under national legislation, they mean that there is no right to strike in this country. In most countries, if a strike is lawful the contract of employment is put on ice; in this country the contract of employment is breached and one can be sacked, as was demonstrated at Wapping. There is no right to strike in the social chapter. Perhaps I should also draw attention to the fact that the workers at GCHQ will not have their rights restored. The charter says:

"The internal legal order of member states shall determine under which conditions the extent of rights under Articles 11-13 shall apply to the armed forces, police, and civil service"

That means the status quo at GCHQ, although many people think that under the charter the workers would be given the right to join a union.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) referred to the protection of children and young people. The wording in the original charter was:

"Young people . . . must receive equitable remuneration",

but later the words

"in accordance with national practice"

were added. So what does it mean? Ah, my hon. Friend knows.

Ms. Quin: Does my hon. Friend agree that the reason why so many of these provisions were watered down—something which, like him, I greatly deplore—was the intervention of the United Kingdom Government, not the attitude of the other 11 countries?

Mr. Leighton: I am not certain that my hon. Friend is absolutely right. On my travels round Europe I found that many European employers do not abide by the rules. There are no health and safety executives in the back streets of Naples. There is no health and safety executive anywhere in these countries. Nor is there a commission for racial equality. In the social charter—even the Minister is agreeing with me on this—there is nothing like the British Commission for Racial Equality. There are no paragraphs about racial equality.

Mr. Mandelson: Should we rejoice in the fact that the people of Naples and elsewhere do not have the benefits of a health and safety executive and the advantages of a commission for racial equality? Surely under the principles of socialist solidarity we should want to export these good ideas to the rest of Europe. That is why many of us on the Opposition Benches support the social chapter and the entire treaty.

Mr. Leighton: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. I agree with him 101 per cent. He is someone whom I admire very much and I agree with him completely. All that I am saying is that we must beware, be

cautious, be realistic and avoid exaggeration. We must not give untrue perceptions of what is in the treaty. I am trying to give hon. Members the result of the Select Committee's work. The Committee visited six countries, spending taxpayers' money and making an investigation——

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will my hon. Friend explain to some of our hon. Friends who seem to find it hard to understand that it is difficult to export high standards if they are not written down in the first place?

Mr. Leighton: Yes, that is true. If we want the social dimension, we must work for it and we must vote for the amendment tonight.

After the section on the young, there was a section dealing with the elderly. No words were deleted, but new words were inserted at the beginning:

"According to the arrangements applying in each country"—

Mr. Randall: Before my hon. Friend deals with that, may I ask him about article 104c and deficits? Most hon. Members will be concerned about over-restrictive deficits during a period of recession, but perhaps what one must do in a period of recession, for all sorts of obvious reasons, is borrow and invest in the infrastructure. Is my hon. Friend aware, however, that there may be greater flexibility in the treaty than he implied? I refer him to paragraph 3, which says that the Commission will take into account all relevant factors, and if I may just suggest —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have a sort of sub-plot going on.

Mr. Randall: There is a question, Dame Janet, as to whether the situation is as rigid as my hon. Friend suggested. Paragraph 3 of article 104c says,

"take into account all other relevant factors, including the medium term economic and budgetary position of the Member State."

Surely these words mean that in a period of recession there would be flexibility.

Mr. Leighton: Once again, I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is helping my case. He is referring to a previous intervention and saying that the Commission might be gracious enough to consider——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Take account of.

Mr. Leighton: Oh, "take account of". That is very nice of it. I take the view that the budget deficit should be decided according to the circumstances of the day—which change—by the elected Government of the day. I do not think that any of this nonsense should be enshrined in the treaty. I have heard about the end of history and I do not understand much about it. But this is the end of economics. We cannot discuss economics because it has all been decided: 3 per cent., in the treaty, unless the Commission will take something into account. It is nonsense. These things should be decided by our own democractically elected Parliament and I do not want our people stripped of their powers in favour of the Commission, with an international treaty and a court that will decide what is to be done. Who believes in that nonsense? I hope that we will vote against all this stuff.

I turn now to implementation. Here there were references to "legislative measures", but they were taken out. The Commission was to present an action plan by a certain date, but the date was taken out and the words "as soon as possible" were put in.

That is the charter. What has happened since? Sometimes when I discuss these things with my friends, I ask them if they can think of any directive that has come out of the charter since it was promulgated. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East produced a brilliant briefing for us in which she mentioned three things. One is that there should be a written contract of employment. Most workers will have one, but it is right that they should all have one. Secondly, there was an amendment—not a new directive, but an amendment to the 1985 directive on collective redundancies. Someone should tell the President of the Board of Trade about it. Thirdly, there was something for pregnant workers, but again this shows the way things are going; it was so emasculated, so watered down, that in the end the pregnant workers were given so many weeks off with sick pay, as though pregnancy were a sickness. Incidentally, the Italians—who love children and value women—voted against it because they thought that it was not enough —*[Interruption.]* Have I said the wrong thing?

Apart from directives, regulations and decisions that have a binding effect, my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East will find, from looking through her papers, that there are numerous opinions, communications, recommendations and resolutions. The only trouble with them is that they are all pious and meaningless because they are not binding. They have had little effect and most have disappeared without trace.

No one can say what we have got out of European Community legislation. The Select Committee on Employment asked the Government to describe the state of play and the effect of all the legislation coming out of the charter. They sent us the "Memorandum on European Community Legislation", which I have here. I recommend anyone interested in the subject to get a copy of this document so that he can find out what has happened.

One directive, entitled "Working Time", has been dropped. It seems unlikely that it will ever see the light of day again and if it does it will have been emasculated. There will be so many exceptions that it is likely to be meaningless.

Another directive is entitled "Information and consultation of workers, or European Works Councils". Are not they the Vredeling proposals, which date from more than a decade ago? They have been blocked and nothing has happened. Once again, the Government tell us that there is no progress.

A proposal entitled "Access to Training Decision" was opposed by employers. I think that one of my hon. Friends said that continental employers are all in favour of such training, but employers were starkly against that proposal, as were five member states. What happened? There will be only a recommendation, which has no legally binding effect and everyone will ignore it.

Another proposal was a "Directive on part-time and atypical work". The Government tell us that the state of play on that directive is that it is "dormant". That is a word that we do not often use in the House. I looked it up in the dictionary, which said:

"lying inactive as in sleep—in abeyance".

The Government's definition is that

"no progress has been made on furthering"—

the proposal—

[Mr. Leighton]

"for a considerable length of time."

I support the proposal, but I am afraid that it is dormant.

A proposal on the equal treatment of men and women dealt with the burden of proof in sex discrimination cases. That is known to many hon. Members. The Government tell us that it is dormant and has been for several years, so we do not hold out much hope for that.

Another directive, entitled "Parental leave", would have entitled workers to uniform conditions of parental leave, regardless of sex, in all member states. What has happened to that? It has been "dormant for several years." The Government are telling the Committee, "Forget it, you don't have to worry about that one."

The "labour clause proposal" concerns the introduction of a labour clause into all public contracts. That is what we used to call contract compliance and it is a good idea. What happened to it? The Government memorandum tells us:

"The Commission are now unlikely to produce a separate proposal on this subject."

So I think that we have to forget about that.

The only conclusion that I can draw from all that is that the expectations that marked the 1980s and found expression in the social charter are ebbing away. There is no life in the charter—it is running into the sands. The momentum has disappeared and the chance of most of the important proposals in the charter being implemented is becoming increasingly remote. Was the social charter a phantom? Was it only a slogan? Was it a smokescreen of verbiage to cover the 1992 competitive free-for-all and to keep the unions sweet and on board? Was it meant to drag the wool over their eyes?

I enthusiastically support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland. We should demand a social dimension. Everything should have such a dimension, but it is not in the Bill. The business man's Europe is there, but the workers' Europe—the Europe of the people, the unions, the young and the elderly—is not. That is not what we are being sold. We must fight for the social dimension and the social charter. It would be outrageous if the Labour party voted for a Bill that resulted in the business man's Europe, without thinking of the people who work in it.

6.15 pm

Mr. Marlow: I have tabled two amendments in this group—Nos. 127 and 129—which deal with freedom of movement for workers, as that is obviously an important issue.

Whereas that matter was decided by qualified majority voting, it is to be decided under the procedures of article 189b. I do not want to go on at length about my amendments but article 189b seems very complicated. I should like my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to explain its implications when he replies to the debate—*[Interruption.]* I am not sure what my right hon. Friend the Minister said. Does he want me to give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend moved a closure motion because he clearly thought that the debate should have come to an end last week and he tried to prevent me from intervening altogether.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend made a very good speech today—a speech that I enjoyed. It was informative and held together, although I did not agree with all of it. I am sorry that he has to make that sort of debating point by way of an intervention. He knows as well as I that there are such things as probing amendments—that was a probing closure.

When my right hon. Friend winds up the debate for a second time, can he tell the House the implications if freedom of movement of workers is decided under the procedures set down under article 189b rather than by qualified majority voting? I am sure that the House would be grateful if he could also explain, in words of one syllable and in a short time, how article 189b works, so that when we return to our constituencies we can inform our constituents.

Amendment No. 7, tabled by the Opposition, seeks to remove the social fund from the Bill. As I understand it, the social fund is a slush fund—a means of taking money from taxpayers in my constituency and in this country and giving it to taxpayers in other countries. It is a means whereby the Commission and European institutions can gain clients in other Community countries and thus gain support in those countries. I think that it is on page 31, is it not?

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that it is the inevitable and honest logic of capitalism that if one wants to create a genuine single market one needs a mechanism to redistribute wealth from the more dynamic areas of the market to the poorest areas? Therefore, it follows, absolutely logically, that one needs some form of social chapter and fund and that that should grow inexorably year by year until Europe can replicate the situation in today's nation state, which redistributes about 40 per cent. of gross domestic product via central taxation and benefits. If that is not the logic, I should like to hear someone explain how one would create a genuine common market without redistributing wealth to relax the tensions between rich and poor areas.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman sits on the Opposition side of the House, and I sit on the Government side. We have different philosophies. The hon. Gentleman makes no bones about the fact that he is a socialist and is in favour of redistribution. I do not share his views on redistribution, although we obviously have social obligations that we are very happy to meet. I do not know about the hon. Gentleman, but I want a single market. I want the Germans to be able to sell in our market, and the British to be able to sell in Spain. I want a level playing field in terms of the movement of goods, but each country in the European Community should be entitled to make its own decisions on social policy and, to a certain extent, on commercial policy and taxation, thereby encouraging its own prosperity so that it can deal with its own social problems.

Mr. Livingstone: I think the hon. Gentleman misunderstood me. What I am suggesting is not being put forward as socialism. In fact, the mechanism for the redistribution of wealth began here long before there was a Labour party. Some historians estimate that about 1·5 per cent. of local wealth was redistributed under Queen Boudicca. This is not new; it has grown inevitably, Government by Government, until we are now absorbing about 40 per cent. In a genuinely common market a substantial proportion of wealth will be funnelled in this

way by capitalists, corporations and conservative politicians across Europe. I wish this were socialism so that we could claim it.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman has his view of Europe, and I have mine. The Europe that I want—by being competitive, by having competitive rates of taxation, by including countries which do not embrace the social charter and, therefore, have competitive labour forces—will generate more wealth. Wealth that is generated in individual countries enables those countries better to look after pensioners, hospitals and other social needs that all Members of this House, in their different ways, want to provide for. My view of Europe is different from the hon. Gentleman's.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that the reality lies in the difference between the two approaches? On the one hand, there is the socialist approach, which seeks, through political manoeuvring, to engineer the distribution or redistribution of wealth; on the other hand, there is the true free market capitalist philosophy, which seeks to operate in a naturally competitive environment where trade is drawn to more competitive areas, which distribute their own wealth. The question is whether one sees Europe as a nation with a national obligation to redistribute or as a collection of individual nations with no obligation to redistribute.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend made the definitive speech of this debate, and he has just made a definitive intervention. Indeed, he makes much better than I the point that I am trying to put across—that by competing within Europe we all generate wealth. That is what we must do. If we are forced into the same mould, if we are directed from the centre by the inevitably bureaucratic institutions that Europe has at present, enterprise and therefore the generation of wealth will be discouraged. In those circumstances, we shall not have the resources to do the best for the people for whom we all, including Opposition Members, want the best.

Mr. Lord: Bearing in mind the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), may I put it to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) that, in all of this, the basic conundrum is that we are being urged to co-operate and to compete at the same time. The two are incompatible.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend makes his point very well indeed, and I am grateful to him.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The hon. Gentleman speaks about the distribution of wealth. That is what we all want; yet after 14 years of the magnificent free enterprise Tory Government there are 5,000 homeless people from Scotland sleeping on the streets of London. Does the hon. Gentleman want that situation to continue? The social charter would at least give those folk some hope.

Mr. Marlow: No hon. Member in any part of the Committee will deny that we have social problems, but neither will any hon. Member deny that there were social problems in 1979. However, I put it to the hon. Gentleman that if he looks at the general level of prosperity—if he looks into people's houses, at people's cars, and so on—he will see that it is far higher than it was previously. Let him consider the resources that we in this country are applying to social security, hospitals and education. The amount being spent on these social services is several times greater than it was when there was last a Labour Government. If the hon. Gentleman looks fairly at the situation, he will see that that is the case.

The Opposition's amendment seeks to apply the social fund more widely. The new article 123 says:

> "In order to improve employment opportunities for workers in the internal market and to contribute thereby to raising the standard of living, a European Social Fund is hereby established in accordance with the provisions set out below; it shall aim to render the employment of workers easier and to increase their geographical and occupational mobility within the Community".

That was all there already, but there are added the words:

> "and to facilitate their adaptation to industrial changes and to changes in production systems, in particular through vocational training and retraining."

In particular, yes, but not only. It seems that ever more resources will be applied to this fund and that it will be used to facilitate adaptation to industrial change and to changes in production systems. It seems to me that that means direct investment in other people's industries and factories. How can I go to my constituents and say, "Some of the money that is being taken from you by way of tax is to be sent to Spain, Portugal, Italy or Greece so that people there may improve the productivity of their factories, produce goods more cheaply than you can and, therefore, close your factories and put you out of work"?

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): We are recipients from the fund to a substantial extent.

Mr. Marlow: That may be the case, but the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well why. Under the original provisions of the Community budget and the common agricultural policy, there was such a deficiency of Community resources coming to this country that some funds have been diverted, by device through the social fund, into the United Kingdom. Does the hon. Gentleman really believe that, as things develop, with the stated need for cohesion in the Community, we shall be able to keep that share of the social fund? If he does, he is very much in the minority. As things develop, increasing amounts of that money will be moved from the United Kingdom to other parts of Europe, from my constituents to people in other European countries.

In an intervention today, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that there was overwhelming support in Europe for the social chapter, that all the other 11 countries were in favour of it and wanted us to join. It is easy to understand why they want us to join. Recently I talked to a major business man in Northampton. He had just come back from Germany, where he had talked to business men, including someone running a company with a turnover of £300 million a year. The Northampton man asked the German how he saw himself as he would be in four years' time. The German said, "I think I'll be out of business."

He said that, in addition to the problems caused by eastern Germany, his country suffered because wages were too high and social costs were much greater than in the United Kingdom.

It is because of the high wages and social costs and the burden imposed on other European countries by many aspects of the social chapter that those countries want to place the same obligations on us. They realise that the

[Mr. Marlow]

burdens are increasingly making them less competitive, whereas the United Kingdom is becoming increasingly competitive. How can it be in our interests to have to shoulder those burdens? I am perplexed and puzzled. Why does the Labour party—which every day claims that it is concerned about unemployment, which it describes as the biggest problem confronting this country—want to impose on this country the burdens that other European countries have imposed on themselves and, through the social chapter, want to impose on us?

I must say categorically that I and most of my colleagues deplore and dislike the Maastricht treaty, although we congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on making the best of a difficult job, but the one thing about it that we dislike above all else is the potential damage threatened by the social chapter.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 306, Noes 290.

Division No. 127] **[6.30 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Faulds, Andrew
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain

Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Robert C. Hughes

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Sir George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawksley, Warren
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George

Stott, Roger	Wicks, Malcolm
Strang, Dr. Gavin	Wigley, Dafydd
Straw, Jack	Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Tapsell, Sir Peter	Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*	Wilson, Brian
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*	Winnick, David
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*	Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Tipping, Paddy	Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Vaz, Keith	Wise, Audrey
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*	Worthington, Tony
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*	Wright, Dr Tony
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold	Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Walley, Joan	
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*	**Tellers for the Noes**
Wareing, Robert N	**Mr. Gordon McMaster and**
Watson, Mike	**Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.**

Question accordingly agreed to.
Question put and negatived.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Dame Janet. Is it the custom and practice of the House for the occupant of the Chair always to accept a closure motion put to him or her by the Government Whip? I say that because some Opposition Members were anxious to take part in the debate that was so drastically and disingenuously curtailed by Government Whips.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The decision is left to the discretion of the Chair. If the hon. Gentleman has some grievance against the Chair, there are proper ways to make that known, but now is not the time.

Mr. Fraser: On a point of order, Dame Janet. I do not want to whinge because I have sat here for two days and not been able to say anything about racial discrimination in Europe, but it would be helpful if we had some ground rules about how to catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair. For instance, if an hon. Member has spoken for several hours, will he, like a racehorse, carry a penalty for having spoken for so long at the expense of those who have short but relevant contributions to make? Some hon. Members are called several times, even if they have made a contribution lasting several hours, while others who have conscientiously attended for some time—I am not the only one—have no chance to speak. Is a list of such hon. Members kept in the same way as it is on important Second Reading debates and other similar debates? We are confused as to how to catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair, the weighting, and the degree of fairness as between one potential contributor and another.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Clearly, the Chair has a problem when many Members want to speak. All who occupy the Chair seek to maintain proper balance and fairness over time. If one considers the whole time scale, that balance and fairness becomes more evident than over a comparatively short period.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert
'(except Article 100c on page 17 of Cm 1934)'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to discuss the following: Amendment No. 110, in page 1, line 9, after 'II' insert
'but in respect of paragraph 9 on page 11 of Cm 1934, Her Majesty's Government as part of their formal process of ratification shall state that so far as the definition of the single market is related to an area without internal frontiers (to be enshrined in Article 7a of the amended Treaty establishing the Community) they regard absence of such frontiers only as not impeding the operation of that market and without prejudice to any action related to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security.'.

Amendment No. 133, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article 100c on page 17 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 134, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article 100d on page 17 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 359, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(d) as referred to in Article G on page 9 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 104, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'and IV' and insert 'IV and VI'.

Amendment No. 46, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert
'but not Article 100c in Title II thereof'.

Amendment No. 113, in page 1, line 17, at end add—
'The above subsections shall only come into force subsequent to the laying before Parliament by Her Majesty's Government of a Command Paper concerning the implications and operation of the provisions contained in new Article 100c of the Treaty on European Union (Control of third country visas by the European Council of Ministers and related powers of Member states) and to approval of its terms by Resolution of both Houses of Parliament.'.

New clause 12—*Application of Article 100c of the Treaty of Rome to certain provisions on co-operation in the fields of justice and home affairs*—
'No notification shall be given to the Council of the European Communities that the United Kingdom has adopted a decision of the Council under Article K 9. (Application of Article 100c of the Treaty on European Union) of the Treaty on European Union unless a draft of the notification has first been approved by Act of Parliament.'.

New clause 13—*Adoption of conventions in the fields of justice and of home affairs*—
'No convention drawn up by the Council of the European Communities under Article K.3.2.(c) of the Treaty of European Union shall be adopted by the United Kingdom unless a draft of the proposed instrument of adoption has first been approved by Act of Parliament.'.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Dame Janet. I believe that this is the appropriate moment to draw your attention to amendment No. 110 and to new clauses 11 and 12, which are included in this group——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. There is too much noise and I cannot hear the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Shore: The amendments to which I refer are of a different sort from those grouped with amendment No. 8. I ask for your indulgence, Dame Janet, so that it may be possible at the end of this debate, or as you think appropriate, to have a separate Division on amendment No. 110, which deals with the right of movement under the citizenship clause, and on the two new clauses at the end —which insist on an Act of Parliament before any part of that which is looked upon as the second pillar of the treaty is brought within the trunk.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The occupant of the Chair always takes note of requests for Divisions. However, the Division that the right hon. Gentleman seeks would take place not at the end of this debate, but when the appropriate point on the selection list is reached.

Mr. Blair: Amendment No. 8 is designed to secure a debate on extremely important issues relating to justice, home affairs and immigration. Although we will not press it to a Division, those issues are critical to this debate.

I want to make clear the basis of the proposals in the Maastricht treaty, ask the Government for their views and

intentions in relation to those detailed and complex proposals and raise specific questions in respect of asylum policy and co-operation over policing.

Article 100c and article K leave no doubt that co-operation across areas of immigration, asylum, policing, justice and home affairs is envisaged. Any suggestion that the treaty ignores or rejects such co-operation is patently absurd. The procedures for determining the limits and nature of that co-operation reflect the sensitivity of certain issues covered by both articles.

Apart from visa policy, there is little chance of Britain being forced against its will or being obliged to co-operate in those areas. Equally, such co-operation is plainly contemplated and encouraged by the way in which the articles are drafted.

Article 100c concerns a common policy on certain visa matters. It provides for a common policy on third countries whose nationals will require a visa, certain procedures for developing a common visa format, and for emergency situations created by a flow of people across national frontiers.

It is important to understand that the policies proposed in article 100c will come into existence only following multi-stage consultation. Before 1996, the list of third countries requiring visas will be drawn up only following a proposal from the Commission, consultation with the European Parliament and a unanimous decision by the Council of Ministers—at least in respect of visa third countries.

If, on the contrary, there is a desire after 1996 to have a common list of countries where visas are required, that can be done by qualified majority. The imposition of emergency visas will result from a recommendation of the Commission and from a qualified majority in the Council. Extension of the six-month emergency period will require the same procedure as that which is required for drawing up the original list.

The format of the visa itself requires a proposal from the Commission, a qualified majority in the Council and consultation with the European Parliament. If a qualified majority applies, it will apply to third countries where visas are required. After 1996, it will apply to the emergency provisions and the format. The ratification process is not clear—although it is clear in dealing with article K.

Quite apart from understanding the procedures for visa co-ordination, it is important that any visa regime—domestic or European—is not used as a back-door method of denying asylum to those genuinely seeking asylum in Britain or elsewhere in the Community.

At present, if entry from a country requires a visa—as is the case with many countries—and as applications can be made only at the British port of entry, in practice asylum applications are often disbarred. A few months ago, visas were required for Bosnia, but no consulate existed to grant them.

It is important that article 100c is understood in that context. It provides for a common visa policy, but also for unanimous decisions where they clearly matter. Whether or not that common visa policy is developed, it should not be a regime of the lowest common denominator but one that attempts to guard the civil liberties of those seeking asylum in particular.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): My hon. Friend says that the policy followed will not necessarily adopt the lowest common denominator. Why does he believe that? Hon. Members in Committee on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill became acutely aware that the whole thrust of western European thinking is to reduce all immigration and visa policies to the lowest common denominator—including the more important area of refugees.

Mr. Blair: I did not say that it would be the lowest common denominator. There is no such provision in relation to article 100c, which provides for a procedure for determining a common visa policy. I was arguing that it should not be based on the lowest common denominator. As my hon. Friend knows, we strongly made the point in respect of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill that it is erroneous to think—although my hon. Friend is not saying this—that, outside Maastricht, nothing is happening in relation to asylum and immigration matters. Agreements are currently being reached that will operate according to a much looser formula than that set out in the treaty.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I hear what my hon. Friend says, but will he tell the Committee whether he is for or against article 100c?

7 pm

Mr. Blair: As I hope I made clear, article 100c, by providing for a procedure whereby a common visa policy can be determined, is entirely acceptable. Whether one decides to agree such a policy depends on the type of policy that is to be agreed. It is a procedure, a process. Whether in the end we decide to accept that process depends on what can be negotiated and what is on offer. On behalf of the Opposition, I am making it clear—no doubt the Secretary of State will make his own position clear—that we shall not agree to procedures that are based on the lowest common denominator. We want procedures that fully accord with the civil liberties of those applying.

Mr. Shore: Is not it the case from what my hon. Friend said a moment ago that, from 31 December 1996, decisions will be made by a qualified majority vote? Therefore, it will not be a case of our deciding on the merits of each case on which we could exercise a veto.

Mr. Blair: As my right hon. Friend will understand, at present the Council acts unanimously. Decisions made after 1 January 1996, with regard to countries whose nationals must be in possession of a visa when crossing the external borders of member states, can be made by qualified majority. It does not follow that the immigration rules will be decided by qualified majority. As I shall show when we come to article K, dealing with substantive matters in relation to immigration, justice and home affairs, there is, almost throughout, a requirement of unanimity.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I do not wish to misunderstand my hon. Friend. I understand that he agrees with the procedure, but does he agree with the principle of a common visa? As I understand it, a person prevented from obtaining a visa to enter any one European country cannot enter any of the other countries.

Mr. Blair: With respect, the issue is the determination of those third countries whose nationals must be in possession of a visa. As I understand it, that decision must

[Mr. Blair]

be made unanimously up to 1 January 1996. After that the list of those countries can be determined on a qualified majority basis, but we are still in charge, through article K, as I shall show in a moment, of basic immigration policy. It is important to realise that. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mr. Marlow *rose——*

Mr. Blair: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman and then I shall develop my argument, but the article is clear.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) asked the hon. Gentleman whether he was in favour of article 100c, which says that after 1 January 1996 those countries to which a visa should be applied from the European Community could be decided by qualified majority voting. Is the hon. Gentleman in favour of article 100c?

Mr. Blair: I have made it clear that I am in favour of the procedure for determining those countries whose nationals must be in possession of a visa. However, it is clear from article K that that is not the same as saying that immigration policy is to be decided by qualified majority. It is not. When one looks at article K, which we should now do, it is clear that unanimity is required in its main elements. I see nothing wrong in the principle of co-operating in those areas provided that the co-operation is on a proper basis.

Mr. Livingstone: Am I right in assuming that, although my hon. Friend accepts the structure of the treaty, he expects it to be operated in a progressive fashion and is not worried about the lowest common denominator? How then does he explain the terminology of the treaty which talks about a threat of a sudden influx? The treaty seems to perceive a horde of Arabs and black and brown peoples threatening to come. That does not encourage me or my constituents to believe that we will not end up with the lowest common denominator in practice. What guarantee do we have?

Mr. Blair: With the greatest respect, my hon. Friend is being a little unreasonable. Article 100c, paragraph 2, says:

"in the event of an emergency situation in a third country posing a threat of a sudden inflow of nationals . . . the Council, acting by a qualified majority . . . may introduce, for a period not exceeding six months, a visa requirement".

That is to contemplate a situation that must be within the serious contemplation of anyone. It does not follow that the tone of the treaty is designed on some racist basis, or on the lowest common denominator. It is a procedure.

The immigration policy applied by the Conservative party during the past 10 or 15 years should hardly be held up as a model of decent immigration policy. If we look at the matter with an open mind, we will see that a procedure is set out for determining those countries from which a visa is required. Article K is the main part that deals with immigration policy.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend will agree that it is good to get the position clear before we move to article K. Does he also agree that the provision of article 100c is that, after agreement on the common visa policy, any one of the 12 nations of the Community in relation to any third country, A to X, can make arrangements for anyone from country A to X to come to any country 1 to 12? Once that administrative arrangement is made, the person with a visa for the Community can travel freely inside the Community on the administrative arrangements made under the aegis of one of its members. If that is the situation, we should proceed on something like that understanding, because that is the heart of article 100c, whatever we may believe about the co-ordinating machinery for visas.

Mr. Blair: I do not think that that is right. As I understand it, the agreement is made by the Community as a whole with regard to countries that will either be on the list of countries whose nationals require a visa or not. That degree of agreement depends on the country concerned and the negotiation around it. But I cannot for the life of me see anything repugnant about co-operating on the basis of that procedure. The content of that decision is another matter. That is precisely what is negotiated between the member states. However, I see nothing inherently bad about nation states co-operating when we operate as a European Community. I should have thought that that was good.

Mr. Corbyn: Along with many other hon. Members, I am deeply concerned about the concept. We are moving to a position where, by majority voting, there will be a removal of rights that are ordained to people under the 1951 Geneva convention on refugees. If a country admits an asylum seeker who has previously been refused a visa by any member state and that person seeks asylum in that country, he would have entered the country illegally because he had been denied a visa. European law would then force us to expel someone who was seeking political asylum, be it from former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka or any other place. I ask my hon. Friend to think carefully about the serious step that is being taken which I believe will be against the interests of those seeking asylum.

Mr. Blair: Again, I do not think that that is right. Under the treaty the position of refugees is protected, as is the position of people under the United Nations convention. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] In article K.2, paragraph 1, for a start.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I do not often rise in support of the hon. Gentleman, but I suspect that I am rising in my own defence as well because I am sure that I shall get caught up in the same debate. First, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman—I realise that he has less support than myself—who has so far impeccably and correctly stated the position under the treaty. Article 100c brings within Community competence decisions on the list of countries from which visas are to be required by the member states. After 1996 that can be subject to majority voting. But that in no way affects the admission of any individual, the criteria upon which we would issue visas, or anything of that kind, which would be solely within our competence. As the hon. Gentleman correctly says, anyone who reaches these shores and applies for asylum will be treated by us as an applicant for asylum, and be entitled to have his application dealt with in the ordinary way. I have no doubt that the debate will broaden out into immigration and asylum policy generally, but the operation of immigration policy and our visa policy remain within our competence,

subject to the House, because the Government will determine them in the immigration rules. The Bill merely brings a narrow area into Community competence.

Mr. Blair: I am not sure whether I should thank the Home Secretary; it might have suited me better had he attacked me vigorously. However, I shall accept his support, for what it is worth. I shall deal more fully with the position of refugees in a moment, but I believe that it is covered specifically by the treaty.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend said that he was confident that it would not be a question of the lowest common denominator. Has he seen the minutes of the Trevi committee and those of the ad hoc committee on immigration? Other hon. Members have not seen them —the Government have kept them secret—but they are crucial to whether we accept that my hon. Friend's interpretation of the treaty is correct.

Mr. Blair: That is a point in my favour, rather than that of my hon. Friend. We have criticised the Trevi group, and the ad hoc group of Immigration Ministers, for operating outside the proper procedures. A careful reading of the Maastricht treaty will show that its purpose is to bring such operations within those procedures.

Mr. Cohen: The treaty has not yet been ratified.

Mr. Blair: I will deal with the issue of ratification in a moment. My hon. Friend will probably find that the treaty will give us a better opportunity to debate some of the critical issues than we have now. At present things are done in secret and we are not given an opportunity to debate them properly. It is for precisely that reason that there must be sense in trying to impose some form on what is now happening.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is concerned about the Trevi group. Decisions made there are arrived at unanimously and a Minister then has to justify them in the House. Under article 100c and article K, it is possible that a series of issues—not just visa issues, but issues of general immigration policy—could be decided by qualified majority vote, without coming back to the House. The United Kingdom and the House of Commons would be excluded from the process and we could do nothing about it. It is as serious as that.

Mr. Blair: I hope that, once I finally get on to article K, I shall be able to show that that simply is not true. As for the Trevi group being a wonderful example of the openness of government, perhaps the hon. Gentleman can exchange views with my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen); certainly, that is not my experience.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has obviously studied the matter very carefully, but hon. Members who have not done so would appreciate his advice. According to his reading of article 100c, would there be a common arrangement for the style of visas and on which countries will require visas? Does he believe that a person with a visa valid for entry to, say, Italy or Greece would thereby have the right to enter this country? Article 100c does not make that clear. Will everyone have the same kind of document? A Minister has been unable to clarify that; I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to.

Mr. Blair: The hon. Gentleman expresses a vain hope. It is a question of more than the form of the visa, but article K—with which I will now deal, irrespective of requests for interventions—makes it clear that immigration policy is still a matter for unanimity. That, at any rate, is my view.

The co-ordination procedures in article K are complex, but there are broad areas of common interest, including asylum, immigration, justice—both civil and criminal—and customs and police co-operation. The procedural dimension of the article divides into two parts. First, there is the co-ordination envisaged by paragraphs 2 to 6 and paragraph 9. A common policy derived in the first way requires an initiative of a member state, or the Commission, and a unanimous decision in Council. That, I take it, will be the effect of article K.4(3).

Furthermore, any conventions drawn up unanimously by the Council shall be adopted in accordance with the "respective constitutional requirements" of member states. That is the point involving ratification to which I shall turn shortly.

The measures implementing joint action may be decided on a qualified majority basis if the Council unanimously so decides. There is, as it were, a trigger of unanimity before qualified majority voting operates. Measures implementing conventions shall be adopted by a majority of two thirds of high contracting parties, unless such conventions state otherwise. Obviously, they will often state otherwise, because they will be drawn up on the basis of unanimity.

7.15 pm

In addition to the requirements laid down explicitly in articles K.3 and K.4, there are other, more general safeguards. There are supplementary requirements, consisting of compliance with two international conventions, which are mentioned in article K.2. One of those conventions is that relating to the status of refugees, so that point is specifically covered. Then there is the consultation with the co-ordinating committee of senior officials, mentioned in article K.4, and the consultation with the European Parliament and the Commission referred to in article K.6. Perhaps most crucially, article K.2(2) refers to the responsibility of member states to maintain law and order and to safeguard internal security. Those matters are clearly set out and remain unaffected.

Article K.9 provides for the importation of the procedures relevant to article 100c into the areas covered by paragraphs (1) to (6) of article K.1. Perhaps the Home Secretary will confirm that the importation of the procedures in article 100c will, in a sense, involve the Commission in a way in which it otherwise would not be involved. Such an incorporation involves—indeed, requires—an initiative on the part of the Commission or a member state, a unanimous decision by the Council, successful completion of the voting according to whatever voting conditions are then imposed by the Council and the recommendation that the decision be adopted in accordance with those "respective constitutional requirements".

I want the Home Secretary to explain clearly what is meant by the words "respective constitutional requirements". I understand them to mean that ratification, or debate in the House, would be required.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The meaning of article K.9 is certainly important. There is, in effect, what the Government tend to describe as a double lock if it comes

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

to any suggestion of extending Community competence beyond article 100c. Such extension would require a unanimous decision of the Council of Ministers, followed by constitutional endorsement in each member state. That, in effect, means a vote in this Parliament. Community competence, under article 100c, could not be extended without all 12 member states voting in favour of it and the House of Commons supporting that extension.

Mr. Blair: That is certainly my understanding and I think that it is made fairly clear in article K.9. At the Edinburgh summit, the Danes declared that the agreement to use article 100c would require the same constitutional procedures as governed the ratification of the treaties, which would mean a five sixths majority in their Parliament or a referendum.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): To what extent will the European Court of Justice function and what will its role be?

Mr. Blair: According to article K.3, the conventions that may be agreed—obviously, they will be agreed by the full European Community—may stipulate that the court shall have jurisdiction to interpret their provisions and to rule on any disputes; but that will be decided in relation to the specific conventions involved.

To obtain action or agreement in relation to the areas of policy in article K, there must in each case be a figure of unanimity before procedures—some of which may involve qualified majority voting—can be implemented. There is a ratification process before Community competence is extended. Both of those are there and seem to be fairly clear.

Mr. Spearing: I hope that I can make myself clearer than I did on the previous occasion. My hon. Friend asked the Home Secretary what the Government thought was the correct constitutional procedure for ratification of what is, in effect, an expansion of the powers of the Community in the treaty under article K.9. My hon. Friend may have noticed that in new clauses 12 and 13, which apply to a similar and even riskier procedure under 2.(c) of article K.3, some of my hon. Friends and I have said that the lock, when it comes to this country, should not be a vote of the House of Commons alone but a specific Act of Parliament. I remind my hon. Friend and the Committee that by means of a simple vote on a statutory instrument it is possible to ratify something as being a Community treaty. I think that my hon. Friend will agree that a statutory instrument, or even a resolution of the House of Commons, should not be able to extend the powers of the Community—by, in effect, ratifying a Community treaty —and that it should be done by nothing less than an Act of Parliament.

Mr. Blair: I understand my hon. Friend's point and his concern about the fact that there is a difference between the procedure for ratifying something and an Act of Parliament. The most important point is that the House of Commons should be given the opportunity to express its view. That is the vital aspect. Provided that that is done, the precise form in which it is done is less important. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I take the point that my hon. Friend has made, but the most important point is that there should be a chance for us to express our view.

Mr. Shore: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Blair: Perhaps my right hon. Friend will allow me to answer this point before I give way to him.

It is clear from reading article K.9, in conjunction with the other articles in article K, that in only a small number of cases is it possible for that situation to arise. It is also absolutely clear from article K.9 that the procedures in article 100c—in other words, the extension of Community competence—cannot happen at all except unanimously and after measures have been taken in accordance with constitutional procedures.

Mr. Shore: This is a very complex matter and difficult to get right. One accepts the fact that unanimity is needed in the first instance. That is absolutely clear. However, once unanimity is gained, there is no possibility of clawing it back. The importance of that first step is crucial. The second step is also crucial. The second step appears to be, through the operation of articles K.9 and K.1(3), that the whole of our immigration policy may conceivably be shifted into the European Community domain, under article 100c, under which matters can be decided by a qualified majority vote. We need something very much stronger than a simple resolution of the House of Commons, or a vote in the House of Commons. We need an Act of Parliament before any such act could be authorised.

Mr. Blair: There are a number of different steps within article K.9. It is important to understand the differences between each of those steps. Article K.9 will not apply at all unless there is a unanimous decision of the Council. At the same time, the Council determines not merely whether European Community competence is to be extended, but the relevant voting conditions that relate to it. That is a fairly significant safeguard. Article K.9 also recommends "the Member States to adopt that decision in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements."

I understand entirely the point that my hon. Friends have made, which is that the procedure for an Act of Parliament is very much bigger than it is for a resolution of the House of Commons. Even before one reaches that point, however, the Council must unanimously decide it. It can also lay down—this can be part of the negotiations upon which unanimity is founded—the relevant voting conditions relating to it. We should have to be extraordinarily negligent in the conduct of our business if we were unable to construct sufficient safeguards within article K.9 in order properly to protect our position.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is speaking on behalf of the Opposition. The hon. Gentleman opposes this Government. This Government may be in favour of policies which his hon. Friends look upon as racist and deplorable policies. On the basis of those policies, my right hon. and learned Friend might be unanimous with other European Governments. He might then come back here and, on the basis of one debate and one vote, and with the support of the Patronage Secretary, drive us all through the Lobby. And that would be it. The hon. Gentleman's party—the Labour party—would be able to do no more about it. That is what the hon. Gentleman is saying to his colleagues. He says: "Trust this Government. We are very impressed. We are delighted."

Mr. Blair: I am saying nothing of the sort. This Government can provide poor legislation. The co-operation at the moment, outside the Maastricht treaty, has resulted in decisions with which we powerfully disagree, but it seems to me that, as a matter of principle, it cannot possibly be said that it is wrong to seek the prospect of co-operation. Whether we then grant that co-operation depends upon us. I do not believe that the safeguards are inadequate.

When the Secretary of State replies to the debate, I should be obliged if he would give us his views relating to the situation in which he may be prepared to activate article K.9 and his views on ratification. It must not be thought, however, that the alternative to what is in the Bill now is that there should be no discussion of these issues. It is absolutely clear that since 1975 intergovernmental meetings have been taking place under the auspices of the Trevi group. Various policy groups have been meeting to co-ordinate policy. At the last ministerial meeting of Immigration Ministers in London on 30 November, issues relating to harmonisation, asylum and safe third countries were discussed. Some Parliaments—for example, the Dutch Parliament—gave their people the opportunity to debate these matters. The papers were laid before those Parliaments before decisions were taken. None of those steps is at present open to this Parliament. It is extremely important, therefore, that we do not believe that the choice at the moment is between nothing happening in this area and what is happening under the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Corbyn: This is an extremely important point. If the Government were to come to some agreement at Trevi on changing the immigration rules in some way, they would be put to the House of Commons in a one and a half hour debate on a statutory instrument, on a negative prayer. And that would be it. The Opposition have always complained that that is a totally unsatisfactory way of deciding immigration law and immigration policy. That, too, apparently, is all that we shall get under the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Blair: It is not. If one looks at the treaty carefully, one sees that that is not what is happening. The safeguards there are greater than the existing safeguards. The point is that none of these things exists or comes into being unless effect is given to the procedures that I have delineated a number of times and that are set out in article K.9. It is important to take account of that fact when deciding our attitude to the procedures that are before us now.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: Very well.

Mr. Trimble: I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman when he obviously wished to continue his speech. However, a thought has occurred to me and I should be interested in his reaction to it. The hon. Gentleman obviously considers the safeguards in the Maastricht treaty on this point to be adequate. Perhaps they would be adequate for member states that have a proper ratification procedure, but because of the nature of our constitution we do not have a proper ratification procedure. If we were to change our constitutional requirements and introduce a proper ratification procedure so that anything that had to be ratified came back properly to the House of Commons to be embodied in legislation, that might be all right, within the context of those agreements. The problem lies perhaps not so much in the terms of the Maastricht agreement but in the fact that our constitution must now be fitted underneath the new written constitution for the European union. Our constitution was evolved for a different purpose and we may have to think more deeply, but a proper ratification procedure in the House would solve some of the difficulties that have been raised.

Mr. Blair: I understand and have some sympathy with that point. However, in a sense, it is a matter for us to determine. Within the context of the Maastricht treaty, the procedures are plain as they apply to all member states.

I deal with two particular issues arising from the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), I apologise for intervening. I am sorry that I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the precise references, but if he reads certain volumes of *Hansard* from the late 1970s, he will see that his party's Callaghan Government accepted a demand by the then shadow Home Secretary, now Lord Whitelaw, that any such development—any such ratification—must be by Bill, not by Order in Council or any other form of statutory instrument. His Government accepted that willingly.

7.30 pm

Mr. Blair: I am always delighted to be reminded of the time when my party was in government. I understand the point about the process of ratification and, as I said, I have some sympathy with it. However, in the end, it is something for us to determine outside the provisions of the Maastricht treaty.

I deal now with two particular issues arising out of article K of the Maastricht treaty. The first has to do with asylum policy. Much of what has been said by some of my hon. Friends who oppose the treaty is based on a belief that our asylum policy has worked extremely unfairly for those seeking asylum. However, if we can get the right basis for agreement, there is a strong argument for co-operation on asylum policy, a co-operation that genuinely solves the problems and is not based on the lowest common denominator.

I submit that there have been two striking changes in the European asylum situation in the past 20 years. The first is a huge rise in the number of asylum applications from about 13,000 throughout Europe in 1972 to more than 600,000 today. The second is the dramatic fall in the proportion of asylum seekers being granted asylum. Virtually all were granted refuge in 1972 whereas today the figure is only about 20 per cent.

Those changes are the result not only of a change in procedure but of the changing nature of refugees away from those subject to individual persecution at the hands of various totalitarian regimes towards the position today when most refugees are fleeing from ethnic conflict or civil war but are not themselves subject to individual persecution. The second type of refugee is not explicitly covered by the 1951 Geneva convention and Yugoslavia is a classic example of the problem.

Inevitably, many of those seeking asylum are not asylum seekers in the strict sense of the word because they are not subject to individual persecution, but, nevertheless,

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they are in a desperate situation. Countries acting on their own, merely pulling up their drawbridges as fast as they can, is not the answer to the problem. It requires to be managed on the basis of shared goals and responsibilities. Indeed, if some of the energy presently being expended on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill was directed towards helping those displaced by the conflict on the basis of a proper policy of co-operation, it would provide a much better solution than those that we have recently debated in the House.

Contrary to some of the more lurid headlines, the vast majority of refugees did not want to leave their homeland and are desperately keen to return. A policy of co-operation and joint action is surely the only intelligent response.

I have one or two points to make on international policing.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Before my hon. Friend moves on to the issue of policing, will he agree that the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill, which we have recently considered and which is now in another place, is the basis and blueprint for a future European policy? Is it not true that Britain's role in the past year in dealing with Bosnia and the former Yugoslav states is quite shameful and that the number of refugees whom we have so far received in this country is minimal and derisory? Is that not a matter of absolute shame, not only for the Home Secretary but for the entire Government?

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friend will know that colleagues from the Front and Back Benches have constantly raised the plight of the refugees and have strongly criticised the Government's asylum and immigration policy. I do not believe that the Bill should be the basis of co-operation between member states, although that is what is happening, irrespective of Maastricht. It is important for us to raise these issues, whether we are debating Maastricht or asylum and immigration policy in general.

The system for international policing would be affected if some of the provisions in article K.1 were to come into effect. The growing levels of international crime demand a more concerted international response. However, the procedures give some cause for concern and I should be grateful if the Home Secretary would respond specifically to this point. The problem is not that there are too few avenues for information exchange, but, at the moment, there is a danger that there are so many systems that they may at best cause unnecessary duplication and, at worst, conflict with each other.

The Trevi group, outside of Maastricht, has long had working groups dealing with anti-terrorism, police technology and organised crime and has set up its own European information system. In addition, the countries that are party to the Schengen agreement, which does not include this country, are attempting their own common information systems, backed by agreements on cross-border chases and similar matters.

Most crucially, Interpol, which obviously has a long history of international police co-ordination, has recently become considerably more efficient and more able to provide computerised records of fingerprints and other information that will be of some assistance in tracking down international crime. The important task is not to add another European body for information exchange, but to concentrate our efforts on focusing and enhancing the existing co-operation. It is far from clear which of those tasks Europol is primarily meant to undertake.

It would be right for the Home Secretary at this stage to say a word or two about Europol. It must be said that its beginnings have been rather inauspicious. There were disagreements over its location and when it was to become operational. Interpol has proposed to incorporate it within its own European secretariat, as a part of Interpol which will have separate functions. It will, in some senses, be a separate bureau but it will nevertheless still be under the aegis of Interpol. As that is specifically contemplated in the Maastricht treaty, I should be grateful if the Home Secretary would say something about it.

In his speech on the Maastricht treaty on 4 November last year, the Prime Minister was constantly at pains to point out how little co-operation was obligatory under the treaty. As with so much else in the treaty, the Government define their position not by the parts of the treaty which they embrace but by those which they think they can avoid. Provided that the right basis for co-operation can be found—I agree that that is the issue that must be determined—immigration and home affairs matters are not issues on which intelligent co-operation should be regarded as alien as long as there are proper safeguards to ensure that countries can continue to protect their own distinct interests where they wish to do so.

Sir Teddy Taylor: How?

Mr. Blair: I think that that has been adequately set out earlier in my speech. The hon. Gentleman may shout, but some people will oppose co-operation on any basis. We do not. We believe that co-operation is entirely sensible provided that the basis of it is clear and it will work in our national interest. That implies not a wholesale destruction of sovereignty, but a process of co-ordination. If used reasonably, to further clear objectives, it will yield a far greater benefit to our country and to the people who live in it than would perverse isolation.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I have been listening carefully to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who made what I regard as a well informed and accurate speech. When speaking about article 100c(6) the hon. Gentleman suggested that other matters could be considered, but that that matter would be determined by the trigger article, K.9. Two conditions must apply. There must be a unanimous decision of the Council of Ministers. That is acceptedc, but unanimity does not last long in Europe. By article 100c we have already found out that the unanimity rule will be downgraded by 1996. The Single European Act was passed seven years ago, and unanimity has already gone in many areas. Over the course of time, decisions were made by majority voting.

Ratification by national Parliaments is the other side of the double lock. I appreciate that the law must be sound, but changes could be in prospect. A resolution of the House after one and a half hours' debate would not have a serious impact. It is unlikely that an Act of Parliament, which would be much more substantial, would be conceded.

In dealing with some of the points that have been made I shall refer to amendment No. 113 and new clauses 12 and 13.

Mr. Spearing: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we should deal with the so-called double lock straight away? Some hon. Members, especially Front-Bench spokesmen, present it as a guarantee, but does the hon. Gentleman not agree that, whether it be over the arranging of the rules —that is important—or over the method of voting, once there has been a unanimous agreement the door back in the other direction is locked? The Home Secretary looks surprised—but once the agreement on the structure for decision making and voting procedures was concluded, unless there were a new treaty or a new Edinburgh summit or something else to change it all, any successor Government would be doubly locked into those procedures.

7.45 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet: There is a lot of sense in the hon. Gentleman's argument. The lock is a Bank of England lock, and when it closes, it closes. That does not mean that there will be no changes in future. As I have said, majority voting has gone in many quarters; there is no reason why it should not be modified here. I envisage that in future the provisions in articles J and K will be taken over as additional machinery required for the Commission and the Council of Ministers.

The Prime Minister has said that he is not prepared to allow a referendum—although we shall be able to argue about the possibility. The Prime Minister will not have a referendum because he does not consider it purposeful. In that case there should be full parliamentary control over any matter in which we can see great danger. The participation of the European Parliament is distinctly limited. Considerable powers could be taken away from a democratically elected Government here and surrendered to bodies in which representation is not so clear.

Another matter of grave concern to me is the fact that we are still supposed to be responsible for a large segment of Commonwealth countries. If we support the measures before us, surely we shall still have responsibilities not only in Europe but beyond which give cause for concern.

I am troubled by another significant matter. We are told that the treaty must go through without amendment. If that is so, there will be no satisfactory arrangement for the House to deal with any Act which becomes necessary to rectify article K.9.

The use of article 100c in conjunction with the citizenship provisions under article 8, and in alliance with the pillars under article K, has given the Council of Ministers and the Commission a stake in both camps. In this case, immigration policy is likely to follow.

The implications of some of the original arguments on visas are broad. I have considered some of the countries where visas are required. The United Kingdom lists 81 different states whose nationals require visas; France does things another way, and, rather than stating a requirement for visas, says that 40 nations do not require visas; Germany cites as many as 70 countries.

We could find ourselves in difficulty. Centralising within the EC could mean that, even if pressure were brought to bear, Britain would have to admit people whom it considers undesirable. For example, there are problems with the Algerians in France and with the Indonesians in the Netherlands. Once such people enter any country in the Community they can flow to any other part of it.

Furthermore, visas are often granted capriciously. To give a simple example, about two years ago I wanted to go to France and I had to obtain a visa. That was because a ship had been tied ashore in New Zealand, so the French decided there would have to be repercussions for the New Zealand Government, and made visas an essential requirement. I am glad to say that the requirement has since been removed.

We have noticed that the point of the treaty of Rome and of the Single European Act is free movement of people, services and capital, which is provided by articles 48 to 73. But that does not seem to apply to that big stretch of territory for part of which we are accountable—the British Commonwealth. What happens to the arrangements under the Hong Kong settlement? Will they be counterbalanced by certain people in the Community? After further upsets in South Africa, will people be permitted to return to the United Kingdom?

Mr. Corbyn: Is the hon. Member aware that under article 100c it is perfectly possible for EC member states to get together and decide, for example, that visa requirements should be introduced for visitors to this country from the Caribbean? That would be opposed by the British Government, who have already given a commitment not to introduce such visas, especially for people from Jamaica, but the requirement would be imposed on this country and then it would be illegal under European law for Britain to admit Jamaican visitors without a visa, even though the stated policy of the British Government was that they did not want to introduce visas.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Those anomalies must be ironed out, although it is quite possible that they could go through.

Has the matter been looked at carefully by the Commission, by the British Government and by others? I know that the Italians and Greeks have no effective administration for visa control. In that event, people may leak into these countries and then come across to the United Kingdom. They will have a right to be here for some time or they may be illegal immigrants. Once in the United Kingdom, they cannot be removed because they cannot be detected.

There is another anomaly. The French define the people of Guadeloupe and of Martinique as European Community citizens. Would we be able to define many of the people of our former colonies as citizens of the United Kingdom who should have free entry? Why has a special privilege been conceded to the French? I understand that the Portuguese have taken similar action with Macao. I dare say that those special matters have been arranged.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Surely my hon. Friend appreciates that the freedom of movement between EC member states derives from the treaty of Rome and from the Single European Act 1986. It has nothing to do with the Maastricht treaty. British citizens given full British nationality under the Hong Kong citizenship scheme would be as entitled to freedom of movement as the citizens of Macao whom my hon. Friend mentioned.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am not certain that my hon. Friend is right about that.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend tell his hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) that the difference is that a limited number of people in Hong Kong, who have worked hard for this country and who

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

have been good friends, will be able to come to this country? Every citizen of Macao is a Portuguese citizen and would be entitled to enter this country. That is the big difference. To suggest that we are giving preference to Hong Kong may be misleading.

Sir Trevor Skeet: It is inevitable that many suggestions will be made in a matter such as this, in which there are no certainties.

I have sat through most of the debates on Maastricht and I am amazed that no Law Officers are present. We are lucky today in having here an experienced Queen's Counsel in the form of the Home Secretary, who can make his own contribution, but the Law Officers should be present at all our debates because many legalities arise.

The Prime Minister said on 9 October that certain matters were outside the jurisdiction of the European Court and outside the competence of the European Commission. He said:

"We have wanted this principle established for years."

My right hon. Friend was referring to the pillars. Having looked at the pillars carefully—the Opposition have rightly suggested that the pillars should be encompassed by the treaty itself because that is what it will come to in the end—I have tried to work out precisely the role of the Commission.

The Commission's role is not so innocent as it would seem. On the initiative of the Commission or of a member state, the Council of Ministers will be able to adopt common positions under paragraphs 1 and 6. A co-ordinating committee will be set up. Who will participate in that co-ordinating committee but the European Commission which will be fully associated with all its activities? That provision is in article K.4.2. Under article 152 of the treaty of Rome,

"The Council may request the Commission to undertake any studies the Council considers desirable for the attainment of the common objectives, and to submit to it any appropriate proposals."

In other words, studies can be undertaken. The Commission has the right to draft and propose legislation on immigration policy, on drug addiction and on other matters alluded to.

I wonder whether the Government consider that they have been resourceful enough to insulate us against the revisions that are likely to be made to the treaty in 1996. We have had a treaty of Rome since 1975 and we have had the Community now for only 36 years. The House of Commons has operated for more than 700 years. We shall find that we may become a national council at the end of the day. We should consider the matter far more carefully and we should consider how our position as a national Parliament should be secured.

I note that article 100c falls within the provisions on the approximation of laws. It seeks to approximate the laws not merely on other matters, but on immigration policy and the like. I have said that article 100c deals with visa controls and presupposes broader immigration controls. There are three important articles in the treaty of Rome to which I draw the Committee's attention.

Article 5 says that member states shall take all appropriate measures to fulfil their obligations and they shall do nothing that is detrimental to the obligations being attained. Article 235 says that if the Community does not have sufficient powers, it can damn well take them. Article F should also be remembered. It says

"The Union shall provide itself with the means necessary to attain its objectives and carry through its policies."

When one realises the significance of all this, when one realises what the Commission can do, when one realises what it has achieved in 36 years and when one compares that with what we have attained over 700 years, one wonders what will be left for this Chamber to do. Concessions are being made and rights are being lost, probably without even a referendum. The public may lose all their rights of representation in this Chamber and the great issues will be decided in Brussels.

The Home Secretary will probably refer to the new Minister, Mr. Flynn, who is a full-time appointee. My right hon. and learned Friend will probably say that as these matters are outside the competence of the Commission for the moment, Mr. Flynn will have nothing to do. I dare say that he can find a lot going on and I dare say that he will continue co-operation and negotiation as far as he can.

My final point deals with subsidiarity under article 3b. We have two choices. We can have pure international collaboration between states, which would suffice. After all, in previous years we have collaborated and we have been able to find satisfactory solutions. Alternatively, we could adopt the philosophy that the Government advocate of supporting the pillar arrangements of intergovernmental arrangements mixed with the Council of Ministers and with the European Court.

In the United Kingdom, we have learnt to live with immigrants, and our policies have been successful. We have long experience of racial issues because we have been a major colonial power. We have legislation on the statute book, such as the Immigration Acts of 1971 and 1988, and the British Nationality Act 1981.

It is worth remembering—we are primarily concerned with Europe—that there are 30 different ethnic groupings in the whole area. All these people could flood into other corners, and because of the free movement of people it would be difficult to resist them, provided that they had the means by which to support themselves and provided that they complied with certain regulations in the treaty.

In the Bedford area, we have more than 70 nationalities. If people felt that all their applications would ultimately be decided in Brussels, they would probably be shocked by the arrangements. I will not say that the British law on that matter is perfect, but it is much more tolerant than many of the arrangements which are likely to come out of Europe. Such arrangements resort to more absolutist methods.

We have gone a long way on this important clause. I am not sure where the articles will lead us. Eventually, it will be the foothold that the Council of Ministers and the Commission will use to secure their final entry, which could be extremely disastrous for the United Kingdom.

8 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The provisions in article K, which are being considered in this group of amendments, go some way to improve the prospects of co-operation in Europe on matters of great pressing and immediate concern. The impact of matters such as immigration, combating drug addiction, terrorism and fraud on the member countries of the Community is

growing. Some of the criminal problems which are dealt with in diferent countries by justice and home affairs departments know no national boundaries. Clearly, international co-operation is necessary if those threats to civil society are to be combated effectively.

The treaty marks an important step forward in establishing a framework of co-operation, improving co-ordination and opening up procedures which have been conducted to some extent in an unsatisfactory ad hoc way. There has been much criticism, especially from some of the quarters which criticise title VI of the treaty, about the lack of transparency in the procedures for tackling crime and in the activities of the ad hoc committee on immigration, the Trevi group, the Schengen group and so on.

Title VI marks a valuable step forward. It does not go much beyond recognising that the member countries of the Community would wish to co-operate on such matters for reasons of self-interest. It provides continuing servicing of that co-operation by establishing the co-ordinating committee and by specifying that decisions shall be arrived at unanimously, for the most part.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Does not title VI go a good way beyond that? We have already discussed how unanimity should be extended to qualified majority. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that all the conventions set out in paragraph 2(c) in article K.3, which we have not yet mentioned but which will guide the co-operation to which he referred, could be made subject to the judicial decisions of the European court? Does not that mark a great deal of change from what we have at present, which is rather more than the hon. Gentleman is suggesting?

Mr. Maclennan: It is an inherent characteristic of the sovereignty of the member countries of the Community that they may freely decide to draw up conventions which, as a result of the operation of their domestic constitutional laws, become binding in their own countries. That does not seem to go greatly beyond what is already the case. The provision that the European Court of Justice may have jurisdiction to interpret provisions is a step beyond the law as it prevails in the Community at present. I accept that it is a step forward. It is an extremely sensible step to take, because, if member countries seek to act in accordance with an agreement which has the force of the treaty, it is clearly desirable that they should all have the same understanding of what the treaty provides.

What more authoritative way of interpreting provisions could there be than submitting any doubts or differences to the arbitrament of the court, which would undoubtedly give the necessary steer? If it proved to be unsatisfactory to a member country, it remains open to that country to follow the normal proceedings for derogation of the provisions of the treaty. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I hear a chorus of disagreement—I am not quite sure why. It is a normal principle of international law that derogation provisions are incorporated in any treaty. Provisions for denouncing treaties are incorporated in such conventions. That remains especially true for a convention which is drawn up under article K.2—for example, the European convention on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

At least once in the memory of many hon. Members, the Government have seen fit to announce derogation from the provisions. That seems to be the way in which we will proceed. There is nothing novel about that. It is a novel step to allow the European Court of Justice to have a specific role in interpreting provisions and to rule on disputes involving applications. It is a welcome step forward in the development of international law.

Mr. Spearing: I concede that the hon. Gentleman knows more about the matter than many of us present. The proper role and vires of the European Court of Justice is important. It is part of the so-called trunk and arises from the treaty of Rome, and the normal role of international courts and international law with regard to a possible derogation which could subsequently be arranged or may possibly be arranged under existing law.

If the European Court of Justice is to adjudicate on matters relating to those conventions, it will operate under the rules which stem from the treaty of Rome and the rest which follows. Therefore, the strength of the Community in its trunk sense is extending into those pillars, and it is no longer international in the United Kingdom: it is part of the Community structure.

Mr. Maclennan: It is international as between the member countries of the European Comunity. If 12 countries, or however many countries there may be in the Community, decide that they want to agree to a convention, there is everything to be said for having a common interpretation of what has been decided. To rely on the normal method of resolving disputes about conventional agreements in the European Community is to rely on the European Court of Justice to give an authoritative judgment in the matter. I acknowledge that there is no such comparable international court of justice outside the Hague framework. The international Court of Justice in the Hague is relied on to interpret, for example, the 1951 European convention on refugees.

Title VI is definitely a step forwad and a means of minimising disputes among member countries, rather than maximising them. The matter of greatest uncertainty in my mind is the adequacy of article K to deal with some of the pressing problems which member countries of the Community face. I question whether the Governments which drafted the Maastricht treaty were too timorous in facing up to the need to reach legislative agreement or agreement on a mode of legislating which could tackle some of the problems. It is desirable not only to co-ordinate the responses of Governments by intergovernmental agreement but to have common standards across the Community.

One example is combating drug addiction. There are different views within the European Community about how to deal with the problem of drugs. Some countries are regarded as more permissive than others. As a result, some countries may think that other countries offer a loophole or channel for the importation of drugs into the Community—the weak underbelly, if you like. I do not see how that type of problem can be dealt with by intergovernmental co-operation. It must be tackled by the adoption of a common Community response, for without boundaries such matters will become pressing and practical problems.

By denying themselves the ability to legislate quickly and adopt common provisions on home affairs matters, the 12 member Governments will limit their capacity to respond to problems which affect every member country. Article K.9 appears to adumbrate the possibility of some

[Mr. Maclennan]

form of legislation on such matters under the provisions of article 100c. It is so tentative a step that it is scarcely adequate to the circumstances.

Mrs. Dunwoody: What the hon. Gentleman is talking about is important. Will he make it clear—I am not a lawyer—whether he is suggesting that the Community should have the right to impose legislation on member states, including those to which he refers as the soft underbelly? Presumably it would be policed and could be imposed by a central authority.

If that is not what the hon. Gentleman is saying, I find it difficult to follow his line of argument. If we are asking for the agreement of the soft underbelly states, whomsoever they may be, how can we proceed to legislate if those countries are not prepared to accept stronger policing and stronger methods?

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Lady has not misunderstood me. I suggest that it may prove difficult to make effective co-operation between Governments and the police in matters such as drug addiction if there is no legislative competence to back up that co-operation. If we had different laws about drugs in Scotland and England, our capacity as a united kingdom to tackle the problem of drug trafficking would be seriously damaged.

We must recognise that, in moving towards a Community without frontiers, we are moving towards the United Kingdom position. There is no policing of the frontier between Scotland and England. That has certain practical consequences. It makes it sensible to have common law on some matters. It does not mean that common law is necessary on everything: it means that it is necessary to have the competence to decide where it makes practical sense to have common law.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I am carefully following what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Of course, if a common law is introduced, all countries will have to accept that law as it is. If it is the common view that Europe should have much less severe restrictions than we enjoy in the United Kingdom at present, the effect could be the opposite of what the hon. Gentleman says. We could find ourselves having law imposed on us which is far more relaxed than we would want.

8.15 pm

Mr. Maclennan: That is true. That is a consequence of living in a democracy. It is always possible to move one way or the other. The balance of opinion on drugs within the European Community is not on the side of the Dutch. It is fairly clear where the balance of opinion would fall.

I chose the example of drugs as a matter on which it struck me as clear that not to have legislative competence in home affairs could defeat the purposes of co-operation. Article K.9 provides a mechanism, if I read that rather obscure article aright, whereby

"The council, acting unanimously on the initiative of the Commission . . . decide to apply Article 100c of the Treaty . . . to action in areas referred to in Article K.1(1) to (6)". That is a peculiar reference, because article 100c deals with the one specific matter of the issuance of visas to third countries. As a matter of interpretation, I find it hard to understand.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will be kind enough in his reply or in an intervention to explain what he understands by the tie-in to article 100c. Does it say that all that is required when a step is taken unanimously by the Council is that the Council will, in an area covered by K1(1) to (6), act unanimously on a proposal from the Commission after consulting the European Parliament? That does not seem to provide a legislative mechanism. I find it difficult to understand.

I suspect that something is intended which is far-reaching and may have the ratchet effect other hon. Members have suggested. If that is so, we should be clear about it. Certainly, when the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was asked whether the ratchet effect was in place, he did not deny it. I believe that he was right not to do so.

My party is content that this part of the treaty marks a valuable step forward in improving co-operation in Home Office matters between European countries, but we remain somewhat dubious about whether it goes far enough in giving the Commission and the Community the role that we believe that they should have in legislating on such matters.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regard as the most positive achievement of the Maastricht negotiations and treaty the agreement to extend the areas of policy in which member states of the European Community would co-operate by the so-called pillared approach. That was the most significant decision taken by the 12 member states of the Community when they gathered at Maastricht. It was a position for which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister argued strongly on behalf of the Government. It marks a significant and desirable turning point in the way in which we shall develop what is described as the European union.

Today we are talking about the so-called third pillar of justice and home affairs. It covers a range of policies on which the British Government and all parties in the House wish to co-operate with other member states. We regard it as desirable to do so. We have been moving ever closer towards our partners on the key matters listed in article K. Certainly we have had the Trevi meetings to discuss peace and security matters and the ad hoc meetings of Immigration Ministers for many years, and I do not recall anybody ever challenging the position of the British Government who wished to discuss these matters and move, by a process of co-operation, ever closer to common policies in some of those areas, as we have been doing.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: If I may just continue for the present, I am resigned to the fact that I shall no doubt give way as often as the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has done.

In developing that co-operation, the Maastricht treaty provides a framework which will put the whole thing on a more coherent basis. Insofar as it affects the relationship between Ministers and the House on discussions about European co-operation in these areas, it will almost certainly enhance the role of the House, increase the amount of information that comes back to the House and, no doubt, expose Ministers, quite properly, to more debate and discussion about the kind of things that we discuss in Trevi and in the ad hoc group.

Mr. Madden: Will the Home Secretary confirm that there has been constant criticism by hon. Members of the failure of the Government and successive Home Secretaries to make statements to the House following meetings of Trevi and other groups? There has been no parliamentary accountability and no opportunity for hon. Members to challenge the Executive about decisions taken or discussions conducted. It has been a disgraceful abuse of our parliamentary procedures and it gives us no confidence that things will improve if and when the treaty is ratified.

Mr. Clarke: I congratulate the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on, as usual in his interventions, sailing into a wild extravagance of language and grotesquely overstating his case, as he does on each and every feature of asylum and immigration policy.

My practice, which I think has been the practice of my predecessors, has been to report back to the House by way of parliamentary question on proceedings at Trevi and immigration councils. I do not recall that the pressure for oral statements about those proceedings has been altogether overwhelming. There have been no deafening demands on the Floor of the House. There have been demands that more of the papers should be available beforehand, however, and I anticipate that the Government will respond to that. I put in the Library a document that we were considering—the draft European external frontiers convention which, I was originally surprised to discover, it was Whitehall practice not to put in the Library. In due course we must come forward with proposals for reforming parliamentary procedures in this area. I quite accept and would argue strongly myself that we cannot have the House less well informed about the proceedings in the third pillar of the European union than it expects to be in the other two pillars.

Insofar as in the meetings that we have had in Trevi or in the ad hoc group of Immigration Ministers we might have reached the stage where we were agreeing to policy proposals that would require a change in British law for us to implement them, however, then as Ministers I and my successors would remain subject to our own parliamentary constitution and would have to come back here to get the legislative authority to make the changes in legislation on which we had committed ourselves to other Governments. That broadly remains the position here. A more coherent framework is proposed——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I will give way in a second.

The reason why we have had these ad hoc groups before is that there has always been difficulty in moving the existing institutions of the European Community, the existing fabric of the treaty of Rome, into the areas of justice and home affairs. As an enthusiastic supporter of European union and of the European Community, I have always had reservations about extending Community competence under the treaty of Rome into areas of this kind. I am always described as a Euro-enthusiast, a description that I never resist, but I have found over the years that the method of determining policy in the European Community is frequently far from perfect.

Proceeding on what is described as intergovernmental co-operation, rather than bringing things within Community competence, seems to me to offer considerable advantage. The first is that the Commission does not have the sole right of initiating policy. The Commission is involved in the proceedings. It has in certain areas a right to propose initiatives. It is excluded from making initiatives in certain limited areas under article K, but it does not have the sole right. Member states may initiate proposals as well, and nothing would proceed except by unanimity so far as the member states are concerned.

This area of the third pillar is not subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice except in one tiny respect where, by unanimity, the member states may refer things to the European Court of Justice. The European Parliament has the right to be consulted and to give opinions, but the third pillar is not subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court.

This third pillar, therefore, is about European intergovernmental co-operation in the areas of justice and home affairs, which means that it requires the consent of the British Government and, insofar as the consent of the British Government might change either immigration rules, matters of criminal justice or anything of that kind, this Parliament would remain sovereign. We would have to come back here and seek Parliament's consent to any changes in legislation to which our European policy might commit us.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), with whose speech I agreed in large part, the hon. Member for Sedgefield and I are in almost total agreement on this subject—no doubt to the rage and wrath of members of our respective parties who are refusing to attend these debates—but when the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland says that co-operation is not enough and that we should have common policies, of course in some areas it makes sense in the 12 member states to move towards the area of common policy. In recent discussions I have talked about harmonising our immigration policies, which plainly makes sense, given our geography and the pressures upon us. I would like to move much closer to common policies on drug abuse, and so on. There is no reason why intergovernmental discussions should not lead to common policies, if all 12 member states consent by unanimous resolution and then if all 12 Ministers, including the British Home Secretary, can come back to their Parliaments and seek their consent to such policies. It is a way of proceeding which merely carries forward what we have been doing so far but in a more coherent way and one which is more likely to deliver results—results for which we are accountable to this Parliament.

Mr. Maclennan: I am very grateful to the Home Secretary for giving way and also for his recognition of the extent of agreement, but I was trying to suggest going a little further than common policy to a situation in which we would have common law, decided on a European basis. That does not seem to be something that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is advocating.

Mr. Clarke: No, we are all having difficulty in advocating the step that we are taking in the treaty. It is true that it does not go as far as the hon. Gentleman suggested, which should be some small consolation to some of my hon. Friends.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): May I just back-track on what my right hon. and learned Friend is saying, to the point at which he said that there was an area here for improved parliamentary scrutiny? We clearly do not have

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

powers, or have not been using whatever powers of scrutiny have existed in this Parliament hitherto, but the third pillar presents the possibility that the Select Committee on Home Affairs might be the body of continuing scrutiny of those matters. Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell us the Government's thinking about a process of continuing parliamentary scrutiny through the Home Affairs Select Committee examining these matters as they arise, so that Parliament may be better advised of what is intended by Government before they take their decisions rather than afterwards as has been the case hitherto?

Mr. Clarke: Discussions are going on about that within the Government at the moment. I will undertake very shortly to write to my hon. and learned Friend with our proposals for parliamentary scrutiny under the third pillar. He has raised one or two issues on which it is possible to come to more than one conclusion—for instance, whether it should be the Select Committee on Home Affairs or the European Scrutiny Committee which looks at matters under the third pillar—but I undertake to write to him, giving details of the Government's proposals by way of parliamentary accountability, and such proposals will of course be made more widely available to the House as well.

I wholly accept that the House will want some clarity about the way in which it is informed of proceedings under the third pillar, and has the chance to consider them before matters are determined and how, in effect, it gives or withholds approval to what is decided. I do not remotely expect that the House would consent to more restrictive procedures for matters dealt with under the treaty of Rome than those it has been accustomed to in that area. We simply have to ensure that the procedures of the House are well attuned to intergovernmental co-operation under the third pillar.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

8.30 pm

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way once more and then move on to article 100c.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Nothing should put the fear of God into the House of Commons more than the sight of three Front Bench spokesmen—all of whom are lawyers—in total agreement on a policy. May I draw the attention of the Secretary of State to the wording of article K.9? When giving his interpretation of that article, he made tremendously reassuring remarks, but its wording is very revealing. It states:

"The Council, acting unanimously on the initiative of the Commission or a Member State, may decide to apply Article 100c of the Treaty."

If he will forgive my saying so, that is not quite on all fours with what he has told the House.

Mr. Clarke: I believe that it is, unless I made a slip of the tongue. I said that the third pillar does not contemplate the Commission having the sole right of initiative. As someone who has attended countless Councils of Ministers, I have frequently been irked by the fact that, under the treaty of Rome, the exclusive right of initiative lies with the Commission, which is frequently persuaded by one, or a group of, member states to bring things forward, but legally has the sole right of initiative.

Under the third pillar, the Commission can make proposals to the Council, but it has no monopoly of that right. Member states can also do so, and any initiative requires the unanimous consent of all member states before it has any effect—with the exception of article 100c, which brings an extremely narrow area within Community competence and therefore makes it subject to treaty of Rome type procedures.

The article contemplates bringing within Community competence the list of countries for whose nationals visas are required for visits and also establishes a common format for the visa. We accepted those proposals in the Maastricht negotiations for reasons of efficiency. The amount brought within Community competence under article 100c is very limited. It contemplates that eventually all member states will have a common list of countries whose nationals require a visa. After 1996, if people wished, the question of a common list could be decided by majority voting. The article also requires a common format. It does not extend beyond that, nor does it in any way reduce this country's right to determine for itself to whom we give visas and the criteria upon which we award them. That will remain a matter for our immigration rules, subject to continual debate and controversy in this House.

Several of my hon. Friends have asked what will happen if another country gives a visa to someone who then wishes to come here. That is a serious question. Someone who is granted a visa, say by the Federal Republic of Germany, would not require a further document to come to this country and would present a visa in a format of a kind to be established. However, that would not automatically mean that they would be able to enter this country as they would still be subject to the immigration controls over third country nationals upon which we are insisting under article 8a of the existing treaty, which will become article 7a.

Persons presenting themselves with visas would still be interviewed by our immigration officers and would have to satisfy the entry clearance officer that they were entitled within our immigration rules to enter this country for the purpose that they had stated. The mere production of an EC visa would not enable someone to get past our immigration controls, although it would have considerable evidentiary value.

The more progress that we make in harmonising immigration policy, the more likely it will be that someone presenting an Italian, French or German visa will be likely to satisfy our immigration requirements. However, a British entry clearance officer will still be able to say that although someone has a visa, from his interview it was plain that it was obtained by deception and on grounds that do not satisfy our immigration rules. He could then refuse entry and turn the person away.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Outrageous.

Mr. Clarke: It is not outrageous. I shall allow my hon. Friend to try to explain why he believes that it is. I am trying to explain that this does not affect the right of a third country national to enter this country. They remain subject to our immigration rules.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does the Minister accept that, instead of expecting every immigration officer to look at

everyone coming into this country with a visa from Italy and the rest, the only powers reserved will be for the officer to ask, "Are you a drug addict or a terrorist?" If one has reasonable grounds for believing that they are, one can stop them. Is he saying that we would be able to decide that only 50 per cent. of such people could come in? Surely, under article 100c, we will not have that legal right, as it allows us to refuse entry only if we have reasonable grounds for suspecting that someone is something like a drug addict or a terrorist. Is that true?

Mr. Clarke: It is not true. Article 100c does not take away our right to apply our immigration rules. It only governs the list of countries from which member states require visas and the format—the colour, size, shape and content—of the visa. The British Government's interpretation of article 8a of the Single European Act, which is not before us today, is that we remain entitled to apply our immigration controls and that article 100c does not extend any further.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) asked how far that extremely restrictive area of Community competence would be extended to other areas under article K.9.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Yes.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend has anticipated my question.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Before the Home Secretary gets there, does he suggest that existing United Kingdom immigration controls can be safeguarded in their entirety by article 100c(5) which states that it will not prejudice member states' responsibilities

"with regard to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security"?

Mr. Clarke: We do not need that. There is nothing to safeguard. Under article 100c we are giving away two things to Community competence—if that is the language that my hon. Friend likes to use—first, the list of countries from which we require visas and, secondly, what the visa will look like. Article 100c concedes nothing else and unless we move the procedures under K.9 nothing else will be conceded to competence.

There is a great deal of excitement about whether article K.9 will bring into Community competence all the questions of asylum, and immigration law and rules. As I shall seek to demonstrate, it most certainly does not.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): On fabrication, if someone from outside the European Community, holding an EC visa, but not one issued by the United Kingdom, were turned away from the United Kingdom, would he be able to turn to the European Court to seek to show that the United Kingdom authorities had not turned them away legitimately?

Mr. Clarke: In my opinion, no. Someone coming to this country from France and refused entry could not, in my opinion, go to the European Court and complain that that refusal was contrary to his Community rights. If someone presents himself with a European visa in the common format, in my opinion, no directly applicable law would enable him to go to the European Court. Whether we go in that direction entirely depends on where we go on article 8a—7a as it will be—which is outside this debate. So far as this treaty is concerned, anyone with a European visa who was turned away might have certain rights of appeal here but would have no redress through the European Court. It is feared that article K.9 will extend this very restrictive application of article 100c into other areas. Article K.9 opens up the possibility that eventually everything in article K might, as everyone wants, affect European competence.

One of the things in the Maastricht agreement on which we insisted—largely because of the sensitivities of members of my party and of those who were observing the Maastricht negotiations closely—was that there should be a double lock before any such extension of competence could take place. Going beyond the list and appearance of visas would require unanimous voting in the Council by the 12 member states, and each member state would have to ratify the agreement which, in effect, would be a new treaty. This country has a long-standing process for the ratification of every kind of treaty—something that was criticised by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). The sovereignty of Parliament is what concerns a large number of hon. Members. It remains our position that in this country treaties are ratified by changing the law if changes in domestic legislation are required and, otherwise, in accordance with the Ponsonby rules. That has always been the case, and is currently the position.

This Bill does not go along with the entire Maastricht treaty, and it was never likely to do so. It changes those parts of domestic law which have to be changed before we can ratify the treaty and comply with our treaty obligations. This is all extremely fanciful. The current Government oppose any extension of competence in this field, and we shall not make possible the necessary unanimity. I am not clear about the Opposition's position, but I believe that they, too, oppose any extension of European competence in this field. For the foreseeable future, therefore, the risk of achieving a unanimous vote is slight. It may be of further consolation to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) that the Danes are even more insistent than we that there should be no extension of European competence in this area. It is one of the matters that they expressly raised at Edinburgh.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I entirely support my right hon. and learned Friend's approach, and I am very glad that he has been emphasising the big "C"s of co-operation, convention and consultation. In that regard, I am fully in sympathy with what he is trying to do. However, I have a limited tactical question about article 100c. If my right hon. and learned Friend is not able to answer it now, I shall be happy to have a response at a later stage—if necessary, in writing. Article 100c(1) refers to a unanimous decision to adopt the visa list. Paragraph (3) says:

"the Council shall adopt the decisions referred to in paragraph (1)".

Does that mean that the Council, by the majority voting system referred to in paragraph (3), would adopt only that visa list which had been predetermined by unanimous voting? It seems to me that there need no longer be unscrambling by majority voting if there has already been unanimity. One is left with a curious paradox. Apparently, in paragraph (2), there is a remaining unanimity requirement for extending the special emergency list adopted by majority voting. Will this unanimous extension procedure remain in place even after paragraph (3) has come into operation?

8.45 pm

Mr. Clarke: I shall state my opinion now and, if I should prove to be wrongly informed, I shall write to my right hon. Friend or seek to intervene later.

I think that the list of member states whose nationals will require visas will be determined unanimously before 1 January 1996 but, thereafter, by qualified majority voting. It seems to me that that overtakes paragraph (2). Straight away, there can be qualified majority voting in the case of an emergency. If there were a huge exodus of people from another country, there could be a qualified majority to determine whether it was necessary to add that country straight away to the visa list. Six months thereafter, extension could be only by unanimity. However, I contemplate that when we get to 1 January 1996 that will be pretty well unnecessary as a country can be put on the list permanently by the ordinary qualified majority. As I look in a certain direction, I get the impression that I have that broadly correct.

Mr. Spearing: On the Ponsonby rules, the right hon. and learned Gentleman and I are absolutely at one, as we are on the question of the purpose of the Bill, whose limited objective is to give us a link and thus enable legislative obligations to be put into British law. This is a matter about which there has been a good deal of discussion. In this respect, article K of title VI is a little ambiguous. This is a very important matter, so I want to deal with it very carefully. Article 100c(6) says:

"This Article shall apply to other areas if so decided pursuant to Article K.9."

Thus, it is out of the area of visas, which until now we have been associating with paragraph (6). I see that the Home Secretary agrees.

Article K.9 says:

"The Council, acting unanimously"—

there is a lock there, up to a point—

"on the initiative of the Commission or a Member State, may decide to apply Article 100c of the Treaty establishing the European Community to action in areas referred to in Article K.1(1) to (6)".

Article K.1(1) to (6) contains a whole range of matters: asylum, immigration, judicial co-operation—the lot. Does not the Home Secretary agree that, by that mechanism —initially, I admit, by unanimity—it will be possible to deal with all the matters in article K.1? Very important to article 100c are the words

"subject to voting conditions determined at the same time".

Although there may be an initial lock, article K.1(1) to (6) is brought into the purview of article K.9. Does the Home Secretary agree that that is correct?

Mr. Clarke: It is what I have just said. Paragraph (6) is the mirror reflection of K.9. They repeat each other. Article 100c has the very restricted application that I have described exhaustively. It can be extended only by the process referred to in article K.9, which requires a unanimous vote in the Council of Ministers, followed by ratification by each of the 12 member states under their own constitutional procedures. The current political reality is that there is not a snowball's chance in Hades that either the British Parliament or the Danish Parliament will agree to any such extension—assuming, for the moment, that the British and Danish Governments stand on their heads and suddenly decide that they wish competence to be enlarged.

The provision is even more restrictive than the hon. Gentleman has indicated. Even by the process provided for in article K.9, one could not bring in everything that is set out in article K.1. One can go down only to paragraph (6). So far as I can see, there is absolutely no procedure for bringing into competence, by any process whatsoever, judicial co-operation in criminal matters, customs co-operation or police co-operation.

Mr. Spearing: Why not?

Mr. Clarke: Because it would require another treaty —if we ever finish debating the Maastricht treaty and anybody contemplates another one. The next treaty revision is due in 1996.

We co-operate on a totally intergovernmental basis over the issue of policing, and have done for a long time. The Trevi meetings have been conducted for a long time. The most important part of the Trevi process is the operational level and the co-operation that must develop between 12 police services in a community such as the European Community.

I was asked about the process of developing Europol. There have been some active politics on the issue. The British Government are in favour of establishing Europol. We were in favour of establishing a drugs information unit to have effect from 1 January 1993. During our presidency, when I presided over the Council meetings, I did my best to achieve its establishment on 1 January 1993.

I assure the hon. Member for Sedgefield that there is no question of Europol cutting across Interpol. That is the plain view of the vast majority of European Community members. However, we see a case for a criminal intelligence gathering operation between the 12 member states, aimed at international organised crime, primarily drug trafficking.

Progress on Europol is still proving irritably slow for all 12 member states. The delay illustrates the dangers of proceeding by unanimity. All 12 member states want Europol, all want to begin with a drug information unit and all want Europol to start on 1 January 1993. We managed to reach agreement on the nationality of the director-general, but we failed to reach a unanimous conclusion about where the headquarters should be located. So scrupulous are the protections built into the procedure to satisfy sensitive Members of Parliament here and in other Parliaments who are concerned that sovereignty might be given away that until all 12 member states agree on where the extremely important organisation should be located and until all 12 Ministers have given their consent, returned to their Parliaments and received approval, the organisation cannot be set up. If that process does not underline the extent of the security to protect our sovereignty and reassure those concerned about Community competence, few other factors will.

My position, adopted on behalf of Britain, was that I could not care less where the headquarters were located. I made it clear that the British would vote for whatever location might command unanimity among the other member states. Unfortunately, there were other sensitivities involved, and the matter remains to be resolved. I hope that the problem will be resolved during the Danish presidency.

Mr. Maclennan: The Home Secretary is giving us a most fascinating account, and I am grateful to him for underlining some of the points that I was trying to make

about the difficulty of progressing by unanimity. However, I am still unclear about the last part of article K.9. Is it envisaged that Community competence—which he said could be extended under that article—will extend to matters of Community legislation such as binding directives that have passed through the normal Community processes? Article 100c does not appear to provide for that. It appears to provide for common decisions on policy such as setting up the headquarters for Europol. That seems to be a restrictive provision—even more restrictive than that suggested by the Home Secretary.

Mr. Clarke: I think that we are talking about the difference between having Community competence and not having it. When a list of countries requiring visas, such as that under article 100c, is drawn up, it will be a matter of Community legislation. It will be dealt with as Community legislation when it is subjected to the scrutiny of the House. There is no provision for Community legislation on intergovernmental co-operation—the third pillar activities—so we would proceed with such measures by politically binding agreements, by resolutions. If their Parliaments approved them, the 12 member states would then make the necessary changes to their immigration laws and rules in order to comply with the Community policy.

The effect of bringing a policy into Community competence would be to move from the sphere of intergovernmental co-operation into the treaty of Rome as amended, opening up the way for such matters to proceed by way of European legislation. For the reasons that I have given, I do not think that that is likely at present.

I hope that I have satisfied the Committee, with the co-operation of the official spokesmen of the two other parties, that the amount that we are ceding under the third pillar is slight. I should like to believe that I have persuaded the Committee that a positive advantage of the Maastricht treaty is that it opens up a far more sensible procedure than we have hitherto had for the co-operation that we desire on justice and interior matters. I think that we have dealt with most of the fears expressed. I understand why people have fears over such important matters, but there is no question of Community competence over the issues that I have described.

I shall not enter into the other arguments of policy. They have been a feature of discussions on the Maastricht treaty throughout most of western Europe. Some people believe that a flood of immigrants will be let in by Community activity outside Government control; on the other side of the argument, others believe that we are setting up a fortress Europe and that many people will be kept out who should be let in. The key issues of immigration rules and asylum will remain a matter for the Government, the House and British immigration rules, subject to our continuing commitment to the Geneva convention and the European convention on human rights.

Sir Teddy Taylor: What are the implications of the continuing disagreement with the Commission—according to the Home Secretary's letter—on the interpretation of article 8a?

Mr. Clarke: That is a small footnote matter to raise at this stage in the debate. It remains the Government view—repeatedly asserted to the Commission—that we have committed ourselves, under article 8a of the Single European Act, to the free movement of European Community nationals within the Community. We believe that we are entitled to retain our immigration controls on third country nationals. That remains our position. The Single European Act was entered into by a Government of which I was a member under my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher. That issue will be discussed in one quarter or another, but is not a matter for the Maastricht treaty or for today.

Mr. Cohen: I very much oppose article 100c, and I have not been convinced by the speeches of either Front-Bench spokesman. Therefore, I support amendment No. 8, which would exclude article 100c. That is why I asked my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who moved the amendment, whether he was for or against it. I am for it, but it appears that he is against it, in principle. However, I know that my hon. Friend, who has a good record on those matters, would not touch with a bargepole any similar measure, outside the context of the European treaty, that would transfer asylum or immigration policy to faceless bureaucrats.

The Government will allow no amendment of the Maastricht treaty. It has to be passed as it is. The role of the House of Commons is to scrutinise Bills and get rid of bad aspects, but that goes to the wall if no amendments are allowed. The logic is that, however appalling an article in a treaty, it has to be driven through the House. We know that that is the view of the Government, but I am sad to note that it is also the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield.

I do not agree with my hon. Friend that we shall not get to the lowest common denominator. I believe that the whole process has been set up so that we can go to the lowest common denominator in immigration and asylum policy among European countries. Where are there any commitments to racial equality or to family reunification as a right?

Mr. Bernie Grant: Is my hon. Friend aware of the debates that took place in the Committee considering the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill on the removal of visitors' right of appeal? When we did a trawl of practice in European countries, we found that Britain was the only country that had the right of visitors to appeal enshrined in law. In other countries, that right was on an ad hoc basis and in some did not exist at all. The Trevi group brought British standards down to the level of Belgium and other similar countries. That is an example of the lowest common denominator being applied, and if it can happen here, it can happen with other aspects of the Bill.

9 pm

Mr. Cohen: That is a good example. I pay tribute to the work done by my hon. Friend and others on the Committee in drawing out those matters. He is right to point out that the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill will get rid of the right of appeal, thereby bringing us down to the level of other European countries and introducing the principles of article 100c.

Tied up with the lowest common denominator argument is the point about immigration and asylum policy being conducted in secret. That is abhorrent. Already, officials in Ministers' private offices can interpret rules as they like, and Members of Parliament do not have

[Mr. Cohen]

much influence on that process. How much worse will that be if the decisions are taken by bureaucrats in Europe in secret?

Ministers will also make secret deals. Every now and then, when there are negotiations, perhaps over a subject that has nothing to do with immigration or asylum, deals will be struck in secret. One Minister will say to another, "You support us over an agricultural tariff and we will support you over the countries to go on visa lists." There is a grave risk that that will happen, although it would be scandalous if it did, because people's lives and rights—for example, to visits from their families, fiancees, husbands or wives—are at stake.

The argument of my Front-Bench spokesman and those in favour of Maastricht is that immigration and asylum procedures are so bad that we must get some change, and the change that is on offer comes from Europe. That is not the right approach. The procedures may be bad now, but I do not see why we should have to accept them as bad for ever, and enshrined in article 100c. Faceless European bureaucrats would have control over many of the principles in our asylum and immigration policy.

The treaty moves on from one clause to another—from article 100c, which refers to article K.9, which in turn refers to articles K.1(1) to (6). Let us look at those latter articles. What do they say that the bureaucrats will have control over? It is said that:

"Member states shall regard the following areas as matters of common interests:

1. asylum policy;
2. rules governing the crossing by persons of the external borders of the Member States and the exercise of controls thereon;
3. immigration policy and policy regarding nationals of third countries".

The whole list will come under European control. The linking of article 100c with articles K.1 to K.6 and K.9 will give the Community the power to take responsibility for asylum and immigration policy, which I regard as offensive and highly dangerous.

The deliberations by the ad hoc Trevi group on immigration were secret. My hon. Friends and I asked detailed questions, seeking to establish the decisions that were made, but Ministers repeatedly refused to answer.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): No, we did not.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, they did. Ministers answered only sanitised questions tabled by Conservative Back Benchers, which allowed them to paint in broad-brush strokes a picture of the Trevi talks. We have never received detailed information on the decisions of that group. That abhorrent secrecy will continue, and the kind of procedure established by Trevi will be institutionalised by article 100c.

The Minister said that the House might be able to debate a statutory instrument if there was a legislative change—but if the interpretation or reinterpretation is that no legislative change will occur but only an administrative change, there will be no such debate. Some so-called administrative changes would be deemed by my right hon. and hon. Friends and me as fundamental—but no debate would be permitted in those circumstances.

It may be that certain powers are lying dormant in that provision—particularly in article 100c(2), which states that a visa requirement may be introduced

"in the event of an emergency situation in a third country posing a threat of a sudden inflow of nationals".

Who is to interpret that—a bureaucrat, as an administrative matter? He could make all the changes he liked without a debate in the House, which would be quite wrong.

If there were a debate on a statutory instrument, it is likely that it would last only one and a half hours, and would take place early in the morning, when most right hon. and hon. Members would have gone home.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) would oppose the measure—as he has many others, with great honesty—because people would be thrown to the lions and be denied a proper asylum policy, and families would not be allowed to visit their relatives. The Minister would stand at the Dispatch Box and say, "We're not in the same situation as before. All the members of the EC have approved this policy—so even if we agreed with you, we could not go along with you." It would be goodbye to any realistic opposition to such measures.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Can my hon. Friend explain why I heard an equally impassioned speech against articles 100c and K.9 during the French referendum, given by Jean-Marie Le Pen?

Mr. Cohen: I reject my hon. Friend's implication. I have no association with Le Pen and do not agree with him at all. I am totally opposed to his views.

Mr. Enright *rose*——

Mr. Cohen: No. I must tell my hon. Friend that many right-wing movements are building up in Europe, and they could end up having an important voice in the European Parliament. They might even take over some European Governments and have a say in British asylum and immigration policy. More dangerous than Le Pen's speeches now would be for him to be in a position to act because of the institutional changes that the treaty will make.

Mr. Spearing: We occasionally hear such questions during these debates and outside. Le Pen is anathema to me, as he is to my hon. Friend, both as a person and in his politics. But is it not conceivable that his reading of the treaty on this matter might coincide with that of the European Court?

Mr. Cohen: Everything that Le Pen stands for is anathema to me. I do not want to go into what he reads into the treaty. I need not go as far as France to find such people. There are people in this House who may vote in the same way, but for different reasons. Le Pen's racism is abhorrent to me.

We have heard some strange things about the European Court of Justice. Both Front-Bench spokesmen have been keen to say that it will not have a role in implementing human rights and giving rights to individuals. What an amazing thing for them to say.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield said that it may be involved in injustices. That was crushed by the Secretary of State, who said that it would not. He said that there would have to be unanimity before even member states could refer matters to the European Court. Certainly individuals will not be able to use the court if

their families have been denied visits. That is disgraceful. For both Front-Bench spokesmen to suggest that that is an asset is appalling.

Article 100c introduces majority voting from 1 January 1996. The United Kingdom's present asylum and immigration policy is appalling. I have tabled an early-day motion on that. It is anti-human rights. But at least that policy could be changed by a future Labour Government. That would not be possible under article 100c. A future Labour Government could be out-voted by the other European Governments, and we would not be able to change the policy that is set in stone by this treaty.

A Labour Government with good humanitarian intentions could well be shackled by article 100c, unable to adopt a humane asylum policy. That is an amazing situation. I would have great sympathy for my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield as Home Secretary in those circumstances. He would have to apologise to the House for being unable to implement the policy he wanted in order to save lives, because he was prevented by article 100c. I would not want to see my hon. Friend or any Labour Home Secretary in that position.

We have talked about a Bosnia-type situation. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield said that any one country could pull up the drawbridge. That is right, but under article 100c the whole of the EC could pull up the drawbridge. That could be done without any debate in the House. It could be done by the bureaucrats in the European Commission. None of the EC countries would let people in despite the life-threatening situations that they might face.

We would be stuck with institutions and procedures, shifting power to the EC, which have been set up by the Tories for their own narrow interests and view of immigration and asylum policy. I consider many of the Government's policies openly racist: some of the cases with which I have had to deal are clear examples of that. I do not want a future Labour Government to be stuck with quasi-racist policies with which they could not dispense because those policies had become a European institution.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made a good point about majority voting. He said that, although policy could be adopted under article 100c, it would be immensely difficult to change it if it proved to be wrong. He is entirely right. It might be impossible, or almost impossible, to alter a decision that had been made for the wrong reason—perhaps in panic.

9.15 pm

Our nation has certain long-standing commitments to other countries in the Commonwealth. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) mentioned Jamaica; others have referred to Hong Kong citizens. Those commitments could be cast aside by a majority vote. Certainly the Home Secretary gave no assurances about people's rights to enter this country, and to travel to other countries. The Commission could wipe out those commitments. Surely we should not allow that to happen without even a statement in the House.

Article 100c is obnoxious, and it should be opposed. It shifts immigration and asylum policy to faceless bureaucrats in the EC. Its ratification would make it doubly difficult—indeed, virtually impossible—for my constituents to be visited by members of their families who live abroad. The Secretary of State made that clear. Relatives will have to meet all the visa requirements set up by the Commission; even if they manage that, they will still have to face the problems of an immigration policy that —if the Government are given the free hand to which the Secretary of State referred—is likely to become even worse.

Especially obnoxious is the way in which asylum policy may put lives at risk. If the EC adopts the policy that we are discussing, along with a set of principles that cannot easily be challenged in Parliament, people will be forced to return to their own countries and face torture or death. They will be kept out of safe havens.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman speaks regularly about human rights, and no one doubts his integrity. I have often wondered what would happen if South Africa were suddenly to find itself in economic chaos, and to experience the problems that can arise at times of change. Many people might want to come to the United Kingdom, where their roots lie because of the origins of their parents and grandparents. What would happen to them if the Community decided that they could not come here?

Mr. Livingstone: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) who has just asked that question systematically voted for the Asylum Bill, which strikes out the right to be an economic migrant? As there is economic chaos in South Africa, the hon. Gentleman has provided a legal basis for keeping those people out of this country. We congratulate him.

Mr. Cohen: I shall not respond to that last intervention, except to say that many of those powers will be taken away from the British Parliament and given to the Community. I believe that lives will be put at risk by such a shift in asylum policy.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I do not propose to delay the Committee for more than 10 or 15 minutes. I thought that the last exchange was particularly interesting. Until now it has been this sovereign Parliament that has been able to make decisions about immigration and nationality. While the Opposition may not agree with current policies, nevertheless they must hope that the time will come when they are more to their liking. One thing, however, is certain. When the Maastricht Bill goes through, there is nothing that the House of Commons will be able to do about it. It will be unable to determine policy.

Until now it has been very much, with respect to my right hon. and learned Friend, a lawyers' debate.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I declined to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who waxed ever more lyrical about all this, but at some stage we should bring back the debate a little nearer to reality. My hon. Friend's opening proposition was startling. There is absolutely nothing either in the Maastricht treaty or in the Bill that takes away from this Government and this Parliament the right to determine our immigration policy and our immigration rules, except regarding certain vital matters that a few people get very excited about—the list of countries in respect of which we require visas and what the visa looks like. Otherwise, we are being treated to ever-wilder flights of fancy. I hope that during his 10 or 15 minutes my hon. Friend will not sail out on the same folly as that upon which the hon. Member for Leyton waxed lyrical.

Mr. Knapman: If we soon reach the position where there will no longer be internal barriers or boundaries, I do not see how our future policies will be anything like what they have been in the past. It is very much our fear that this Parliament will be unable directly to influence future policy. No doubt my right hon. and learned Friend will be able to exercise some influence from time to time, but the House of Commons will be a very ineffective check on any future Executive.

If a nation state cannot decide who its peoples are, it cannot, by definition, be a nation state. We know, from the make-up of the treaty, that the combination of Euro-citizenship and a European union without boundaries comes very close to what many of us believe to be a federal state. It may be that somebody can tell me the difference between an ever-closer union and a single institutional framework and how that is different from federalism, but I have not yet heard anyone do so. All that I know, having a 21-year-old daughter, is that if she told me that she had met a young man and that she was in ever-closer union within a single institutional framework, I should have to tell her that in all conscience I doubted whether that was a particularly decentralising remark.

If anybody in this country believes that the Bill is decentralising, I shall have to disagree. They certainly do not believe that on the continent. They certainly do not believe it in the continental press. Occasionally we have the benefit of the advice of Chancellor Kohl. In the *Financial Times* of 4 January, Chancellor Kohl was certainly under no illusions about what the Bill means.

This is potentially the most lethal part of the Bill. We are talking about the mass movement of people. I agree that the debate is all about article 3(c), article 8a, article 100c, article K.1 and article K.9. One needs, I believe, to say K.9 rather carefully. The mass movement of people, however, is the precursor to turmoil.

It is ironic that we should be proceeding with the Maastricht treaty just as the newspapers are telling us what really happens to those countries when they suddenly decide that they want free movement of peoples, capital and all the rest. Are we learning nothing from Yugoslavia? Have we learnt nothing from the USSR? What is the difference between what we are doing here and what they did there? It does not take too many decades to reap the harvest of that.

When the United States of America, Mexico and Canada were considering how to proceed, they were wise to study what we were doing; they took one look and said, "No, not for us, thank you very much."

Sir Teddy Taylor: Their unemployment is going down, too.

Mr. Knapman: This is almost a takeover bid.

The root cause of the problem with the Maastricht treaty is that it is for a small group of rich nations—it does not go wider, only deeper. Adjoining the rich nations are untold millions and tens of millions of very poor and often destitute people.

If anything brought down the evil empire in the east, it was the arrival of television. Years ago, the communist system could easily tell people that they were well off because it could jam the airwaves. Suddenly, it could no longer jam the airwaves—television arrived and the news travelled that the people were not well off. One cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

We are talking not only of Russia and other Commonwealth states adjoining it, although all are in desperate trouble—Romania, Albania, the Czech republic to a certain extent, or Slovak republic as it is now, Bulgaria and many more. The problem will not be restricted to the eastern boundary. Around the Mediterranean, Spain, Portugal and Italy will have problems of mass immigration—legal and illegal, although probably illegal—from north Africa and other small countries in Africa which have been racked by famine, disease and war.

There are so many thousands of miles of boundaries to the east and so many thousands of miles of coastline—do we really think that articles 3(c) or 8a and the rest will somehow control the mass migration of tens of millions of people? That may be our intention—I fear that it is—but it is doomed to failure.

Mr. Garnier: Could not the problem that my hon. Friend is apparently attempting to outline apply to any legislation? It is not special to the treaty or to the laws that follow. The problems of illegal immigration flow from the problems pertaining to population movements. It does not matter what the law is; illegal immigration will occur.

Mr. Knapman: I have already said that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, and, no doubt, all lawyers, look at it that way. My concern and, I believe, that of a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends is still that as long as our sovereign Parliament can decide what policies are for the benefit of the British people, we can at least be free to make our own mistakes. As an island, we have certain advantages in that respect.

Mr. Marlow: Is not the basic point that if we agree article 100c, article K or whatever, a Government—with whom we might or might not agree—can, through a short process and what is called unanimity, agree an immigration policy in Europe, put it to the House between 10 pm and 11.30 pm and have a vote, and that will be it? Instead of having a United Kingdom immigration policy, we shall have a European immigration policy. I might take a view different from that of the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant). He might want an open door, or at least more of an open door than I might want—and that is his privilege. I might want a restrictive policy.

None the less, after that fateful vote with the pressure of the Whips upon us, there would no longer be a United Kingdom immigration policy but a European immigration policy. Thenceforth this House would be powerless to do anything about it.

9.30 pm

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend puts the problem well. There we shall be, under pressure from our hon. Friend the Whip, being told to vote in a certain way. Those of us who do not do that will suddenly be revealed as men with no particularly secret sex lives—as overweight, with double chins, mousy brown hair and spectacles. We shall have nothing to hide; we shall no longer be the objects of our constituents' admiration. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is right in all that he says.

Problems, such as the mass movement of peoples, are already happening. One million immigrants entered Germany this year. It is all very well for us to say, "It is shocking. Some of them are rioting and killing immigrants." But before we get on our high horse, let us

ask ourselves what the reaction of the people of this country would be if we were asked to take in 1 million immigrants? Under the Bill, that is what we could face before long, whether those people came here legally or illegally.

Of course, Germany will be the magnet, because Germany has the economic power. People in general will look for prosperity. Germany has huge wealth; no doubt that has been much increased by the flirtation with the exchange rate mechanism. If people are looking for wealth they will go to Germany. A recent article about the Bundesbank said:

"'the Bank that rules Europe' . . . almost doubled its currency reserves between August and December (from DM98·2 billion to approx DM170 billion). Several nations in Europe are now having to beg for their repayment deadlines to be extended."

We know where the economic power lies and from economic power other power is derived. We should not be surprised at that. The centre of Europe will be parts of France and Germany and the Benelux countries. Power and wealth tend to move towards the centre.

People are beginning to talk about all that. The other day I was surprised to read an article which reported General Carlos Coll, a commander in the Spanish air force, as saying that there were

"clear indications of German intentions 'to become the leader of Europe' . . . Germany is whipping up a situation, he says, 'which could almost be described as the prelude to war'."

There is much more of that. The general is entitled to his opinion—but if that is what the Spanish air force is up to, we should examine his future pronouncements carefully.

Not all the immigrants are escaping from persecution. A large proportion of them are, but a large proportion merely want to better themselves. Some of the countries will be our partners in the EC. Others may hope to become partners. I wonder if we thought seriously about the effects on immigration implied by the present rate of wages in the Skoda factory. I believe that Skoda manages its body plant in the Czech republic and its engine plant in Slovakia—and that is just one of its problems.

Another problem is that for performing a 42-hour week a qualified Skoda worker earns about £120 a month. For somone earning that amount, what a temptation it must be to hear on one's television set that one could do the same work in Germany, probably much more easily and with more modern machinery and other equipment, and earn many times more. Of course, Volkswagen does not have plants only in Germany. It has plants in Spain where wages are considerably lower. The free movement of people will enable workers to go from the Spanish car plants to the German car plants where they can earn a great deal more. What is wrong with that? At a time of mass unemployment, the local people in Germany will not tolerate that.

We can pass laws here thinking that we shall somehow control the mass migration of tens of millions of people. We shall find out that we are no cleverer than our forefathers were. We are selling our birthright for a mess of pottage and for future troubles which are difficult to describe.

Mr. Shore: The contributions by Front-Bench speakers have not entirely allayed the anxieties about article 100c. The argument boils down to this. The Government say that there is a double lock on the door before responsibility for immigration policy, for asylum policy and for all associated questions is moved from the national Parliaments and Governments to the institutions of the European Community.

It is said that two locks stand in the way. The first is the trigger of the unanimity vote, which we have identified already in article K. The second is the further agreement within the ambit of article 100c to devise the rules for the future control of immigration and of asylum policy.

The Home Secretary, who unfortunately is not here, said that there was not a snowball's chance in hell of any Home Secretary or Minister agreeing to give up the fundamental and important rights that now belong to the British Government and the British Parliament.

I am not impressed by that reassurance. It is simply an assurance by a Minister that he will not give up those powers. In the whole history of the EC, we see the progressive surrender of the powers of national Governments to the EC, for one reason or another. I assure the House that we shall not have long to wait before 1996 brings the Commission, the Europeans and all the enthusiasts banging on the door and kicking down the pillars that have been established under articles K and J which separate, for the time being, these major areas of policy from the normal procedures of the treaty of Rome and the European legislative process, including the Court of Justice.

I am not impressed and I point to the dangers. If there had been real concern that we should not face those dangers in the future, the connections between articles 100c and K would never have been made. The Home Secretary and the British Government, if they had been determined to safeguard our rights in this area, would never have conceded that these matters should have been brought into article K of the Maastricht treaty.

I now focus on a matter that has not been discussed in the Committee today. There is not just one movement of people coming from third countries—about which I shall say a good deal later, because there is the danger of all that being brought under a new regime and new controls; there is a different movement within Europe itself. If we are concerned about fortress Europe with regard to the rest of the world, what do we make of the total freedom of movement of 300 million Europeans within the fortress?

Under the treaty we are saying, "You are free to come in any time. Bring your families with you. There is no constraint on the movement of people provided that you are European nationals. Provided that you are a national of one of the 12 European states, you can come in and enjoy the great privilege and advantage of going out if you wish to do so." The treaty of Rome did not give anything like that freedom. I shall remind hon. Members of the provisions in articles 48 and 49 of that treaty, but I will not go into detail:

"Freedom of movement for workers shall be secured within the Community . . . Such freedom of movement shall entail the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality . . . It shall entail the right, subject to limitations justified on grounds of public policy, public security or public health: (a) to accept offers of employment actually made;"

That is a reasonable provision.

If there are job shortages in a Community country and a shortage of labour services in another part of the Community, it makes sense to allow people to come and take those jobs. Indeed, if there is a shortage of specific skills, countries may wish to bring in people with those valued skills. That makes good sense. The freedom of movement is related to jobs.

[Mr. Shore]

A sensible immigration policy, for us at any rate, is based on three major considerations: first, to allow people in to deal with identified labour shortages. In the 1950s and 1960s, many people came to Britain from Commonwealth countries and from the colonies, as they were at that time, to deal with identified labour shortages. Secondly, we have a right, a duty and a great tradition of keeping our doors open for people who need asylum. That should be maintained. The next source of a continuing immigration policy relates to the first one. It relates to the dependants, the people who have a family connection. Thirdly, there is the right of families to come together, to join their menfolk if they are the first to arrive in the United Kingdom. Those are the three clear principles that have activated all post-war immigration and asylum policies in Britain.

We are now covered by the Single European Act, which says that we will have a Europe without frontiers. Article 8a, which relates to citizens of the union, says:

"Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move freely and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in this Treaty and by the measures adopted to give it effect."

I do not know what those limitations and conditions are and I would certainly like a response from the Government about them.

Article 8f provides that, because we have all become citizens of the union, we have the right not merely to look for work in other member states but to reside in those states, regardless of almost every other consideration. The right of citizens to reside is an important and fundamental shift and change. A nation and a state is defined by its right to decide who shall come to its land, who shall dwell there and under what conditions. As has been rightly said, there are differences between hon. Members in each political party and on both sides of the House about how generous or restrictive we are in allowing people to enter Britain.

It is a power of the British state to make such decisions. As long as we are a state, we must retain that power. We cannot possibly accept the transfer of that power to the European Community.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The right hon. Gentleman is developing an important, interesting and fundamental point. He has talked about the right of a nation. I shall bring the matter down to the local government level. I shall deal with some of the fundamental issues that might result from the treaty and the opportunity for people to be able to move freely to any country in the Community. Where would the opportunity for people to move freely put local authorities with regard to their function in allocating housing in a local government area? Would a citizen of an EC country merit equal treatment in the allocation of points, or in whatever system a local authority used to allocate its housing fairly?

9.45 pm

Mr. Shore: I do not know the answer to that. I should like to know what restrictions are placed on people exercising their right of free entry to Britain. Will they have that right regardless of whether they would be a burden on the state? Would the same requirement be placed on them as on so many of our constituents when they seek to bring their relatives into Britain—that they should have adequate accommodation? Will all those requirements be dropped for European citizens? If so, we are erecting two entirely different frameworks of law and systems of entry control which clearly discriminate in favour of the citizens of the nation states of the European Community who are now to become citizens of the European union.

Mr. Cash: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in Dover there is already a channel through which people are expected to drive or walk which specifically states in bold letters that it is for European citizens, even before we have completed the proceedings on the Bill?

Mr. Shore: It is disgraceful that officials in Dover should anticipate what the House of Commons will do.

My amendment deals precisely with the needs of public security and law and order. Clearly, we cannot accept arrangements under which anyone has the right to enter Britain without proper checks and reside here. The major check, especially on people who bring drugs with them or are planning outrages or terrorist activities, is the check at the border of Britain. The only effective check at the border is the passport. I want some additional assurance from the Home Secretary about passports.

The Home Secretary is well aware that it is the view of Mr. Bangemann, the Commissioner who deals with these matters, that we have a legal obligation enforceable in the European Court of Justice to allow European citizens to come into our country without showing their passport. That is the contention of Mr. Bangemann and the European Commission.

The Home Secretary has tried to hold Mr. Bangemann at bay and has not allowed the matter to go to the European Court of Justice, although he could still do so. Shall we continue to inspect the passports of people from the European Community countries? If we accept the Commission fudge that all that people need to do is wave a piece of magnetic cardboard and say that they are citizens of the European Community, we shall reduce passport control to a farce.

In any case, how can one tell without looking at the passport whether the person is a citizen of a European member state? As the Home Secretary knows, there are at least 8 million residents in Europe who are not citizens of European states. Will there be a differential between citizens and residents? How can the one be detected from the other without passport checks? I suggest that we are in grave danger of going much too far in our treatment of our fellow members of the European Community. By allowing European citizens to enter Britain with so little control, we are making tough and severe the discrimination between that category and other United Kingdom immigrants and their families as well as people resident in Europe who are not citizens of another European country.

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Gentleman is fishing for me to intervene. First, his question about the free movement of European Community citizens arises, as he well knows, from article 8a of the treaty of Rome, as amended, and is not affected in any way by the Maastricht treaty or by the Bill. Commissioner Bangemann asserts that under article 8a we are obliged to abandon what the Community would call internal frontier controls, which means checks at our ports and airports into European movements, but that is not a position that has ever been accepted by the British Government. It remains our view that the obligations that we entered into under the Single European Act, which was

approved by the House, commit us to free movement of persons within the Community as far as EC citizens are concerned. It is relevant to the Bill that there are certain rights of residence for EC citizens who choose to come here, but that does not mean that we have in any way abandoned our right to retain frontier controls on third country nationals who wish to come here.

I have had discussions with Commissioner Bangemann on ways in which EC citizens can be distinguished from third country citizens so that we can just let them pass through and concentrate on the immigration controls on third country nationals which it is, in our opinion, our undoubted right to continue to exercise. But that is not remotely affected by the Bill. The right hon. Gentleman's amendment rightly probes this area, but it is not necessary; it is not an amendment which has any consequential effect on this important problem.

Mr. Shore: The Secretary of State has not said how one can distinguish those immigrants or those people moving across our frontiers who have no right to come in from those who are European Community citizens. How, without inspecting passports, can one category be distinguished from the other?

Mr. Clarke: It is an administrative question whether we exercise sufficient control to identify EC nationals. For some time we have been loosening, so far as is practicable, controls on EC nationals crossing our frontiers and it is in our interest to do so. British people are as irritated by inconvenience in passing through frontiers as other EC nationals are. But we must ensure that our entry clearance officers have sufficient evidence of identification of EC nationals to be able to sift them out from the rest and to run the full immigration check on the rest.

I have had some discussion with the Commission on whether production of documents will be sufficient. I will not agree to anything proposed by the Commission or by anyone else unless, having consulted my own immigration and nationality division, I am satisfied that those officials whose duty it is to exercise immigration control into this country believe that whatever is being shown is sufficient for the purpose.

If one goes to Dover now, one will see coachloads of people going through. If the immigration officer has no reason to doubt that the coaches are full of British nationals or EC nationals, we do not insist that the officer holds everyone up for half an hour, clambering about the coach and opening everyone's passports. It is a question of common sense and practicality in each case.

Mr. Shore: All that I can say to the Home Secretary is that I do not see how any passport control officer can have sufficient evidence unless he is able to look at the passport, see whose it is and pass on. We have all done this many times. It is not particularly hazardous or difficult.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Surely the only way in which immigration officers can exercise some control at the ports of entry is by looking at the colour of a person and stopping all those who do not look white—stopping people like me—and asking them to produce a passport. That is the only way in which they can do it.

Mr. Shore: That is a high-profile way to do it. It is very obvious and conspicious. How does the Home Secretary think that the millions of people who are not of European origin, living in the rest of the Community and in this country, will feel when they experience at first hand the operation of the procedures? How will they feel when one lot of people is simply let through and the other lot is stopped, interrogated and examined?

The Home Secretary said in his intervention that the Maastricht treaty adds nothing to what is contained in the Single European Act or articles 48 and 49 of the Rome treaty. Are we really to understand that the resounding declaration in the article on citizenship of the union—

> "Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move freely and reside freely within the territory of the Member States"—

does not mean anything and has not added anything? Are we to understand that it is all guff, wind, noise and words?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall have to look up the quotation. The right hon. Gentleman is quoting from the citizenship provisions, which we shall debate in due course. New rights are given to European citizens, such as the right to vote in certain municipal and European elections and to stand as candidates. The other rights are to consular protection and so forth. I am content to discuss that.

The free movement of persons is not affected by the Maastricht treaty and by the Bill, except to the extent that, as a sovereign Government subject to the rule of a sovereign Parliament, we choose to co-operate in some changes. No one will reduce the free movement within the Community which has already been agreed for EC nationals. The important issue that the right hon. Gentleman is debating is how far we have already committed ourselves to that free movement under article 8a of the treaty of Rome which, for some reason, is soon to be called article 7a. The obligations imposed by article 8a are not affected by the Bill or by the Maastricht treaty. He has raised an important matter, but it is completely outside the ambit of our discussions.

Mr. Shore: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is telling us that the basic rights of free movement and of residence were already conceded under the Single European Act. They certainly were not conceded under the treaty of Rome.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept—as he, I and the Home Secretary were all here—that when debating the Single European Act we were not told that it could lead to the removal of internal frontiers? In fact, we were told exactly the reverse. Such things will now be decided by the European Court, not by the Home Secretary. If it decides that internal frontiers should go, there is nothing that the Home Secretary, the right hon. Gentleman or Parliament can do about it.

Mr. Shore: We shall need a searching examination of what the Government are committed to and what regulations and directives seek to implement clauses 48 and 49 of the Rome treaty and the relevant part of the Single European Act. It could be the case—I am not saying that it is, but I should like to know—that people can come into this country without any income. They might not be particularly attracted to this country, but some people might do that. They might have no intention of working here, be unable to look after themselves and thus become a burden on the state. Is that the case? I suspect that it is not, but I want to know. I want to know what we have entered into and what rights we have reserved.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): If the right hon. Gentleman's new-found concern about illegal immigrants—which comes as a big surprise to the rest of us—is so genuine, is he aware that the majority of them come here with valid papers and visas and overstay their welcome? Would he not support, at least in part, my view that we might deploy our immigration officers far more intelligently by sending them to the east end of London and to Leicester and Derby? That is how we will find the illegal immigrants and send them home.

Mr. Shore: I do not think that the hon. Lady followed clearly my remarks or my concern. I am worried about the fact that two standards are being created and I am conscious of that fact because many of my constituents are conscious of it. All that I know is that when I try to help to bring together families in my constituency they first have to cross the hurdle of the primary purpose rule. Secondly, they have to show that they will not be a burden on the state. Thirdly, they have to show that they have adequate accommodation. The relatives who may be brought in are limited to a very narrow range of people and they may enter only in very special circumstances. There is no such constraint in the case of people moving from continental Europe into the United Kingdom. It seems to me that this is discrimination, which will be resented greatly by immigrant communities in this country.

In addition, there are the approximately 8 million residents in continental Europe who are non-EC citizens. They will be stopped in the same way. They will not enjoy the free movement to which the Home Secretary referred. This is ridiculous. I am in favour of letting people come in to find jobs and of giving them reasonable rights, but I am not in favour of treating the rest of Europe as if its people were my fellow citizens.

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee to report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Adjourned accordingly at Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 January 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ALLIED IRISH BANKS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 2 February 1993.

DUNHAM BRIDGE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Read a Second time, and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION BILL

Read a Second time, and committed.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read
To be read a Second time on Thursday 4 February 1993.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Potato Regime

2. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the draft potato regime proposals to be next considered by the EC Council.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): The December Agriculture Council decided to consider the proposals again as soon as the European Parliament has given its opinion.

Mr. Dunn: With regard to the supply of potatoes from within the United Kingdom, does the Minister question, as I do, the sense of restricting what is grown here while permitting broad access for potato products from Europe?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend has a good point. At the moment there is no Community regime. The United Kingdom has its own system, based on acreage quotas and guaranteed payments. Nobody else has that system. If we moved to a Europewide regime and maintained our existing system intact, United Kingdom growers, uniquely, would face limitations while nobody else would. We should have to reflect on whether that would be in the interests of the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. John D. Taylor: As the Minister here, rather than a Minister at Stormont, has the responsibility of making representations on the potato industry to the European Community, and as there is a major crisis in the Northern Ireland potato industry due to poor weather conditions throughout the year, has the Minister yet made any representations to the Community about special support for that industry in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Curry: No, we have not. We have to discuss the future of the potato regime, which is crucial to the United Kingdom, especially as we now import more than half a million tonnes per year mainly of frozen chips. Our overwhelming priority is to settle the uncertainty that follows on the proposals, so that we all know exactly where we stand. Where we can give particular help to areas with particular problems, we shall find out what realistic opportunity there is to do so, consistent with Community rules and being fair to all producers in the United Kingdom.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is the Minister not aware that in the European Parliament a resolution was passed unanimously because of what happened to the recent potato harvest both in the Irish Republic and in Northern Ireland? Is the Minister aware of what the Commissioner said, and the promise that he gave? Why are the Government so slow? Why have they not made representations when the Irish Government are doing so and are to get something for their producers?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman will know that one of the certainties in life is that whatever the Irish Republic gets the Northern Irish ask for the same treatment. We have an extremely good record in ensuring that we can deliver that. The hon. Gentleman will know that I have

some experience of resolutions in the European Parliament. If I may say so, there are forms of persuasion that I sometimes find more persuasive.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Who is winding up Ministers about the need to abolish the potato marketing scheme? Could it possibly be McCain or United Biscuits—food processors, and two of Britain's largest crisp producers—companies which just happen to have paid £300,000 to the Conservative party in the past two years? Are they the people who now determine Government policy in these important areas? Are they the people pushing Ministers?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman's conspiracy theory comes a little earlier in the day today, but we always welcome an old friend and I suppose that it is better to hear it sooner rather than later. What he says is transparent nonsense. Our concern about the present scheme is entirely due to the fact that a very large part of the growth market is in processed potato products, and that market has gone more and more to imports. We want to ensure that the investment in processed products goes into the United Kingdom. We do not want to export our jobs, our manufacturing or our acreage. Our whole policy will be governed by the need to ensure that we create a climate for investment in Britain, so that jobs come here, acreage is planted here and added value comes to the United Kingdom. That is how we can do a good job for farmers, processors and consumers, based on what we can produce ourselves.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Will my hon. Friend continue to keep in mind the fact that the growers of Lincolnshire, the main potato-growing area of Britain, strongly support the retention of the present potato marketing board and are deeply apprehensive about any proposal to change it to some sort of European scheme under which they feel that their interests will be sacrificed?

Mr. Curry: I believe that the one thing that would sacrifice their interests would be if we agreed a scheme in which everyone in the Community could plant what they wanted and there was free trade within the Community but the United Kingdom alone was pegged back by acreage quotas. That would not be fair to British farmers. At all events, we will take care that the important research and development facilities of the board, and its important marketing activities, can carry on.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that throwing the potato industry to the free market is not a solution to anyone's problems? Will he take into account the special needs of the Scottish seed potato industry? Many of the producers and growers have invested huge sums of money recently to profit from and ensure progress under the existing system; they are telling Scottish Members that if the system is not broken it does not need fixing.

Mr. Curry: The system is not broken, but it has its problems, the main one being that in the main growth area of the market we have been increasingly supplied by imports. We now import 530,000 tonnes of processed products per year, and many of the chips in the great British fish and chips meal are imported.

As for seed potatoes, there is no question of a great contraction of British potato acreage in different circumstances. People are not falling over themselves to get out of growing potatoes, but we want more people to grow them. We have more varieties than many continental countries. There is a market overseas for Scottish seed potatoes because we can boast greater variety and expertise than many other countries, and we want to exploit those advantages.

Set-aside

3. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce the provisions of the permanent set-aside scheme.

Mr. Curry: We are awaiting a Commission proposal on non-rotational set-aside under the arable area payments scheme and expect decisions later in the year. We are also considering how to implement a scheme for the 20-year withdrawal of land from production as part of the agri-environmental programme. We shall be consulting on both schemes shortly.

Mr. Field: Does my hon. Friend recognise the love that the British people have for the patchwork neatness of the British countryside in areas such as Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and the anxiety of the public and of farmers about the possibility of growing weeds and brambles on good quality agricultural land? Will he push the Commission hard to come up with a scheme that will ensure that some set-aside money goes into planting broadleaf woodland such as the good old English oak?

Mr. Curry: I am as pro-tree as my hon. Friend is. We hope to be able to implement two schemes that will answer his concern. The first is the so-called non-rotational scheme, which can use land set aside for periods longer than a year for things like woodlands, biomass, wildlife habitats and archaeological sites. A long-term, 20-year scheme will be heavily targeted at the creation of habitats. The two schemes will show that we can build many sensible environmental benefits into the set-aside programme.

Mr. Tony Banks: Can the Minister not see the sheer injustice of the situation in which farmers are paid not to grow things while miners are thrown out of work? If farmers can be paid not to grow things, why cannot miners be paid not to mine things?

Mr. Curry: Farmers are not being paid not to grow things: they are being paid for the penalty of a loss of income on land which would otherwise cost every person in the United Kingdom too much money. The whole purpose of what we are trying to do is to build sensible environmental benefits into the programme. I know that the hon. Gentleman is greatly concerned about that aspect of policy. I am sure that he will find when he makes trips into the countryside that when the schemes are operational not only will they result in cheaper cereals, which will benefit his constituents, but the countryside will benefit from being environmentally enhanced.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

4. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made towards the establishment of new environmentally sensitive areas.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I announced the launch of six new environmentally sensitive areas last week.

Lady Olga Maitland: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that news. Does he agree that environmentally sensitive areas are as invaluable to those who live in towns as they are to those who live in the country, because they make the countryside more attractive to visit, visits result in tourism, and tourism results in jobs?

Mr. Gummer: I agree with my hon. Friend. There are a number of environmentally sensitive areas within easy reach of her constituents. ESAs enable us to target money to improve the countryside, to keep that which we especially want to keep and to ensure that farmers are able to look after the countryside in the way that townspeople and suburban dwellers want. ESAs have been recognised by the rest of Europe as perhaps the most enlightened advance in environmentalism since the war.

Mr. Roy Hughes: What constitutes an environmentally sensitive area? Does the category include areas in which there are badger setts? Will the Minister take account of the fact that in some instances dogs have been allowed into badger setts and that recently on the land of a Mr. David Samworth of Melton Mowbray setts were blocked with steel drums? Will he try to ensure that my Badgers Act 1991 is operated in both spirit and letter?

Mr. Gummer: As nearly 12 per cent. of the land area of England will be covered by environmentally sensitive areas, it would be difficult to imagine there not being badger setts in some of those areas. I do not think that in any of the prescriptions for environmentally sensitive areas we have a specific point about badger setts. I should not like the hon. Gentleman to think that he had edged his question into a different one, but I will look into the question of badger setts and environmentally sensitive areas.

Sir Jim Spicer: May I assure my right hon. Friend that the people of West Dorset are delighted to see the establishment of the South Wessex downs environmentally sensitive area? They will greatly appreciate that in future. My right hon. Friend knows that part of the world well. The area finishes at Maiden Newton, but it would be extremely nice if it could extend to my home town of Beaminster. May I make future representations to him about that ?

Mr. Gummer: I should be happy to have representations. When I was Minister of State and piloted the first ESA scheme through Committee, all the criticisms were that it would not be taken up and that farmers and conservationists would not like it. The Labour party said that we should not do it like that, and that it should not be done by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food but by conservationists. It has turned out that farmers have learnt from conservationists, and conservationists have learnt from farmers. The Ministry's involvement has meant that many more of my officials have been trained in conservation as well as in production. The scheme has been most successful and I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) whose idea it was.

Farm Incomes (Disadvantaged Areas)

5. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average income for mostly sheep farms in severely disadvantaged areas in 1988-89 and in each subsequent year for which figures are available for England and Wales.

Mr. Gummer: Full details of farm income indices are in the Library. Hill sheep farmers' incomes in 1992-93 were higher than in any year since 1984-85.

Mr. Jones: I am sorry that the Minister did not choose to answer the question on the Order Paper. Had he done so, it would have been obvious that although farm incomes have risen during the past 18 months, it has been from a very low base. Nevertheless, the right hon. Gentleman has reduced hill livestock compensatory allowance by 26 per cent. Having taken that unprecedented step, will he give the House a firm promise that should the EC-funded payments for ewe premiums go down, he will put up HLCAs to compensate?

Mr. Gummer: I hoped that I had answered the hon. Gentleman's question as well as I could. There is a long series of figures available in the Library which will probably answer it. I hope that he will look at them.

It is true that nominally there has been a significant increase in incomes, but I accept that it has been from a low base. Perhaps the better measure is the fact that every farmer—with so few exceptions as to make "every" the most accurate description—will receive £1·80 extra for every ewe this year than he received last year, which is the year under discussion rather than the year before. That can hardly be considered a cut.

The HLCA is designed to be a compensatory payment. The reason why it fell, although the total subsidy and extra help rose, was that overall incomes have risen by 50 per cent.—admittedly, as I have said in every announcement, from a low base. By law, we must take that into account. In the past, when incomes have fallen we have raised HLCAs. That has been the Government's policy, we are committed to it and I shall stick to it.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend accept that he has clearly said that although the income of hill farmers, especially sheep farmers, has risen marginally, it has been from a very low level? Does he accept that in some cases the cuts that he is making in HLCAs can turn a small profit into a loss?

I have seen the projected accounts for two of my sheep farmers in the Peak park. They are likely to make a loss this coming financial year based on the HLCA payments that they will receive, including the increase in extra help that my right hon. Friend mentioned. That will not enable them to make the contribution to the maintenance of the Peak park that so many people consider to be so important, especially the restoration and maintenance of dry stone walls.

Mr. Gummer: I think that my hon. Friend cannot be right in his figures. As the total amounts have gone up and every ewe will attract an additional payment of £1·80 this year, those farmers cannot go into loss because of some cut. Overall, there has been no cut for each farmer. A quarter of the farmers that we are discussing receive

payments specifically designed to maintain dry stone walls because they are in environmentally sensitive areas. I have yet again increased the amount available for that.

My hon. Friend is very careful in his defence of his constituents and I honour him for that. However, there can be no answer other than to say that the Government have increased the support for agriculture in the hills. We are committed to that. A man with 1,000 ewes receives £30,000 in subsidy.

Mr. Tyler: Does the Minister agree that it all depends where we start? Will he confirm that the average level of farm incomes in the upland areas has dropped to almost a quarter of what it was in 1982? An answer that the right hon. Gentleman gave to my hon. Friend the Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) showed that the severely disadvantaged areas have had a cut of 45 per cent. for higher rate sheep and 60 per cent. for lower rate sheep. Will he confirm that had there not been a devaluation of the pound, he would have had to increase HLCA payments this year?

Mr. Gummer: The facts of the matter are that sheep farmers are getting more this year than they were last year and that we considerably subsidise sheep farming. Sheep farmers' incomes have risen by 50 per cent. in the past two years. Many others on low incomes cannot say the same. I am committed to go on helping the sheep farmers in the hills so that they can look after the hills properly. The hon. Gentleman represents a party which rightly asked for compensation when incomes fell, but is not prepared to act accordingly when incomes rise.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it would be fairer to see the £20 million recovered across the whole of agriculture rather than from the farmers who are on the most meagre of incomes? My right hon. Friend has already recognised that we are dealing with a low base year, but he knows that, according to the figures that he has placed in the Library, the proportion in terms of income is in the low thousands of pounds. Will my right hon. Friend outline to the House why the cut has not been spread across agriculture as a whole rather than imposed only on the poorest farmers?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend seems to have missed the fact that a further £70 million or £80 million has gone directly to the hill farmers because the additional payment is made on each ewe. In those circumstances, lowland sheep farmers are facing particularly tough problems. I made sure that payments on cattle in the hills and the high hills were kept up because there had been no reduction in incomes there. When we have to make cuts it is right to ensure that they are made in the areas where there are significant increases. We cannot ignore the fact that every farmer in that situation is receiving more from the taxpayer this year than he did last year.

Dr. Strang: Surely the Minister appreciates that the hundreds of hill farmers who converged on Parliament earlier this week are perfectly well aware of the £1·80 increase in the premium to which he referred. But if income is cut by 50 per cent., as happened to them, an increase of 100 per cent. on that figure is needed to return to the original level. When will the Minister understand that the industry is so disturbed about this because he seems to be saying that he is prepared to cut their incomes in order to prevent them from reaching a level which gives hill farmers a reasonable return for their labour and increases investment in the hill areas?

Mr. Gummer: But £470 million a year of taxpayers' money goes into the hill areas. We are increasing that amount this year at a time when Government expenditure is being severely curtailed. At a time when many have had no increase in income at all and some have seen their incomes fall, we are significantly increasing the incomes of those people. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is talking tosh.

Food and Drink

6. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on initiatives to stimulate food exports.

10. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department is taking to reduce the balance of trade deficit in food and drink.

Mr. Gummer: I have introduced the group marketing grant and announced an independent review into how best Food From Britain can serve industry's future needs. We are holding seminars with about 150 companies to encourage exports. The Prime Minister's two industry seminars have resulted in important initiatives. David Naish—in a personal capacity—is co-ordinating the follow-up action to these.

Mr. Martin: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Having a commercial port in Portsmouth, we understand the importance of exports to our economy. Will my right hon. Friend continue to do all that he can to encourage food manufacturers and producers in the competitive markets which now exist overseas?

Mr. Gummer: We are doing exactly that, and I am happy to say that exports are rising faster than imports. That is a good start, but there is a long way to go and we need to work at every possible outlet.

Mr. Streeter: While recognising the important contribution made by Scotch whisky to our balance of trade figures, does my right hon. Friend agree that the punitive levels of duty on United Kingdom wine and whisky make those home-produced goods far more expensive in Britain than imported goods? Is that not why many people buy French, Spanish and Italian wine and whisky from abroad? Is it not time to review those levels of duty, end that discrimination against home producers and put British interests first?

Mr. Gummer: That matter is for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who must weigh a number of factors together. There is no doubt that in the single market the pressures on various excise duties become very noticeable.

Mr. Salmond: Is the Minister aware of the lively debate about the possible impact of his proposed abolition of the potato marketing scheme on the level of potato exports? Will he confirm that he intends to abolish the scheme because he wants to do so, or does he claim that he has no alternative because of the incoming EC regime? Does the Minister know that many people are praying for a change of heart on his part?

Mr. Gummer: I say to the hon. Gentleman absolutely frankly that there is a real problem with the situation of the present potato marketing board. We are currently restricting the volume of potatoes that we grow in this country, and there is increasing importation of frozen chips and the like. The growing market sector is processed potato. If we do not take the matter seriously now, our industry will find processors moving abroad and obtaining their potatoes abroad. Anyone who ignores that is ignoring the economic facts and ought to be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Morley: I assure the Minister that we support a strong export trade in food products. However, when it comes to meat exports we would rather see adequate local slaughter facilities and exports of meat rather than of live animals. Is the Minister aware of the concern felt about his resumption of live animal exports to Spain, and about the impact of the single market on live animal exports? Will the Minister join me in condemning the fact that cattle were left for more than 20 hours in a lorry at Fishguard recently because there was no room at the lairage there? Does he agree that the best way to eliminate such problems is to press for an eight-hour limit on animal transport and for tighter regulations?

Mr. Gummer: I am totally committed to better, Europewide regulations on animal transport. The hon. Gentleman knows that I have been fighting for that. I have insisted on retaining national measures in those areas not covered by the Community, even after the opening of the single market. The hon. Gentleman knows that I always condemn any ill treatment of animals, and I support him in that. However, we must have a Europewide arrangement. Otherwise, I will have no powers, for example, to stop the export of live animals to Spanish slaughterhouses that receive Community approval. I could not legally do that. We need a Europewide regulation.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that of the 46 per cent. of Scotland's potato crop that is grown in my constituency, much of it is exported? Is he aware that farmers in my constituency are saying that if we scrap the potato marketing board under the present scheme the probability is that, because of the risks involved, farmers will be forced into cereals? Does my right hon. Friend consider that a stimulant or an alternative to exports?

Mr. Gummer: Is it not fundamentally unlikely that whereas every other country has a healthy potato producing industry, ours is the only one that could protect its potato industry only by insisting that we impose restrictions that no other country has? Would my hon. Friend allow me to announce to the House that the Community had decided to allow everyone in Europe to produce as many potatoes as they liked, but that Britain would be restricted to a quota? My goodness!—my hon. Friend would stop talking about Maastricht and give me hell on that.

Promotion

7. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what efforts he has made in the last year to promote British agriculture.

Mr. Curry: Agriculture Ministers take every opportunity to promote British agriculture. We have met, individually, representatives of more than 80 food companies, for example, to explore ways of meeting the challenges of the single market.

Mr. Eastham: When the Minister last met officials of the Meat and Livestock Commission, was adequate time spent discussing meat exports to Europe and the general feeling that it is being run on a shoe string? With greater effort, far more meat could be exported to Europe, with Britain enjoying a greater share of exports.

Mr. Curry: As a matter of fact, I meet the MLC regularly and that is what we discuss. The MLC has its own promotional activities. Indeed, I accompanied it to France a little while ago specifically to promote British meat. Our beef and lamb exports are doing very well; we export one third of all the lamb that we produce and there is also a healthy market for our pork. The MLC is showing the way to other organisations, but what will sell the meat is quality, and we have the quality.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: In his attempts to promote British agriculture, will my hon. Friend address with vigour the problems created by poultry meat inspection costs? Is he aware that independent assessments indicate that United Kingdom producers, especially those in my part of the world where the full costs of poultry meat inspection are applied, are some 5p per bird out compared with continental producers? The consequence of that is that we are being denied export opportunities and we are facing import threats as is evinced by Cargill's decision to locate its plant in France instead of in England.

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend raises a serious point. We are conscious of the costs of inspection to the industry. Of course that was partly necessitated by the salmonella outbreak in the United Kingdom after which confidence in eggs and poultry meat reached a low level and we have had to build up that confidence. However, there has been a change in economic circumstances because of the devaluation of the pound and our chickens have become relatively more competitive. We will continue to address the problems of inspection to ensure that it is carried out as competitively as possible, always being aware of the need to retain the industry in the United Kingdom, not least Sun Valley, which is an outstanding company.

Set-aside

8. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what area of agricultural land in Hampshire is currently subject to set-aside under the common agricultural policy; and what is the annual cost.

Mr. Curry: Some 2,750 hectares of land are currently set aside under the existing five-year scheme at an annual cost of around £500,000. Information on the land set aside under the new arable area payments scheme will not be available until growers have to declare the area later this year.

Mr. Denham: Are the people of Hampshire getting value for money for that enormous expenditure? Is not set-aside an inefficient and expensive means of reducing agricultural production and an ineffective way of protecting the environment? Would it not be better to use that money, for example, to remove the threat to the Thames Valley environmentally sensitive area and to

extend it and, more widely, to reward farmers for farming in a less intensive and more environmentally sensitive manner throughout the county of Hampshire?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman cannot escape the fact that cereal production was too high and had to be brought down quickly. The introduction of quotas and set-aside does that. We have never concealed the fact that we would have preferred to do it by price. The advantage of set-aside is that, first, it acts quickly and, secondly, one can build in environmental advantages. My right hon. Friend will make an announcement about the environmentally sensitive areas to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but at a time when people are crying out for environmentally sensitive areas it must be sheer common sense to make sure that people take advantage of those areas and we get the best value for money. My right hon. Friend has that very much in mind.

Mr. Hague: Does my hon. Friend agree that farmers in Hampshire and elsewhere will much more readily accept the idea of set-aside if they can be confident that it will be implemented properly throughout the European Community? Will he do his utmost to ensure that other national Governments implement their regulations with a zeal equal to that always shown by his Department?

Mr. Curry: I admire my hon. Friend's dexterity in moving from Hampshire to North Yorkshire so rapidly. That does wonders for the road network. Of course we shall pay particular attention to the problems that he highlights. I am just as concerned as he is, as my constituency is next to his.

Dr. Strang: Does the Minister acknowledge that the more land that is set aside, the more jobs will be lost? Is it not a matter of concern that the level of set-aside in Britain is above the EC average because of our better farming structure? Is it not a disgrace that under the current set-aside scheme, farmers are compensated for not producing, but the farm workers who lose their jobs in Hampshire and elsewhere as a consequence of the scheme do not receive a penny?

Mr. Curry: It is a matter of record that the United Kingdom has larger average farm sizes, so that the de minimis rule applies relatively less to the United Kingdom than elsewhere. But other countries are setting aside a far greater amount of land. The problem we faced was simple. There was over-production, people were paying too much for a product that was in surplus and the market was not allowed to operate. By introducing set-aside and compensatory payments, we have brought down the price of cereals, which is a major step in the reform of the CAP.

Beef Regime

9. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the introduction of the new beef regime under the reformed CAP.

Mr. Curry: Arrangements are now well in hand for the operation of the beef special premium scheme to begin on-farm during March.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that there is uncertainty among some farmers about the marketing of their stock during the transitional period, which I believe will be April and May? Will he comment on that?

Mr. Curry: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his comprehension of a very complex scheme. We have arranged for producers to claim premium in respect of April and May at the same time as they apply for their cattle identification documents under the new scheme. The forms are already available at regional offices and will remain available until the end of March.

Ms. Walley: Why do we have stockpiles of beef which elderly people in my constituency cannot claim and who fear that that beef is being thrown away? Why can we not have proper criteria to enable people to claim from the beef mountains?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Lady will know that there is a scheme for the distribution of beef and butter. It is not a very good scheme and it is not designed to tackle surpluses. Pensioners in the hon. Lady's constituency, like pensioners in mine, will be better served by the regime being reformed in such a way that beef is made more accessible to them; and perhaps we could have rather less panic from Labour Members about how bad beef is to eat, because it is not. The fundamental point of the reform is that we reduce intervention. We are encouraging the specialist producer, and I hope that Labour Members will do their bit by telling people that we produce very good beef and that they should eat more of it.

Scotch Whisky

11. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the export earnings of Scotch whisky from the European Community in the current year and each of the previous five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: With permission, Madam Speaker, I will publish the information in the *Official Report*. The value for the first 11 months of last year was £720 million, which was more than for the whole of the preceding year.

The following is the information:

The value of Scotch whisky exports to other EC countries to the end of November 1992 and for each of the previous five calendar years are:

	£ million
1987	409·52
1988	462·33
1989	536·14
1990	622·01
1991	717·76
[1]1992	720·14

[1] January to November.

Dame Jill Knight: Does my hon. Friend agree that negotiations on level playing fields and the harmonisation of duties are more likely to succeed if in Britain we treat our products in the same way as products are treated elsewhere on the continent? Is he aware that British Scotch pays nearly three times more in tax than whisky produced in Italy? Does he consider that to be fair? Will he discuss the matter with the Chancellor?

Mr. Curry: As my hon. Friend knows, the Chancellor is in purdah at present but I have no doubt that we shall be able to get a message to him to that effect.

Mrs. Ewing: Is the Minister aware that at a time when hon. Members in all parts of the House are arguing strongly for a level playing field, United Distilleries has announced the closure of five distilleries—four malt and one grain—with the loss in Scotland of 831 jobs? Will he consider the matter carefully, not only in connection with the whisky industry but in terms of the knock-on effects for those who grow grain for the distilleries?

Mr. Curry: The Scotch whisky industry is the fifth biggest United Kingdom exporter, so its future matters to all who are concerned about the future of our economy. My Department will take all steps possible to safeguard and promote that future.

Mr. Steen: Will the Minister congratulate the English Vineyard Association for forming a consortium to set up a stall on the docks——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is, as usual, most ingenious, but I remind him that the question relates to Scotch whisky.

Mr. Steen: Exactly, Madam Speaker, and as I was saying——

Madam Speaker: Order. A good try. Does the hon. Member wish to rephrase his question?

Mr. Steen: The English Vineyard Association together with the Scotch whisky industry plans to set up a stall on the docks of Calais to sell British alcohol—Scotch whisky and English wine—to English passengers travelling back from France to England so that they can save pounds in duty by buying English products at the French docks. Does he agree that that is quite outrageous?

Mr. Curry: I think we must congratulate both industries for recognising with such alacrity the laws of the marketplace and allowing consumers to benefit from them.

GATT

12. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been achieved in the current GATT negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The compromise that the European Community and the United States reached on agriculture last November provides a good basis for multilateral agreement. Negotiations are continuing in Geneva.

Ms. Lynne: In view of the announcement of import tariffs on steel made by the United States of America last night can the Minister say what effect it will have on the agricultural agreement or on any agreement we might reach on the textile industry, which I consider to be equally important?

Mr. Gummer: The United States should consider carefully its use of this instrument. There is no doubt that the United States has fought its own corner extremely hard and I deprecate some people in this country who suggest that the European Community should not stand up to them.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is making official visits to India, Saudi Arabia and Oman. I am pleased to advise the House that, following discussions with the Sultan of Oman, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has announced that Oman is to purchase the Challenger 2 as its new main battle tank, together with its armoured repair and recovery vehicles. I am sure the whole House will want to join me in congratulating Vickers Defence Systems on its well-deserved success in the first export order for Challenger 2.

Mr. Burns: Notwithstanding that extremely good news, on a slightly different subject, has my right hon. Friend had time today to see the deeply disturbing allegations of fraud in Hackney, coming on top of the discovery of possibly record local government fraud in the Labour London borough of Lambeth? Will he assure the House of the Government's determination to root out the systematic cheating and defrauding of charge payers?

Mr. Newton: Yes. I can certainly assure my hon. Friend of our determination in that respect and I have no doubt that we shall be joined in it by the Opposition Front Bench. I have also, I may say, been doing some research on what the commentators have been saying and I came across this one which said:

"in many areas . . . Labour local government is lacklustre and incompetent. In a few it is simply corrupt and nepotistic.

"This is nothing new. Ineffectual or rotten Labour councils . . . have been a feature of British political life for as long as anyone can remember".

That was in *Tribune*.

Mrs. Beckett *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: If that was in *Tribune* what about *New Statesman*?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Beckett: Is the Lord President aware that the December trade deficit of more than £1·5 billion is the worst for two and a half years and that whatever gloss he may put on it, the country is still in deep recession and deep trouble with no sign that the Government are prepared to do anything about it?

Mr. Newton: What I am aware of is that the trade figures recently have shown that for the first time for a very long time our share of world trade in manufactures has stabilised and that the figures—*[Interruption.]* that is, after decades of decline. The figures today, which inevitably reflect to some extent the consequence on import prices of the depreciation of the pound, also show that export volumes were at record levels for the three months to December; they were up 5·5 per cent. on the year before in the face of a slowdown in world trade, and there are particularly encouraging signs of a continuing increase in car and other manufactured exports.

Mrs. Beckett: I suppose that that was the gloss. The reality is that, despite a huge devaluation, exports this month are down, while imports continue to rise. That is unprecedented during a recession.

Is it not the case that we now have a payments deficit and a budget deficit, and that, for the past three years, 400 people have lost their jobs every day in London alone? Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that the people of Britain are worried sick about this, and that the only people who are not are the Government?

Mr. Newton: The reality is that inflation is at its lowest for six years, that interest rates are at their lowest for 15 years, that productivity is at an all-time high and that all surveys show an increase in business confidence. As I said on Tuesday, it is time that the Opposition stopped trying to talk that confidence down again.

Q2. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amess: Crime in Basildon has fallen over the past year. Does my right hon. Friend think it right for a mass murderer to be interviewed on television about his crimes, on the grounds that it is of educational value and in the public interest, when common sense tells us that it might well put ideas into the mind of a disturbed person? Does my right hon. Friend think that right? The majority of my constituents in Basildon do not.

Mr. Newton: I think that I can safely say that the same is likely to go for the majority of my constituents in Braintree. I can do no better than reply to my hon. Friend by referring to what my vigorous right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said on the radio this morning. He said:

"it is in my opinion contrary to public interest for somebody who is a mass murderer of his kind"—

of Nilsen's kind, that is—*[Laughter.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Very amusing, but I think that the Leader of the House wants to get on.

Mr. Newton: The Leader of the House wants to complete the quotation, Madam Speaker.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that it was wrong for

"a mass murderer of his kind to be allowed publicly to relate his offences in this way—it's bad taste, bad judgment and it's totally insensitive to the feelings of the victims of people he killed".

Mr. Ashdown: If things are so wonderful, as the Leader of the House claims, will he tell us whether he can recall a time when any Government have presided over unemployment of 3 million, while borrowing £1 billion a week and running up a trade deficit that is heading towards £20 billion a year? Is not that, by any standards, the mark of an economic policy that is floundering and a Government who have failed?

Mr. Newton: I am somewhat surprised to find the right hon. Gentleman joining Labour Front Benchers in their exercise of talking the economy down again. I repeat that the conditions for recovery are in place, and confidence is growing. I would expect to have the right hon. Gentleman's support in ensuring that that continues.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. Friend welcome the reduction in interest rates that was announced this week? It has saved British industry £1 billion. Is it not particularly helpful for our manufacturing industry, and to all those with mortgages and overdrafts? Is not some good news coming out of all the gloom? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Newton *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. All this hilarity is a waste of valuable question time.

Mr. Newton: The reduction in interest rates is indeed extremely good news. My hon. Friend might have extended the point that he made in his question by saying that, with the interest reductions that have taken place since 1990, we have seen £11 billion cut off the costs of British industry, and £160 off an average mortgage payment.

Q3. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martlew: Will the Leader of the House inform the Prime Minister, when he returns, that in the western part of the United Kingdom there is a great deal of concern about the fact that the Government are failing to give British Rail the necessary resources to upgrade the west coast main line? Does he agree that, without that investment, the economies of the west midlands, north Wales, the north-west of England, Cumbria, Scotland and Northern Ireland will be grossly disadvantaged? Does the Leader of the House agree also that it would be nonsensical for the Prime Minister to underestimate the political influence of areas that account for one third of Members of Parliament?

Mr. Newton: Should I be able to find the necessary extensive opportunity, in the wake of the hon. Gentleman's question, I shall, of course, report his views to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I have no doubt, however, that my right hon. Friend will disagree with the hon. Gentleman just as much as I do, against the background of the fact that British Rail's external financing limit next year is to be nearly £1·5 billion.

Q4. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rathbone: May I ask my right hon. Friend to request the Prime Minister to review the policies of the British Government and of the European Community towards Israel in the light of the horrible deportations that have taken place there and of the upholding of those deportations by the Israeli supreme court yesterday, and thus bring pressure on the Israeli Government to accept as swiftly as possible United Nations Security Council resolution 799?

Mr. Newton: It is obvious from the response to my hon. Friend's question that his concern is widely shared in the House. He will know that the British Government continue to urge the Israelis to comply with United

Nations Security Council resolution 799. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary sent a personal message to the Israeli Foreign Minister last week, and they will meet in Brussels on 1 February, when, as my right hon. Friend has already told the House, he will emphasise the need for the Israeli Government to take urgent steps to solve the problem of the deportees.

Q5. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gunnell: Will the Leader of the House give his estimate of the total number of jobs, in both the public and the private sectors, that are at risk through rail privatisation? Does he agree with Lord Prior's assessment that there will be 12,000 potential job losses in the areas of rolling stock and signalling? While I welcome the news for Leeds about the Challenger tank, may I ask the Leader of the House whether he agrees that more Yorkshire jobs will be lost in railway engineering factories in Hunslet, York, Wakefield and Doncaster as a result of these threats, unless there is action within weeks, rather than months or years?

Mr. Newton: I do not agree. On the contrary, my right hon. Friend's proposals for rail privatisation and the development of competition are the best means of ensuring an effective and efficient railway system and of guaranteeing jobs for many people in the long term. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging that his area, Leeds, and Newcastle, because of the Vickers presence there, are among those that will benefit from the work that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has done on his visit abroad.

Q6. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir Michael Neubert: Will my right hon. Friend spare some sympathy today for our Community partners, the Irish, whose traditional luck seems temporarily to have deserted them? Whereas Irish overnight interest rates have gone up to 100 per cent., we in liberated Britain have the lowest rates for 15 years, to the great benefit of business, industry and millions of home owners.

Mr. Newton: I very much share the pleasure that my hon. Friend has expressed in what we have been able to do over interest rates. It shows that we are now moving in the sort of direction that both British industry and the whole of the British people want to see in achieving economic recovery.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 1 FEBRUARY—Progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 10th day.

TUESDAY 2 FEBRUARY—Second Reading of the Railways Bill.

Motions on Customs and Excise orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motions on VAT orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY—Motions on the English revenue support grant reports. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (Contracted out Prisons) (No. 2) Order.

THURSDAY 4 FEBRUARY—Progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 11th day.

FRIDAY 5 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY—Motions on the Welsh Revenue Support Grant Reports. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means is expected to name opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet on Wednesday 3 Februaryat 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows:

Standing Committee A—Document No. 5761/92 relating to the incineration of hazardous waste.

Standing Committee B—Document No. 9752/91 relating to the investment and management of pension funds.

[Tuesday 2 February:

Customs and Excise Orders:

1. Customs and Excise Duties (Personal Reliefs for Goods Permanently Imported) Order 1992;

2. Customs Duty (Personal Reliefs) (Amendment) Order 1992.

Value Added Tax Orders:

1. Value Added Tax (Flat-rate Scheme for Farmers) (Designated Activities) Order 1992;

2. Value Added Tax (Flat-rate Scheme for Farmers) (Percentage Addition) Order 1992;

3. Value Added Tax (Input Tax) Order 1992;

4. Value Added Tax (International Services and Transport) Order 1992.

Wednesday 3 February:

English Revenue Support Grant Reports:

1. Local Government Finance Report (England) 1993-94 (HC 422);

2. Special Grant Report (England) (No. 5) (HC 423);

3. Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Capital Amounts) Report (England) 1993-94 (HC 424).

European Standing Committee A

Relevant European Community Document

5761/92 Incineration of Hazardous Waste

Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee HC 79-i (1992-93), HC 79-xvi (1992-93).

European Standing Committee B

Relevant European Community Document

9752/91 Freedom of management and investment of pension funds

Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee HC 24-viii (1991-92), HC 24-xv (1991-92), HC 79-i (1992-93).

Monday 8 February:

Welsh Revenue Support Grant Reports:

1. Local Government Finance Report (Wales) 1993-94 (HC 412);

2. Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (Wales) 1993-94 (HC 413).]

Mr. Brown: In spite of Maastricht and the Government's understandable reluctance to discuss economic affairs on the Floor of the House, will the Leader of the House confirm that time will be found in the near future for the social security uprating orders, the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on the coal industry, which is due tomorrow, and a day's debate on the detailed public expenditure plans of Government Departments?

Will he find time for the House to discuss early-day motion 941 which deals with the disconnection of domestic water services, or find time for the House to discuss hill livestock farming support?

[That this House is appalled that the number of disconnections of water supplies to innabited domestic premises has trebled, from 7,273 to 21,586, since 1990-91; notes that the health and safety regulations in the Factories Act 1901 and the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 ignore the fact that for millions of people the domestic space is also their area of work, that there is no provision for emergency access to water where disconnection has taken place and that this could lead to extreme danger to health in the event of an accident or fire in the home, that where disconnection has taken place this is likely to affect access to heating and will furthermore expose people to danger due to heating systems running dry, and that the installation of prepayment meters does not solve these problems and can exacerbate them in the case of the frail and elderly; and calls on the Government to extend the Health and Safety Regulations to cover all inhabited domestic premises and to instruct the water companies to recover outstanding payments through the courts and not by disconnection.]

May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the widespread anxieties of the shipbuilding and ship repair communities of Devonport, Rosyth and Tyneside, and remind him that we would normally have had the annual debate on the defence estimates by now? May I remind him that we are due a one-day debate on the Royal Navy in the near future?

If the Leader of the House is finding trouble in fitting all this in, perhaps he will consider withdrawing the Railways Bill from next week's business, particularly in

light of recent comments, so that it can be given more mature consideration before it comes to the Floor of the House?

Mr. Newton: In answer to the last question, perhaps I could, but I do not intend to.

As regards the rest of the questions, I note the point made about the Royal Navy. We have recently had a debate embracing the Royal Air Force but also focusing on events in the middle east.

I cannot undertake to arrange the debate that I think the hon. Gentleman was seeking in respect of early-day motion 941, or add to what I said to his hon. Friend last week on the question of further debating public expenditure. As regards hill livestock compensatory allowances, I would expect to provide time for the debate which many people wish to see, although I acknowledge that it is not in next week's business.

As for the coal industry, I will not attempt to add to what has been said on earlier occasions. There is a clear commitment to a debate in the wake of the White Paper that my right hon. Friend expects to publish when he has had a chance to consider all the various reports that he has had from the House and from outside consultants, and to consider future policy.

Lastly, on the hon. Gentleman's first point, about social security uprating orders, I will indeed be looking for a reasonably early debate, and perhaps the precise timing is best left for discussion through the usual channels.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I wonder whether it would be helpful to the House, and particularly the Government, if my right hon. Friend could tell us whether he intends to suspend the 10 o'clock rule on Monday and Thursday of next week, so that we may avoid a repetition of the sad events of last night, when convoys of ministerial cars converged on the Palace and there was no vote; when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was beached in the Smoking Room intending to vote, but there was no vote; and when my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) missed his Adjournment debate because there was no vote. Why was there no vote last night? Did the Government feel that they might have lost it?

Mr. Newton: I think that neither you, Madam Speaker, nor the House, certainly not the usual channels, would expect me to engage in the kind of speculation which my hon. Friend invites about the handling of Government business.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Having regard to the very serious unilateral action on steel imports that the Americans have recently taken, will the Leader of the House make time available for at least a statement, if not a debate, on the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations and the whole question of international trade?

Secondly, I am very pleased to hear that he is making arrangements for the debate on HLCAs, after the very successful farming lobby of this place earlier this week. Will he give us a guarantee that the debate will be on the Floor of the House and not in a Standing Committee?

Mr. Newton: Yes. I expect a debate on the Floor of the House.

I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the undertaking that he sought about a debate on GATT and trade matters generally, although of course I will consider the point that he has raised. He may like to know, if he is not already aware of it, that both Sir Leon Brittan, on behalf of the whole European Community, and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade have made clear in writing to the United States Secretary for Commerce our view that the American proposals for steel tariffs are unjustified and disproportionate.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week to debate early-day motions 1228-1232, which appear under my name on the Order Paper?

[That this House takes note of the Premium Savings Bonds (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 3116), dated 9th December 1992.]

Is my right hon. Friend aware that I have used this rather Byzantine procedural device to draw attention to a monstrous proposal by the Post Office to increase certain minimum payments, so that, to give one example, grandparents who wish to give premium bonds to their grandchildren must pay a minimum of £100 rather than £10? If my right hon. Friend cannot find time for a whole day's debate on this subject next week, will he bring his common sense to bear, knock a few heads together and try to stop this very unpopular move?

Mr. Newton: That is the kind of invitation to which any member of a collectively organised administration would be unwise to say yes, but I will certainly bring my hon. Friend's comments to the attention of the appropriate colleagues. I believe that he will find that those colleagues are Treasury Ministers, who are due here to answer questions on Thursday next.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): The Leader of the House may be aware that, today, a copy of "Job Opportunities" is circulating among employees of the Ministry of Defence which appears to contradict the statement made in the House on 12 January by both the Secretary of State for Defence and the Prime Minister that a decision had not been made about the nuclear refits contract. This document suggests either incompetence of the highest level by the MOD or that the House has been misled. Will the Leader of the House make time available at the earliest opportunity for a statement by the Secretary of State for Defence on this matter of great importance to my constituency, and to the whole nation?

Mr. Newton: I need hardly say that my right hon. and learned Friend will of course make a statement as soon as he is in a position to do so. But it is quite wrong—I give the hon. Gentleman this clear assurance—to interpret the document to which he has referred in the way he has. I understand that that has now been made clear by the Defence Research Agency. I will go beyond that and make it absolutely clear that no decision has yet been taken on the future of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, to many people inside and outside the House, it is not only incomprehensible but scandalous that we can once again devote two days to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill while ignoring the grave crisis in the Balkans, which gets worse each

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

week? May I once again urge my right hon. Friend to find time next week for a debate, on the Adjournment of the House if he likes, on that crisis?

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend knows, I am well aware of the concern that he has expressed in that regard, even though I have not been able to respond to it in my statement. I take note of his request, but I cannot make any definite commitment.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): I wonder whether the Leader of the House will give further consideration to the suggestion from my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) for a day's debate on the Royal Navy? The right hon. Gentleman must be aware of the great concern in the communities of Plymouth, Rosyth and Barrow and on Tyneside about future defence orders, but he also needs to be aware that more than 600 constituencies contain companies that place orders at Swan Hunter on Tyneside in my Wallsend constituency.

We need assurances that the Ministry of Defence intends to proceed with its order for a new helicopter carrier, which is why we need a debate to reassure the people of Tyneside and elsewhere in the country that the defence procurement programme will continue as planned.

Mr. Newton: I am, of course, well aware of the widespread interest—to put it no more strongly—in the matters currently under consideration by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, to which reference has already been made, but I cannot add to what I said in reply to an earlier question. However, in view of the fact that Vickers has a strong presence in Leeds and in the north-east—in Newcastle—I hope that the hon. Gentleman's constituents may also benefit to some extent from the work that my right hon. and learned Friend has done in connection with the Challenger order.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be real interest in next week's debate on the revenue support grant settlement? A number of important issues will need to be raised in that debate, but Conservative Members are greatly concerned about local government, specifically the growing evidence of corruption and inefficiency and the attempts by Labour members of councils to undermine the work of their officers. In my constituency of Worcester, they sacked the chief executive in order to give more power to the elected members. Can we therefore find time for a debate specifically on other aspects of local government?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that it would require exceptional ingenuity for my hon. Friend—subject, of course, to your guidance, Madam Speaker—to raise those matters in a debate on the revenue support orders.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Is there any chance that the Leader of the House could persuade the Secretary of State for Wales to make a statement next week on the future shape of local government in Wales? Does he know that we have been waiting for many months to hear the Secretary of State's views? Some of us are beginning to think that, when they are announced, they will merely be the pretext for parliamentary boundaries to be changed.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman need only contain his impatience until Monday, when the Secretary of State for Wales will be here to answer questions. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to put that matter to him.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. Friend announced that the 10th and 11th days of debate on the ratification of the wholly irrelevant treaty on European union are to take place next week. May I remind him that, in contrast, he and the Government did not find a single day throughout the whole of last year to debate the three services—the Navy, Army and Air Force—or the statement on the defence estimates, and that last week's debate on the Royal Air Force was hijacked by foreign affairs? In view of the fact that our armed forces are operational in Bosnia, Croatia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, is it not high time that we had a debate on the armed forces at the earliest possible date?

Mr. Newton: I do not quite share my hon. Friend's apparent feeling that last week's debate on Kuwait and other issues in the Gulf was hijacked. It seemed an important aspect of the work that the Royal Air Force is doing, and a proper opportunity to debate it. I have already said, in response to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), that I shall consider the possibility of further debates, to which he and my hon. Friend referred, but I am not in a position to promise one next week.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House give time at an early opportunity, preferably next week, for a debate on the operation of the Broadcasting Act 1990? The right hon. Gentleman will recall that that was allegedly a wonderful Government measure, but we have recently seen its consequences, with falling audiences for ITV and, because of the money paid for the franchises, cheap programmes now being put on the screen, of which one example is a squalid interview with mass murderer Dennis Nilsen. The Government could arrange a debate so that the responsibility for the deterioration could be placed firmly where it belongs—in their own hands.

Mr. Newton: This subject came up when I was answering questions on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a quarter of an hour or so ago. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is urgently considering what can be done about some of those matters. The Home Secretary is examining the question of the broadcast which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I should add that I simply do not accept the connection which the hon. Gentleman makes between those events and the Government's framework in which broadcasting now takes place.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will there be an opportunity during next week's debate on the revenue support grant to investigate the way in which large swathes of local government operate—especially the way in which direct labour organisations are preserved at all costs, to appease union paymasters and buddies? Conservative Members would be interested to know whether it is just coincidence that the very Labour-controlled authorities that have whinged for so long about being underfunded, and said that the Government kept them short of money,

turn out to be the authorities which have all along been lining the pockets of their sleazeball friends in the union-backed direct labour organisations.

Mr. Newton: The fundamental thrust of my hon. Friend's question is whether he may advert to all that when we discuss the revenue support grant orders—and the answer to that must be yes.

Ms. Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): The Leader of the House has already said that no decision has been taken on the future of Rosyth and Devonport royal dockyards. However, he must be aware of the uncertainty and the fierce competition between the two dockyards. Will he ask the Secretary of State for Defence to make an announcement next week and to comment on early-day motions 1236, 1237 and 1238?

[That this House notes that in a letter from the Prime Minister to the honourable Member for Dunfermline East, dated 6th January 1993, on the handling of the nuclear refit competition, the Prime Minister made no mention of Rosyth's second bid but specifically compared RD57 with Devonport Management Ltd's greatly cheaper docks modernisation scheme, even though senior Ministry of Defence officials had assured Rosyth that Scheme IV would be accepted and fully evaluated in the competition after it was formally submitted on 10th December 1992; is concerned about leaks from recommendations issued by the Secretary of State for Defence's office to senior cabinet colleagues in early January that Rosyth's Scheme IV bid had been dismissed as insubstantial and insufficiently developed, and criticised because Rosyth were unable to file a firm, fixed price early enough; notes that Babcock Thorn state they were not told of such reservations or given the opportunity to submit additional information; is alarmed that similar leaks claim the Ministry of Defence has recommended Rosyth lose all nuclear refitting contracts in favour of Devonport and take instead a five-year package of guaranteed surface ship refitting that will secure only around 1,500 of the dockyard's 4,200 jobs and a deeply insecure future, whilst Devonport will be guaranteed 30 years of nuclear refitting work; and requests an early explanation from the Secretary of State for Defence.]

Will the Leader of the House urge his right hon. and learned Friend to ensure a level playing field for Rosyth royal dockyard?

Mr. Newton: I know from conversations with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence that he is very much aware of the uncertainty felt in both places, and of course he is concerned to remove it as soon as he properly can. Beyond that, I shall simply draw his attention to the hon. Lady's request.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): In advance of next Wednesday's debate on the revenue support grant, will my right hon. Friend be able to find time for our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement on the investigations that have taken place so far into the disgraceful affairs in Lambeth, Hackney, and Monklands, East?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early statement, but my hon. Friend was probably present in the House yesterday when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was answering questions, and made some comment on those matters.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Could we have a statement, if not a debate, on the coal industry next week so that the President of the Board of Trade can be challenged on a statement that he has recently made three times on television—that the coal industry is subsidised by as much as £1 billion a year? The coal industry has not received a subsidy from the Government since 1988.

The President of the Board of Trade is getting mixed up about the fact that power station contracts were made between the electricity companies and British Coal three years ago, and since then the world price of coal has fallen. The President of the Board of Trade says that that represents a subsidy. He is like someone who took out a mortgage in 1988 and then, with hindsight, wishes that he had not, because the price of the house has fallen. It is time that the right hon. Gentleman stopped telling those subsidy stories on television, because there is no truth in them.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman appears to be attempting to stage, in the form of questions to me, the debate that will no doubt in due course take place when my right hon. Friend has brought out the White Paper that he has promised.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my right hon. Friend accept that rather too much time is being devoted to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, when other vital issues such as trade and industry, which make a direct contribution to our economy and with which we are experiencing severe problems, need debating? There are also matters relating to broadcasting—the interview with the mass murderer is an instance of that—and, as my right hon. Friend knows, the transmission into this country of pornographic material by "Red Hot Dutch". That, too, demands Government action. There are also other matters relating to the rural economy, to hill livestock compensatory——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is covering the entire horizon. I should be grateful if he would put a question to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Winterton: I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend would find time to debate these matters, which are of such critical importance to the country—now.

Mr. Newton: I have always been conscious that my hon. Friend has what might be described as wide-ranging interests. He has ranged so widely, as you have said, Madam Speaker, that I could hardly grant his requests in a month, let alone a week.

As it happens, I do not really agree with what he said, not so much about the importance of these other issues as about the Maastricht Bill. I happen to believe that the passage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill is extremely important to the successful future of trade and industry in this country.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that yesterday in my constituency, in Frankland prison, a prison officer was attacked physically and sexually while escorting a convicted rapist in the line of duty? Will he ask the Home Secretary to hold an inquiry into the incident——

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should be putting questions to the Leader of the House about the business for next week, not asking him to act as a post office to pass on messages to other Ministers.

Mr. Steinberg: Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the staffing in prisons, and on the privatisation of prisons, which will make matters even worse?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has now come well within the rules of order, Madam Speaker, because, as I said in my statement, there will be a debate on the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (Contracted Out Prisons) (No. 2) Order towards the end of Wednesday evening on 3 February. Beyond that, I understand why the hon. Gentleman has raised his point, and I will bring it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): May I briefly thank my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) for his unexpected support over the loss of my Adjournment debate last night?

Would it be possible to have a statement or a debate on the late-night opening of betting shops, an order governing which was laid before the House on 19 January? It is a matter of great concern throughout the country and particularly to betting shops staff and greyhound associations.

May we also have a statement at some stage on the future of pylon lines in north Yorkshire and Cleveland, a matter that has not been resolved——

Madam Speaker: Order. Members should ask only about one subject. I will not be able to call all hon. Members who have been rising at this rate, so I ask Members to be brief and to ask only about one subject.

Mr. Newton: In the interests of conforming with your guidance, Madam Speaker, may I say that I note my hon. Friend's request? I was sorry that he was frustrated in the matter of his Adjournment debate last night.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the Leader of the House acknowledge and, further, consider a debate on early-day motion 941?

[That this House is appalled that the number of disconnections of water supplies to inhabited domestic premises has trebled, from 7,273 to 21,586, since 1990-91; notes that the health and safety regulations in the Factories Act 1901 and the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 ignore the fact that for millions of people the domestic space is also their area of work, that there is no provision for emergency access to water where disconnection has taken place and that this could lead to extreme danger to health in the event of an accident or fire in the home, that where disconnection has taken place this is likely to affect access to heating and will furthermore expose people to danger due to heating systems running dry, and that the installation of prepayment meters does not solve these problems and can exacerbate them in the case of the frail and elderly; and calls on the Government to extend the Health and Safety Regulations to cover all inhabited domestic premises and to instruct the water companies to recover outstanding payments through the courts and not by disconnection.]

Given the representations that we have heard today from the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and from public health authorities and the citizens advice bureaux about the unacceptability, in health terms, of disconnecting domestic premises from their water supplies, will the right hon. Gentleman agree that a debate is necessary to ensure that water companies recover debts owed to them through the courts and to make it illegal for them to disconnect supplies from domestic premises?

Mr. Newton: I shall draw that matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend. The hon. Lady will know that, with the encouragement of the Director General of Water Services, water companies have been taking action to ensure that those who have genuine difficulties receive all possible help in meeting their debts.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on the plight of the Maxwell pensioners, and especially on the continued and disgraceful failure of the office holders who are responsible for the administration of the common investment fund to agree, nearly a year after Maxwell's death, to apportion that fund among the different funds that are responsible for the pensioners?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will know that, in some respects, the effort that has been presided over by Sir John Cuckney, who was appointed earlier this year by my right hon. Friend to oversee the recovery operation—if I may put it that way—which has been going well. I know that there are concerns about the allegations of delay on the point that my hon. Friend raises, and I shall bring them to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Leader of the House will know that, since the privatisation of water in England and Wales, domestic disconnections have continued to increase. Since this barbaric practice, which quite deliberately puts people's health at risk for the sake of private profit, is illegal in Scotland, and as this place claims to be a unitary Parliament, will the Leader of the House arrange for Ministers from England and Wales to come to the House next week to make statements explaining to English and Welsh Members why their constituents have been discriminated against in this terrible way? At the same time, will he arrange for a Scottish Minister to reassure us that disconnections will continue to be illegal in Scotland?

Mr. Newton: No doubt the hon. Gentleman is well aware that my colleagues from Scotland will be here on, I think, Wednesday. He may care to raise with them at least part of what he has just raised. As for the rest of the hon. Gentleman's question, I shll not attempt to add to what I said to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson).

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Could we have a debate on arrangments for pedestrians in heavily trafficked areas, and especially on the refusal by many people, particularly pensioners and young mothers, to use subways in Northolt and other areas of London for reasons of danger and so on? May we have such a debate next week so that those issues can be highlighted, no more expensive subways are built and proper surface crossings are made as they are needed?

Mr. Newton: I am a little uncertain whether the main drive of my hon. Friend's question is towards the Home

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Office or the Department of Transport, but in so far as it verged towards the latter, I can tell him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be here on Monday 8 February to answer questions.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on last night's BBC2 "Timewatch" programme which confirmed the crucial role of the Irish Government in the the formation of the Provisional IRA and the collusion between both those parties in launching the present terrorist war? Such a debate would be important, because some of the terms of the contract that was then entered into between the Irish Government and the Provisional IRA are still in force.

Mr. Newton: I made some comment on that, in response to one of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends, when replying for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Tuesday, and I do not want to add to that. The right thing to do now is to concentrate on the efforts of both Governments to defeat current terrorism.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 1259?

[That this House is concerned that British troops in the former Yugoslavia are facing not only hostile forces but also pay cuts and redundancy notices; and accordingly calls on the Secretary of State for Defence to ensure that British troops are paid in full and relieved of worries about their employment prospects.]

The motion has been signed by 23 Opposition Members. Some of us seem to remember that, at the last election, Labour's policy was to cut the defence budget by 30 per cent. Could we have an early debate on this matter so that they can tell us when the Opposition changed their minds?

Mr. Newton: I am tempted, but perhaps it would be proper for the response to come from the Opposition Front Bench. I am afraid that I cannot promise a debate next week.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): As a Conservative Member confirmed earlier, things are gloomy for British manufacturing. Therefore, the news that Vickers Defence Systems in my constituency has won an order from Oman is welcome. Does the Leader of the House agree that the credit for that should go to the company and its skilled work force? Would he further lift the gloom by calling for an early statement by the Secretary of State for Defence to confirm that the order for the Challenger 2 upgrade is to go ahead?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's comments, which were explicit rather than implicit, at the beginning of his question. Motor car exports, chemicals exports and many other manufactured exports are doing extremely well. The prospects for manufacturing industry in the wake of the cuts in interest rates look rather better than they have done for some time.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): Will my right hon. Friend cast his mind back to the last time that we had a debate on tourism? If, like me, he has difficulty remembering because it was so long ago, will he please find time at an early date for such a debate, especially in the light of the Government's announcement in the autumn statement that they are proposing to cut the grant to the English Tourist Board by £4 million over the next two years?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the first thing that I should do in the wake of my hon. Friend's question is to check the date, which I do not have in my mind, on which the last debate took place. On the political thrust of his question, if I may put it that way, he will be aware that the Government are focusing the money that they spend on sport and tourism where it will be most effective, and especially in the overseas promotion of Britain.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Leader of the House accept my apologies for not having given him notice of my question?

Can we have a statement next week on the use, or unique abuse, of the unopposed return procedure that secures from the House an order to print so that the document is secure from legal action under the Parliamentary Papers Act 1840?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that that Act prevents redress against actionable statements about police officers in the Nimmo Smith/Friel so-called report, prematurely praised by hon. Members before they had had an opportunity to read it?

Would he reflect on page 87 of "Erskine May"? Does he accept that there are people, police officers and others who are seething and incandescent with anger, as I am, about the procedure to which I tried to object on Monday, as is shown in column 817 of the *Official Report?* Will he reflect on what can be done?

Mr. Newton: I shall respond in the spirit in which the hon. Gentleman undoubtedly put his point. I have no doubt that he had perfectly good reasons for not giving me notice of his question, and I make no complaint about that. However, I think that he will understand that, without notice, the proper course is for me to reflect on the very carefully considered words that he used.

Points of Order

4.2 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, during Environment questions, the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, in response to a question from myself, said that there were plans to fit flue gas desulphurisation to three power stations in Britain. In fact, he must have known that, although that was the original intention, the current position is that only two power stations are to be retrofitted with flue gas desulphurisation. That was confirmed by the chief executive of PowerGen in evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on 17 November 1992.

This is a matter of considerable importance to the debate on the future of the coal industry. I am sure that the Minister did not intend deliberately to mislead the House. Can you, Madam Speaker, please ensure that the Minister has an opportunity to come back to the House to put the record straight?

Madam Speaker: I assume that the hon. Gentleman, before raising his point of order, informed the Minister that he was about to do so.

Mr. Smith *indicated assent.*

Madam Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Chair is not responsible for the accuracy of statements made by Ministers—or by hon. Members, for that matter. If, having raised his point in this way, the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue it, he must do so through other means.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you will know, we are to debate the railway privatisation measure on Tuesday. As the Government have promised to issue at least six major policy statements which have a factual and direct effect upon that highly damaging legislation, only two of which have been published, please may we have some guidance?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Lady should have sought to catch my eye during business questions in order to raise that matter with the Leader of the House. It is for the Minister responsible to ensure that documents are available before a debate.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I have some guidance in relation to early-day motion 1255 relating to the GAH group of consultants, which was appointed to advise on the national lottery? Hon Members, not including myself, allege in that early-day motion that a reply to a question put by me was far from accurate.

As a great many questions remain to be answered and additional information is coming in all the time about GAH Consultants and their suitability for the post, may I have guidance on how we can ensure that the issues raised in the early-day motion are answered by the Secretary of State for National Heritage or whichever Minister now has responsibility for the appointment of the GAH group?

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman said towards the end of his point of order, that is a matter for a Minister and should have been raised during business questions. It is not a matter for the Chair; it is a matter of policy.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that the Department of the Environment told the press that a statement was to be made today at 3.30 pm on the financial settlement for local authorities. I have recently checked, and that statement is not available in the Vote Office. I seek your guidance on what may be a planted question, which was tabled for written answer yesterday at the eleventh hour and which I understand is the basis of the press statement. If a Minister wishes to make a statement at this time, is it not usual for him to do so in the House so that he may be questioned upon it?

Madam Speaker: I can barely comment until the hon. Gentleman has put before me what he wishes me to see. When Ministers desire to make a statement to the House, they do not need my permission to do so: they merely inform me that they will do so. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that, as I said previously, I am not responsible for the tabling of questions on the Order Paper by hon. Members.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that a Foreign Office Minister has today intervened in an export of vehicles to Croatia which, I understand, would have broken the United Nations guidelines. Surely a statement should have been made to the House on that issue today.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members are being rather ingenious in putting these points of order to me; they should be put to Ministers. The hon. Gentleman must find other methods of pursuing what he has in mind. I can assure him that no Minister has informed me that he wishes to make a statement today.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 15 FEBRUARY 1993

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Andrew Miller
Mr. Hartley Booth
Mr. David Atkinson

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

JUDGES

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 28 January]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Amendment proposed [28 January]: No. 8, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 100c on page 17 of Cm. 1934)'.—*[Mr. Blair.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

4.8 pm

The Chairman of Ways and Means Mr. Michael Morris): I remind the Committee that we are also considering the following: Amendment No. 110, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'but in respect of paragraph 9 on page 11 of Cm. 1934, Her Majesty's Government as part of their formal process of ratification shall state that so far as the definition of the single market is related to an area without internal frontiers (to be enshrined in Article 7a of the amended Treaty establishing the Community) they regard absence of such frontiers only as not impeding the operation of that market and without prejudice to any action related to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security.'.

Amendment No. 133, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article 100c on page 17 of Cm. 1934).'.

Amendment No. 134, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article 100d on page 17 of Cm. 1934).'.

Amendment No. 359, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 3(d) as referred to in Article G on page 9 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 104, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'and IV' and insert 'IV and VI'.

Amendment No. 46, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 100c in Title II thereof'.

Amendment No. 113, in page 1, line 17, at end add—

'The above subsections shall only come into force subsequent to the laying before Parliament by Her Majesty's Government of a Command Paper concerning the implications and operation of the provisions contained in new Article 100c of the Treaty on European Union (Control of third country visas by the European Council of Ministers and related powers of Members states) and to approval of its terms by Resolution of both Houses of Parliament.'.

New clause 12—*Application of Article 100c of the Treaty of Rome to certain provisions on co-operation in the fields of justice and home affairs—*

"No notification shall be given to the Council of the European Communities that the United Kingdom has adopted a decision of the Council under Article K.9. (Application of Article 100c of the Treaty on European Union) of the Treaty on European Union unless a draft of the notification has first been approved by Act of Parliament.".

New clause 13—*Adoption of conventions in the fields of justice and of home affairs—*

"No convention drawn up by the Council of the European Communities under Article K.3.2.(c) of the Treaty of European Union shall be adopted by the United Kingdom unless a draft of the proposed instrument of adoption has first been approved by Act of Parliament.".

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) made a justifiable complaint about the nature of the amendment paper and the difficulty of following the order of debate. Even those of us who have sat in the House for many years are experiencing difficulty—and I confess that I am among them—but for no reason to do with the Chair or the authorities of the House. We all acknowledge that the treaty is exceptionally long and complex and that the Bill is exceptionally short.

Perhaps I may suggest a way of simplifying that aspect. Many years ago, your predecessors, Mr. Morris, hit on the idea of producing an informal, provisional list of selected amendments. I understand that previously the selection had not been announced until the first amendment in the group was reached. That innovation has proved most successful. I therefore suggest that when you, Mr. Morris, publish the successive daily list of selected amendments, the amendments and new clauses that are additions to the groups are underlined or have some signature, to make it clear that they are new. That could save many right hon. and hon. Members a lot of time, and would perhaps assist the Committee in the debates.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his constructive suggestion, which I shall certainly consider. However, before any changes are made, they would have to be put to the Chairmen's Panel because they would have implications beyond the Committee stage of the Bill that is now before us.

Right hon. and hon. Members may have other thoughts on improving our procedures—of a constructive nature, I hope. If they will let me have them at the end of the Committee stage of this Bill, I shall have a meeting of the Chairmen's Panel to consider whether our procedures can be improved.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. At the beginning of yesterday's debate, I raised with the Second Deputy Chairman the singular nature of three amendments under consideration —amendment No. 110, and new clauses 12 and 13. I asked in particular whether consideration could be given to a separate vote on them at the end of the debate. The Second Deputy Chairman replied:

"The occupant of the Chair always takes note of requests for Divisions. However, the Division that the right hon. Gentleman seeks would take place not at the end of this debate, but when the appropriate point on the selection list is reached."—[*Official Report,* 27 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. 1087.]

I believe that there was some misunderstanding. The Second Deputy Chairman obviously took on board my point about the new clauses, but I believe that amendment No. 110 can be voted on at the end of the debate. I wanted to point that out to you, Mr. Morris, because I believe that my previous submission was slightly misunderstood.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. He may not be quite correct. I do not think that amendment No. 110 can be voted on immediately following amendment No. 8, which I invite the right hon. Gentleman to resume debating.

Mr. Shore: As you indicated, Mr. Morris, I was proceeding with my speech when the 10 o'clock rule struck us last night. Up to that point, the theme of my speech had been the amazing contrast in the Bill's provisions, in respect of the open door that article 8a allows to 300 million citizens—to nationals of European states. Article 8a(1) states:

"Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States".

[Mr. Shore]

That seems an enormous enhancement of the right of entry to this country of 300 million Europeans. That open-door, free movement contrasts with the tightening controls and the fortress Europe approach towards the rest of the world and third countries. I maintain that considerable discrimination would be involved in the way in which we treated different people according to whether they were European nationals or people from third countries with connections to ourselves.

4.15 pm

I pressed the Home Secretary on how on earth we were to have effective border controls and distinguish between Europeans and non-Europeans without proper inspection of passports. He said that he always made it plain that we intended to maintain some form of passport control in the United Kingdom, but I was not impressed by the evidence that he gave, because the Commission does not accept the British and the Home Secretary's position. It states that it is a right accorded under the treaty and, therefore, in the last resort it should be determined by the European Court of Justice. It has not come to that, but I put it to the Committee and to the Government that it is a very real apprehension and I should be interested to know what serious legal advice the Home Secretary has had that the British case could be sustained in the European Court of Justice against the pressure of the Commission and presumably that of other member states.

There is also the obvious practical problem of distinguishing between different European citizens. The amendment refers specifically to the necessity of maintaining some safeguards and checks because of the requirements of law and order and our legitimate worries about drug smuggling, terrorism, and so on. How can frontier control be maintained without taking a good look at the passports of those coming in? We do not need an elaborate procedure but simply the right and the insistence that we can look at people's passports.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I do not think that the Home Secretary made clear how the distinction would be made between, for example, French citizens from Martinique, who would be full French citizens because they carry French passports marked that they come from an outer territory, and Jamaicans or Barbadians from part of the British Commonwealth who, because of the independent state of their own country, do not automatically carry a British passport. How would passport officers make that distinction? Is there some facial tic or physical sign that would mark out a Martinican from someone else?

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend has drawn attention to one of the genuine complexities. My hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) pointed out yesterday that in effect it would turn on whether one had a pale skin. I am afraid that, to a great extent, that would be true. Although I am sure that it would be repulsive and repellent to the Committee to operate a passport procedure on that basis —and it is not something that people are seeking—it is an almost inevitable result of the agreements, laws and treaty arrangement that we have entered into. It is a profoundly worrying and unacceptable part of the treaty arrangement.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Apart from the impact on race relations in Britain, to which my right hon. Friend referred, is it not a fact that the facilities and privileges that will be given to citizens of member countries coming to Britain, and reciprocated for Britons going to those countries, are part and parcel of going down the federal road? However much, for obvious reasons, the word "federal" is omitted—had it not been for the objections of the British Government, the word would have been included in the treaty—we shall, by the turn of the century, have obliged people such as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) who want to achieve a federal union.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend makes a relevant point, given authority by the letter that the Commission sent to all member states on how to interpret the issue of freedom of movement. That letter stated:

> "If the Community is to become a genuine internal market, and if this market is to operate under the same conditions as a national market, physical controls must be abolished. This means the abolition of all controls (formalities, procedures, checks, examinations, inspections, etc.) at internal frontiers, just as there are no border controls between regions in national markets."

What is being suggested there is obvious. Already, at any rate in the eyes of the Commission, we are part of not just a single geographical area but of a union in which citizens have the right to move from, say, Germany to England and back again—if need be to reside here, look for jobs and stay—just as citizens of the United States have the right to move from New York to California and stay there, look for work and otherwise move backwards and forwards at will.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) mentioned the importance of good race relations. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was here at the time of the Single European Act and will be aware that the Government of the day said there was no way the European institutions would involve themselves in our immigration controls. We have since discovered that that was wrong. The Government are now saying that we now have a double lock on it all, though in a few years from now we may discover that, without much ado and influence from this House, our immigration procedures have been passed across the channel to Brussels.

If we are concerned about good race relations, we must have fair and firm immigration policies. If the people of Britain perceive that those policies are not working but are being operated by Brussels in such a way that this House can do nothing about it, that will be devastating for race relations. Will not that be bad news for those in favour of European union? Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman should not press his amendment.

Mr. Shore: It would be unacceptable to the people of Britain if national controls over immigration and asylum policy—over people from third countries seeking asylum here—were transferred to the European Community. Nor should it be taken for granted that the British people would consider it acceptable that 300 million Europeans should have rights of entry not related to job seeking and residence in this country—I doubt whether anyone has even realised that—and my amendment seeks to address the qualifications of that right of entry. In particular, it draws attention to security, drugs and so on. It is an

important issue which has not been raised in the House. I appreciate that all matters of entry, migration and freedom of movement are sensitive, but it is important for the issue to be addressed seriously and in public.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): The Home Secretary may introduce administrative arrangements that satisfy his understanding of the interpretation of the treaty, but under the treaty it is open to every citizen of the union to appeal or apply directly to the European Court of Justice. So all the assurances and wit of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and the Home Secretary are only interpretations of how they hope that it may come about, rather than how it will be adjudged. Is not the great weakness of all these arguments that we are no longer masters of determining these arrangements ourselves?

Mr. Shore: I can give an example of what the hon. Gentleman refers to. If, for example, unwelcome Europeans came to this country for one reason or another——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Like Le Pen?

Mr. Shore: Like Le Pen. That is a good example. The Home Secretary could not issue a deportation order. The writ of a deportation order does not obtain against citizens of European countries. That is extraordinary.

Apart from public health and one or two other stated very special exceptions, there is not the right of deportation as it exists in relation to other people who come to this country and we think that they should not have the right to stay and that it is not desirable that they should stay.

Mr. Marlow: The right to exclude people from the United Kingdom is an important point. The right hon. Member might disagree with me, but at present we can, with the prevention of terrorism Act, prevent people from the Irish Republic who are deemed to be bent on terrorism in this country from coming to the United Kingdom. If this part of the treaty goes through, are we not going to find ourselves in front of the European Court at some stage—my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will not accept it at this stage—and we shall be powerless to prevent these people coming to the United Kingdom?

Mr. Shore: That is another complexity of the situation, but I think that we shall leave it to the Home Secretary, who I presume is going to reply later, to give his answer.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I hoped that I had already addressed this at some length. I shall not go over again the fact that the right hon. Member is speaking about article 8a and competing interpretations of that, which goes back to the Single European Act which the House accepted many years ago.

On the question of freedom of movement and right of residence here, the right hon. Member is correct that under this Bill there is freedom for any EC national to live and work here so long as they are self-supporting, but there are set exceptions, which we can debate later, for those excluded on public policy, public security or public health grounds.

I spent a long time yesterday trying to explain that neither the treaty nor the Bill transfers control over immigration policy to the European Community. Indeed, immigration matters are expressly excluded from Community competence unless the double lock in article K.9 is turned, both by the Council of Ministers unanimously and then by this House and Parliament, ratifying any agreement in the Council. If we look at what we are actually debating and these matters of law and order and safeguarding, in paragraph 5 of article 100c expressly says that it is

"without prejudice to the exercise of the responsibilities incumbent upon the Member States with regard to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security."

The same proviso occurs in article K.2, which is also part of this treaty. Paragraph 2 of the article says:

"This Title shall not affect the exercise of the responsibilities incumbent upon Member states with regard to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security."

Our checks against terrorism and against crime and smuggling do not require systematic frontier controls of everybody crossing the border, but matters essential for our security and protection against international crime can be specifically defended by the agreements we have entered into.

Mr. Shore: The quotations given by the Home Secretary were relating, I think, to asylum, in the first instance, in articles 100c and K, to immigration from third countries. I should like to see a direct quotation of the same provisos relating to article 8a, dealing with European citizens who claim the right of entry.

Mr. Clarke: I do not have article 8a before me. The freedom of movement of EC nationals is guaranteed by article 8a, but we can still arrest criminals; we can still enforce the prevention of terrorism Act, as we do quite frequently against people coming from Ireland across what is an open frontier in respect of frontier controls.

Article 8a is not before us now. The right hon. Gentleman keeps asserting that he is worried by the Commission's interpretation of article 8a. My hon. Friends keep reminding us that the Government have continued to regard our obligations under article 8a as quite different, and we maintain that position.

This agreement does not transfer any sovereignty away from us towards the European Community except in article 100c which transfers the comparatively small matters of the list of countries from whose nationals we require visas and the format of that visa—what it looks like. That transfer to Community competence, which is convenient and efficient, does not begin to produce all the bogeys that the right hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends are trying to raise.

Mr. Shore: I assure the Home Secretary that I am not dealing with bogeys. I am dealing with matters which, regrettably, the House has not considered properly in the past. The Home Secretary finds it convenient to describe them as bogeys, but they are much more than that. We have already discussed the power of the double lock over third-country entrants to the United Kingdom being transferred in article 100c, and we have also discussed asylum policy in that regard. What we have not yet discussed is article 8a.

4.30 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Although the legal points that the Home Secretary has made are correct, the fact that a potential terrorist or drug dealer only needed to give what is called a Bangemann wave of his passport when walking through a frontier would make it rather more difficult for the police to identify him, unless they knew in advance that he would arrive.

It should be borne in mind that the Bangemann wave question emerged from discussions between the Home Secretary and the Commission. Is it not rather misleading to suggest that the implications of the legislation will not make it much more difficult to control the importation of drug addicts, terrorists, murderers and other criminals? The Home Secretary must be well aware that the mere flicking of a passport will greatly reduce the powers of frontier officials to identify the criminals that I have mentioned.

Mr. Shore: I believe that that is true. The Home Secretary said yesterday that, provided that the passport officers had sufficient evidence of identity, all would be well. What is sufficient evidence? Would it be sufficient not actually to look at a passport? Would it be sufficient simply to wave a piece of magenta-coloured cardboard? No, it would not. A passport must be inspected properly, and that need cause no great inconvenience to anyone. I have left this country and returned to it many times; I have never failed to show my passport, and I have never felt a sense of outrage when it was examined—quite the contrary.

Mr. Spearing: The Home Secretary said that article 8a was not before us. Article 8a will be in the treaty of Rome, as amended, and it states:

"The internal market shall comprise an area without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty."

Does not the Home Secretary agree that we are dealing with an amending treaty? The treaty that we are discussing —the treaty on European union—amends the updated treaty of Rome. It is rather like an amending Bill, which, in amending an existing Act, gives rise to a new Act. We are discussing the new treaty that will result from the marriage of the treaty of union and the treaty of Rome. Surely the Home Secretary agrees that the consequences will have to be faced: that is the subject of the amendment.

Mr. Shore: I believe that it is wrong in principle to extend the right of freedom of movement of labour, as originally defined in the treaty of Rome, to the wide-open area of legislation in which freedom of movement ceases to be employment related or tourism, and becomes the absolute right to reside in the country of one's choice. That is a major transfer of one of the crucial aspects of sovereignty as we have known it. It is deliberate. I believe that it is wanted and required precisely because it represents a signal surrender of national sovereignty and control. It is one of the four or five powers that belong to any separate nation state.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Will the right hon. Gentleman treat with extreme caution the Home Secretary's advice on this matter, not through ill will but because the advice that the House of Commons has been given over a number of years has not always proved to be correct? I remind the hon. Gentleman that fisheries legislation which was passed by the new Parliament following the 1987 election was, in effect, set aside under the judgment of the European Court. That legislation was not introduced with malign thoughts. The Government believed that it was compatible with their obligations under the subsequently amended treaty of Rome. They were wrong then, and they are likely to be wrong in this case. If there is a scintilla of doubt, we should not touch something that extends the remit of the European Court.

Mr. Shore: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. We do not have to go back very far to find the most remarkable example of misunderstanding by the British Government of the nature of the commitment under the Single European Act. No Conservative Member, and perhaps no Opposition Member, thought that we had made a commitment in principle to a European central bank and a common currency—matters which arose out of the interpretation of the preamble. It matters enormously that we should get the words right, be very sure about interpretation and, above all, look with the utmost care at what the European Court of Justice can do in the matter of widening interpretation.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in the matter of interpretation, there is a difference between the Home Secretary and the European Commissioner? The European Commissioner says one thing and the Home Secretary says another. How confident can we be that the views of the Home Secretary will always prevail? The Home Secretary said yesterday:

"It is the case that Commissioner Bangemann asserts the view that under article 8a we are obliged to abandon what the Community would call internal frontier controls, which means checks at our ports and airports into European movements, but that is not a position that has ever been accepted by the British Government."

What the Home Secretary says is completely different from what the Commissioner says. Yesterday he went on:

"I have had discussions with Commissioner Bangemann on ways in which EC citizens can be distinguished from third country citizens".—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. 1127].

The Home Secretary has never explained how that will be done. Is it to be a case of differentiating between a white person and a black person? This is another example of differing interpretations.

Mr. Shore: I shall return to that tactical problem, which was raised earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). She asked how one was to distinguish French citizens coming from La France d'Outre-mer—Guadeloupe or Martinique—and exercising their right of entry unless one examined passports. That is the crux of the matter—passports must be examined. The amendment would provide strong support for the Government's position by writing in at least two grounds on which they could reasonably need to be satisfied about the entry of anyone into this country.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Committee has not discussed a matter that seems to me to be absolutely fundamental. In France and many other continental countries that are apparently without barriers there is constant checking of identity cards and other papers. That can be done internally at any juncture. People can be stopped at any time. In Brussels, it is quite common for people employed in various sections of the Community to be stopped on the street and asked to present their papers. At no point has

the Home Secretary made it clear that legislation of this type can be made to work only by insisting that the police have the constant right to stop people and ask them for clear identification. By implication, that means identity cards, and all that goes with them, once people are in the country. If one accepts that that is what lies behind this, one can see why Mr. Bangemann has decided that we can go ahead quite cheerfully with waving people through at ports of entry.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend has made a powerful point. If we abandon the control of entry, there must be something to take its place. That something is very likely to be the demand for identity cards and, in addition, power for the police to stop and check individual citizens whenever they feel that there is a reason to be suspicious.

That does not make for good police-citizen relationships, and it is something which most people in Britain would find profoundly unattractive. It is a powerful additional reason for not abandoning frontier controls.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Shore: No, I am just about to finish.

I simply come back to this point. There is no secret about it: the European Commission and most of the other European countries wish to create a state, and they know very well that, in order to create a state in western Europe, one must build up certain powers that have previously belonged to national Governments. They have moved across a whole range of matters. They now want a common foreign policy, a common defence policy and all the things that characterise a separate sovereign state.

One of the half-dozen quite crucial matters is the right of citizens of a state to go wherever that state claims to have its own boundaries. It is clear to me that the European semi-state—it is not yet a fully fledged one—is claiming the rights of citizenship and of abode throughout the whole area of the so-called European union.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As you know, Mr. Morris, I have an amendment tabled in exactly the same words as that of the Leader of the Opposition.

I just want to say a few words about what the Home Secretary said to us. He told us that we have no need to worry about the implications for national control and immigration because of article 100c, and that, if there is any problem, it is not because of what is in 100c. It is because of what was done by nasty Lady Thatcher in the Single European Act; it is her fault and no responsibility of ours, so if there is any problem it is hers.

I hope that the Home Secretary will take rather seriously what I am going to say now. If he takes that view, will he please go back and read what was said at the time of the Single European Act when certain hon. Members, including myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), who asked questions were told that there was no need to worry about terrorism and all the rest of it becausee adequate safeguards were written into the treaty and that everything was fine and dandy. Let us look at *Hansard* and the words of the Home Secretary himself. There we see it written out clearly and specifically. On control of terrorism and the rest of it, he says that the new agreement that they have come to is that

> "In the case of . . . other EC nationals, the purpose of the check [at the border] is simply to establish their nationality". —[*Official Report*, 17 December 1992; Vol. 216, c. *445*.]

There is now no requirement to look at a passport, no requirement to talk to someone and no requirement to do anything, unless it is to find out that someone is an EC national.

The Home Secretary will say that there may be advance warning. Of course it is possible that the police will say that three terrorists are coming across the border on 14 July at 3 o'clock and they will be there, waiting for them. But how on earth will a normal person, watching border controls, contain terrorism or control drug peddling without the opportunity of looking at a person's passport and asking him some questions?

4.45 pm

Mr. Marlow: I would like to return to the point that my hon. Friend made at the beginning of his speech. I was here as well, and I asked questions too. We were told at the time of the Single European Act that we would maintain control over immigration policy. There was no suggestion at that stage that we would have to put up with the "Bangemann wave". We were told that if we wanted to stop people at our frontiers and look at their passports, we could do so. We have discovered that we were wrong and that the Government have discovered that they were wrong. If the Government were wrong then, how much more likely are they to be wrong now in their interpretation of these provisions?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am afraid that it is not just on this occasion, Mr. Morris, as you well know. Sadly, for all kinds of reasons—and I am not suggesting any conspiracy—hon. Members have been misled, deliberately and systematically, over the giving of powers to the European Community. I suggest that in this particular case of immigration control we are being misled again today on the issue of article 100c. I want to explain why.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Presumably the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) would therefore argue that we should change our regulations in respect of the Republic of Ireland.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It is well known that I have always taken the view that we should change our special provisions in relation to the Republic of Ireland. That is a separate issue which was determined by the British Parliament. The hon. Member is well aware of my views, because I believe that we have a fundamental duty, for the safety of our people, to take all possible steps to control the small minority from other countries who want to engage in terrorism, killing and violence.

I hope that hon. Members will consider carefully this new concession by the Home Secretary. In fairness, he was in a difficult position. He was confronted by Mr. Bangemann who said that on 1 January all border controls in Europe must go and that anyone who got into another country should be able to come here, and it was made clear by the Commissioner in a public statement that after 1 January, unfortunately, if we stopped anyone coming across the borders within Europe we would be taken to court.

As he set out in a statement, the Home Secretary had a meeting with Mr. Bangemann. They have not agreed on anything, he says—"Nothing has been decided"—but the fact is that because of the adoption of this new situation they have put the matter off. Now it will go to court and, sadly, because of the wording of the Single European Act

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

we will probably lose the case. It has been put off by coincidence until, no doubt, we have finished discussing the Maastricht treaty. In any case, hon. Members should be aware that we were misled at the time of the Single European Act, and this alone should make us think very carefully indeed.

Does it really matter about frontier controls? It matters desperately because all hon. Members are concerned with maintaining good race relations. I am sure that, whether hon. Members support a weak or a strong immigration policy, we at least agree that we have a duty to try to maintain good race relations. If hon. Members have any doubt about the importance of this, they should look at what happened in Germany when people there gained the impression that the influx of refugees from eastern Europe was out of control. The moment that the British public gains the impression that we will be unable to control the number of people coming into this country for any reason whatever, it will have a fundamental effect on race relations.

Although Southend is one of the nicest places in the world, I was appalled at some of the letters that I received on the admission to a nearby borough of 12 refugees from, I think, Bosnia. I met them. They were Muslims and very nice people, but the fact that they were going to appear on the council list of a neighbouring borough caused a great deal of resentment among some people in Southend and nearby. Hon. Members should be aware that the moment that the public gain the impression that we are not totally in control of entry across our borders, nasty things will happen in race relations, and the people who suffer will not be people like us; it will be the immigrants, the people with black faces. We should be concerned about our duty to them. The best thing that we can do for them is to give the clear impression to the public that we are in control and that we will not have a situation where people can go across our borders without difficulty and without being impeded in any way.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I am interested in this concept of how one identifies, even within the categories where the Home Secretary still has authority. If a criminal is coming into this country, we would ordinarily notify customs and immigration of the name, and possibly provide a photograph, of the individual. There may not be a photograph, but one of the first areas of investigation in excluding persons is the name factor. How is the name of a person coming into this country identified without looking at a passport or other document? I am having great difficulty understanding how the Home Secretary intends to enforce the law and order and criminal provisions in this measure.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is repeating the point that I made and it is a very serious one. People should think about it, especially those Euro-nuts who want to give all the powers to Europe. If people who are known criminals, terrorists, traders in blood are coming across the border, how can they be identified? There may be wonderful police intelligence, one may know that they are coming, but if one cannot look at the passports or talk to those people, how can they be identified?

This is a fundamental change in our practice. It was announced by the Home Secretary on 17 December. Who agreed to this? When did the House of Commons agree to it? The answer is that we never agreed to it, but, sadly, it became one of the essential consequences of the Single European Act. The Home Secretary may again say, "It was the nasty Lady Thatcher, it was not me", but, if he looks back——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend really must not attribute to me views that I do not have. I am a supporter of the Single European Act. I joined my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) in voting for its consequences. I was then in complete agreement with Lady Thatcher. I do not know whether she has changed her mind about the Single European Act. We are discussing article 8a of the Single European Act, which is something to which we all agreed some years ago. I have explained the British Government's view of article 8a and the obligations which we have entered into. The description that I have given is indistinguishable from that which was given to the House when we signed the Single European Act and when we took the Act through the House. That remains the policy of the British Government.

It is true that I had a disagreement on the interpretation of article 8a with Commissioner Bangemann. I do not know what the view of his successor will be, but the British Government are quite clear about the obligations that they have entered into.

The debate on these amendments today is on the basis of a pillared approach precisely because we are not conceding to the European Community institutions, the European Court or the Commission any control of our immigration policy. I cannot, in an intervention, go into how we work under article 8a, but at the moment policemen do not stand alongside the immigration officers looking at every passport; customs officers do not look at every passport. Of course, we will retain our frontier controls because our immigration officers must be satisfied that those going through the European channel are European nationals. The immigration officers are accustomed to dealing every day with people like me who have forgotten their passports. They have all kinds of people coming through——

The Chairman: Order. I understood that this was an intervention. It is a very long intervention.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am afraid that my confidence in the Home Secretary is again shaken. Whatever he may think, I did not vote for the Single European Act; I voted against it on every single clause. He said that we all agreed to it, but I did not, and I hope that he will withdraw that.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My hon. Friend will remember that during the course of that Bill he and I raised many questions on which we were given assurances that have not been followed up in practice. That is why we take what may be described by some as a jaundiced view. What we said then was not listened to, it was dismissed, and that is exactly what is being attempted now.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is quite right and I hope that the Home Secretary will at least listen to this point. If he looks back, as I hope that he will, to the debates on the Single European Act, he will see that we were treated then, as we are being treated now, with absolute contempt. They said our points were silly, nonsense, rubbish. I know that the Home Secretary has not had time to read this treaty, but I hope that he will look

back at those debates, the questions that were asked and the challenges that were made. He will see that we were given a clear, specific assurance that we would still maintain total control of law and order and terrorism. Sadly, this is not the case, because of a decision, not made by the House of Commons, but announced by the Home Secretary in a parliamentary answer on 17 December. This is a fundamental change and one that worries us.

Mr. Marlow: I accept that I am being a bit greedy, but this is an important issue. The Home Secretary has just said that we will maintain our own immigration controls. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East has studied this to a far greater extent than I have and can perhaps tell me if I am right in thinking, looking at article 100c, that it will be possible, after 1 January 1996, for the rest of the Community to require New Zealanders to have visas before they come to the United Kingdom, and that there will be nothing that we can do about it. I should like to know whether that is true or false.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. It is a massive change. If the EC decides by a majority that it wants to require visas, there will be nothing that we can do, nothing that the House of Commons can do. If we are forced to insult a friend for all kinds of political or other reasons, the House of Commons will be powerless. Yet we are told that nothing much is happening, we are not changing anything.

I must say to the Secretary of State, as we said about the Single European Act, that we are being misled. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) may smile, but if he were to go to the homes of people affected by terrorism or drug addiction, he would know just how important it is that we maintain control of our frontiers. If we do not do so, it will be a bad thing for Britain and a bad thing for our people. It is something that matters a great deal.

Mr. Leighton: Is not the problem here that, over the years, many people have not told the truth? A lot of political leaders have moved in a crab-wise manner, disguising what they are really doing. Would it not be far better now for people who take the view of the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) to say that they support the treaty, are in favour of the free movement of people and the abolition of internal frontiers, and are proud of the fact, because that is what they want? In other words, should they not tell the truth about the thrust of the treaty?

Instead, we have the Home Secretary telling us not to worry what Mr. Bangemann says or what the Commission says, because it is all right and we do not really intend to abolish frontiers. Is not that the difficulty, that people have not been frank and open and honest about their intentions?

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Sir Teddy Taylor: I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The Chairman: Order. It is normal for an hon. Gentleman to respond to an intervention before he gives way to yet another hon. Gentleman, but maybe he was concluding and did not want to develop his speech.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It was to save time, because I have spoken longer than I intended to.

I wish that the Home Secretary would stop laughing. This is not funny; it is a serious matter that affects people's lives. The right hon. and learned Gentleman may think it is funny, but it is not.

Of course, the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) is absolutely right: there is nothing that we can do when something has been decided. I do not think that this happened because the Government wanted to do these things; it was because they were manoeuvred into them and are now trying to say that it is not as bad as people think.

Mr. Spearing: I want to revert to what the Home Secretary has said. Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that, while not everybody has to show documents, it is the power to require them to do so that is disappearing? In respect of the Single European Act, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman, or any hon. Gentleman, remind the House of the Second Reading speech of the then right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East, Sir Geoffrey Howe, when introducing the Bill? Is it not a fact that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs was preparing a report on that matter, but that when the Second Reading debate took place they were on a visit to North Vietnam and could not contribute to it?

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has made an important point, but I must press on. I do not want to make a habit of making long speeches in these debates. I just want to make some specific points and seek opinions on them.

The Home Secretary said that nothing much will go under K.9; we can stop it by a veto, and that will be that. That is an over-simplification because, once the original decision has been made on the kinds of things that will be done, there can be majority votes thereafter. But the worry is that, if there is a situation in which the members of the Community agree unanimously—that is, with the inclusion of Britain—on a new rule or policy, and the people of Britain decide on reflection that they do not like it, and the Government or Parliament say that they do not like it, nothing will be able to be done about it. That is the one thing that we should be absolutely clear about. Whilst we may accept that there is unanimity under article K.9 and that the Government will be in a position to say no, the fact is that if the agreed policy turns out to have unfortunate consequences, or if Parliament and the people of Britain decide that they do not like it, there is nothing we can do unless a further decision is taken at the Council.

The third and final aspect of decision-making——

5 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am trying to be helpful and I will avoid laughing at my hon. Friend but, clearly, he has not had time to read article K.9 on which he is lecturing at such length. Article K.9 makes it quite clear that nothing can be brought into Community competence, beyond what is covered by article 100c, unless there is a unanimous vote of the Council, including the British representative. Incidentally, it also includes the vote of the Danish representative who, under the present Government, is even more emphatic than we are that Denmark does not wish to extend competence in this respect. My hon. Friend wandered, saying that if there was a majority vote something would happen, but there is not a word of that in article K.9.

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

Even if the British and Danish Governments were to change their minds and join in a unanimous vote to extend competence, article K.9 gives the House an absolute right to refuse to ratify it. It is what is called a double lock. That destroys the foundation of my hon. Friend's speech which is that what we are debating today brings immigration issues into Community competence. He is plain wrong. He is an extremely intelligent and sensible man with great expertise on Europe, but he has either not read or not understood a word of the article.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Each of us saying, "You are talking rubbish" does not help. Article K.9 states:

"The Council, acting unanimously on the initiative of the Commission or a Member State, may decide to apply Article 100c of the Treaty establishing the European Community to action in areas referred to in Article K.1(1) to (6), and at the same time determine the relevant voting conditions relating to it."

That may or may not mean something, I do not know, but it clearly refers to determining

"the relevant voting conditions relating to it."

We could disregard those words, say that they are rubbish and irrelevant and say, "Teddy Taylor hasn't read the treaty", although the Home Secretary said that he himself had not read it. However, the plain fact is that if all member states unanimously agreed to, say, policy A and policy A turned out to be a disaster, something which the Government, Parliament and the people of Britain find appalling, we cannot repeal that policy ourselves. We are handing over decision-making to a new European state. Although the Home Secretary may say, "Not at all, you are being misleading", it is so.

If we pass a law on asylum or immigration and decide, on reflection, that it is not working out and that nasty things are happening, we can at present pass an amending law. We should appreciate the fact that, even with unanimity even if we disregard the words that I read out and even if we say that we can stop it, if we hand over powers and then find that it does not work out and has nasty consequences for immigrants and for us, there is nothing we can do about it.

Mr. Marlow: If we agree with other European countries that we are going to hand decision-making to Europe and there is ratification in all 12 countries, it becomes European policy. Is my hon. Friend not saying that once it has become European policy, we can never take it back? If my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary disagrees, will my hon. Friend give way to him and let him make his point?

Sir Teddy Taylor: Of course I will. We should know what we are doing. If under article K.9, we hand over the right to decide, we do not have the power unilaterally to change any subsequent decision.

A third important point to bear in mind is that the forum for and type of decision-making in the European Community is different from that of the House. There are 12 member states and, inevitably, gaining acceptance for one policy might mean needing support in a different area of policy, perhaps on financial control or food. That will mean that issues are not decided on their merits.

If anyone doubts that, let him ask himself why Britain and France recognised Croatia, which has unfortunately created terrible problems in Yugoslavia. We knew that to do so was contrary to our policy; we knew that it was wrong and silly and that the Croats were not in control of their country. We also knew that, by so doing, we created fear and panic among the Serbs. However, the Germans wanted our support for unrelated matters, and they got it. The point is that the pattern of decision-making is different.

In all sincerity, I ask the Home Secretary to accept that something serious is happening. I hope that he will accept that if we pass powers to another body which then makes decisions which we find damaging, we can do nothing.

Let us stick to article 100c. In his interesting speech, the Home Secretary said, "Don't worry about article 100c, there's nothing much in it". He said that we were merely to have a harmonised visa certificate, one or two changes. If that means only that every European state is to have the same visa form, what is the advance in that? How does it help anyone in the world if 12 countries have the same forms printed in the same language? Presumably it will cost something to produce them, but where is the benefit? This is the Home Secretary's proposal, so I should like him to tell us the advantage of having the same form with the same words over the present words. I can see none.

As the Minister said, sometimes I do not read things carefully enough. I see that the splendid Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is here—he reads things carefully and sometimes reads treaties. What is the advantage of having a common visa form? There must be a reason for it.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): If my hon. Friend were to have detailed discussions with senior officials of Interpol and Europol, he would learn that they would be very much in favour of a common procedure which would help to increase security and safety and to reduce criminality in all member states, including Britain.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It would be different if we were to have proper control of visas but that is not what the Home Secretary said. He said that we were to have a common format. How does that help security, the police or Interpol? How does it help to all use the same words instead of the French and British having their own little visa forms? I see no great advantage. If I have missed something, or if the Foreign Office knows something that I do not, I hope that it will tell us.

We are being asked to approve that measure today. It will cost something; I do not know how much and the Government always underestimate. Surely there is supposed to be some benefit in changing the forms. The Home Secretary should tell us what it is. We need money for many things, and the Government are up to their ears in debt. I am told that borrowing is now an amazing £1 billion a week, so we should be watching expenditure. If the Home Secretary wants us to agree to the proposal, will he please tell us the advantages?

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), I think that I am right in saying—it can be checked later—that Interpol has specifically stated that Europol is a waste of time.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I do not want to get on to the issue of Europol because it would be outside the terms of the debate. The Home Secretary said that he knew all the

answers, so I wish that he would intervene. He has said that the introduction of a common visa form was one of only two changes; will he tell us the advantage?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: If my hon. Friend had found the time to read the selection paper, he would know that it was in order to discuss Europol. It was debated earlier when he was unfortunately unable to be with us.

There are advantages for efficiency, although not great advantages, in having a visa document which looks the same issued by the 12 states. It is a small matter of convenience and efficiency. I said earlier that it was not a great matter, and it is not one about which most people would get as steamed up as my hon. Friend. He has finally got himself in order and spoken about something of relevance to the treaty of Maastricht. Does he feel so passionately about this instrument of our national sovereignty that the form for British visas should look different from that used by the other 11? Is that what makes his heart beat faster?

The Chairman: The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir Teddy Taylor) has been perfectly in order all the afternoon.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The Home Secretary is trying to answer my questions with his usual insults. First, he says that I voted for the Single European Act, which I did not; then he says that I was not here, whereas I have attended regularly. Why did the Home Secretary not answer my question? I hope he will think about that. I said, "You are forcing us to use a common form. What is the advantage? What benefit will there be?" Apart from flinging insults, which seems to be his normal style when dealing with serious and important issues, the Home Secretary has not given one reason. I hope that the House——

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West) *rose——*

Sir Teddy Taylor: Perhaps the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West will give us a reason.

Mr. Randall: One good reason is that in order to detect crime one needs information, and to obtain that we need computer data bases. One of the key requirements for that is to have information in a common format, so as to put it into the computer systems. That can be used to target crime of all kinds.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman may be misleading himself. Everything can be put into computers whether the same forms are used or not. If someone is interviewed and asked, "Do you want a visa?", the same information can be included anyway. I believe that the hon. Gentleman is making a mistake. He thinks that we shall have a common format for applications. No, there is no suggestion that we shall have the same application form, or that everyone will answer the same questions—so the information will not fit into the computer at all. The French may ask different questions.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: There is a reason, and it runs right through the whole scope of the treaties—to give visible expression to the Euro-state. We have seen that with passports—that was supposed to be a trivial matter, too—and now we see it in the form of a common visa certificate. We are seeing the standardisation, harmonisation and aggrandisation of the concept of the Euro-state.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend watches such developments, and he has hit the nail on the head. We find that almost everything being done now, in Maastricht and elsewhere, has the purpose of establishing the concept of a European state.

Something even more significant is involved here. Article 100c goes even further than the Home Secretary said. Time and again I have asked——

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The Home Secretary has just told us that the matter of the visas is not a big thing. However, his predecessor said the exact opposite. The previous Home Secretary said in the House:

> "In the event, as the House will know, only two immigration matters will be taken into Community competence; first, a substantive one".

And what is that substantive matter? It is the very matter that the present Home Secretary now dismisses as nothing:

> "—the common visa list—which is the agreement on the countries whose nationals would require visas for entry to the Community: and secondly, the more technical question of the format of a common visa."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 26.]

The previous Home Secretary considered those substantive matters, but now when the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) tries to argue about them they are dismissed.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important issue. I want the Committee to remember that I have asked the Home Secretary and the supporters of the Bill what possible benefit of any sort will come from what appears to be a significant change—the use of the same form with the same words—and we have had no answer at all.

5.15 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I do not know whether this would be considered a benefit, but if there is a standard form of words, giving a standard form of rights to the visa holder, the matter will be construed and interpreted by the European Court of Justice. Once that happens, our present power under British law to restrict the people coming into this country would no longer exist as a power that we can exercise through the British courts as the final arbiter of rights. Instead, the European Court of Justice would arbitrate. That is a wonderful example of the way in which we are letting power slip away from the nation state to the European Court of Justice, which has repeatedly said that it is the creature of the union. That is what I believe my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East really fears.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. and learned Friend is so right. I hope that hon. Members will listen to every word that he says. We are doing something stupid, bureaucratic, nonsensical and unnecessary—unnecessary, that is, unless, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) said, the single form is required because it will carry single benefits and single entitlements and rights. My hon. and learned Friend hit the nail on the head. I am sure that he is right. But if he is not, no other reason has been put forward.

The Home Secretary says that we should not worry about article 100c because there is nothing much in it. Yet we shall pass over to the EC—by majority voting, after 1996—the right to decide which people need visas. That is

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

supposed to be of no significance. They will be sitting around the table—let them decide by majority voting. Well, I believe that it matters quite a bit.

Until now this country has decided which countries we wish to be subject to visa requirements. We have taken into account all kinds of considerations. With the Caribbean, for example, the considerations have included our long-standing friendship, and the Commonwealth connection. One of the other countries affected will be the United States of America. At present we do not need visas to go there, and a lot of us think that that fact is important—some may think that it is not—for establishing the continuing bonds between Britain and the United States. The plain fact is that after 1996 that will all be scrapped. The Home Secretary may say that I am talking rubbish or nonsense, or being silly, but I beseech him to look at the list.

I happen to have a copy of the list of proposals published by the Schengen countries. No doubt the Home Secretary will say that that will be different from the EC list, but the Schengen countries are substantial, and following their discussions they published a list. We also have the Government's list. If we look under the letter B we discover that the proposals involve visas for countries such as Bahrain, Belize and Barbados, which are not on the list of countries for which we now require visas. Those are just three countries, but they are rather important ones.

Hon. Members should be aware that after 1996 it will not be the Government who determine the places where visas are required. If a majority of EC countries say that they want or do not want visas for certain places, there will be nothing that the House of Commons can do about it, even if 630 Members say, "This is shocking. We do not want a visa for that country", or "We do want a visa for that country." Our wishes will be irrelevant and powerless.

Maastricht is clearly the end of the road, but the prospect of the powers of the House fading away would not matter so much if they were going somewhere over which the people had some control. That would not matter two hoots.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is making a great issue of the idea that once we have surrendered powers to a European institution we cannot get them back. If it were unanimously decided that we should transfer the items under article K.1(1) to (9) to Community control, and then we ratified the transfer in the House of Commons after a debate, or a late-night vote, would it not be open to the House at a later stage to take those powers back by holding another debate, and another vote?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I cannot reply to that question in detail, because much wider issues would be involved—the same issues that are involved when people ask, "Can Parliament pass a law to withdraw from the EC?" To answer that question would be to stray from the debate. But I can tell my hon. Friend that the only case law on the subject involves Greenland, which was linked to the EC, as we all recall. The only way in which Greenland could get out of the EC, after an election, was not to pass a law in the Greenland Parliament, but to ask all the member states to pass a law allowing Greenland to leave. I do not want to go into that big issue now, but my hon. Friend should be aware that there is a great difference of view on whether Britain would have that right. I think that we would not. I do not think that it would be possible for Britain to withdraw from the EC or any of the obligations unless every other state passed a law to allow us to do so. That is the view that I have always taken, and if there is any doubt about it, Greenland provides the example. The other countries had to pass a law, and Greenland had to give up many of its fishing grounds, which it greatly regretted.

Apparently, the first aspect does not matter at all, because the Home Secretary could not give us a reason for it. However, the second aspect is rather more important, and I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will accept that. If, for reasons of friendship or co-operation, for the sake of improved relations, or because of an emergency, we wanted to operate a regime between us and another country whereby visas would not be needed, we should no longer have that power. It would have gone. If we do not like what the Europeans do by majority vote, too bad.

What about the people of Britain? If we introduced visas for the United States, some of them might be angry. They might send letters to their Members of Parliament; they might demand a debate in the House of Commons. They might even take the matter into account in an election—but what is the point? Their views do not matter, and they will have no influence on these events at all.

This is an important democratic issue. Hon. Members will recall that higher interest rates were forced on us by the exchange rate mechanism, despite mass unemployment in this country——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is developing his argument extremely widely now.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I shall come to my final point then, Mr. Morris.

The Home Secretary says that there is nothing much to these matters. He is sure that the lists will be drawn up by sensible people in a way that we will like. The fact is that that may not happen. I plead with him to remember what happened with article 8a. We know that the Commission takes a view of that article wholly different from the Government's. The Home Secretary said in a statement issued in September 1992:

> "Nothing has been decided and there is much more work to be done. We agreed that our officials should continue to work on the details."

Article 8a means the abolition of frontiers, just as I said that it would at the time of the Single European Act. It is not just a matter of people being able to visit Britain after having obtained a visa for Italy. Everyone will have the right to reside or visit. We should remember the number of refugees in Germany—they will all be able to come here, without restriction. That has not happened yet because it has not yet gone to the court. The Home Secretary has had discussions with Mr. Bangemann, and although he is no longer in his post, someone else is, and it is hoped that something will be done. We have all heard about the waving of passports, known as the Bangemann wave. If we lose the case at the court, all our discussions about controls will fade into insignificance. People wanting to come to this country will need no visas if they come from any other European country.

We know that the Italian controls are practically non-existent and that Greek controls—apart from at Athens, where they are tight—are limited.

Although the Commission has threatened us with proceedings in court, it has apparently now agreed not to go ahead pending discussions. Still, I believe that individuals could take us to court. If they do, it will be catastrophic. Perhaps then the people of Britain will realise that our controls have gone. The Home Secretary is well aware that that could happen, but he will say that he hopes it will not.

All this arises out of article 8a, even though we were told at the time that there was no need to worry about it—that we would still have complete control over immigration. I ask the Home Secretary to acknowledge that this House has been misled time and again. Anyone who says that article 100c will not inevitably lead to visitors—unless they are identified beforehand as terrorists—being able to enter this country from every other European country is kidding himself. The Minister has told us not to worry—that the article does not entail that at all. The Minister will say that someone visiting France on a visa will not be able to get into Britain automatically. What should I tell people who want to visit Britain after 1996? Should they go to the French embassy and ask for a visa? Should they also go to the British embassy and ask for one? The implications of the common visa and of the wording of the treaty as it touches on common external frontiers are clear. The Government say that they reserve the right to refuse people entry if they are criminals or terrorists. If the Minister thinks that article 100c does not matter, I ask him to look back at 8a.

I know that the Home Secretary has been through the nightmare of discussions with Bangemann and others. All this is very frightening, after all. What is proposed is dangerous, silly, damaging to our democracy and potentially damaging to the good race relations that we have in this country. The measure is unclear and imprecisely worded—and it carries with it the same sort of dangers that we said would arrive in the wake of article 8a and the Single European Act.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I am delighted that the Opposition have tabled an amendment to delete article 100c. We need to stop beating about the bush. Article 100c exists to keep black people out of Europe—and to keep Arabs and Russians out of Europe. The intent behind it is racist, and it will create an operational structure that is racist, building on trends that already exist. That is why I am proud to go into the Lobby to vote against this racist measure, and to join my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) in so doing.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): How does my hon. Friend square what he has just said with the argument of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) that article 100c would allow an influx of people to the United Kingdom? Who is right and who is wrong about the significance of 100c?

Mr. Livingstone: It would certainly allow anyone in Europe to come here—that is the fear that seizes some Conservative Members. Large numbers of Germans, for instance, might want to come here. Why Germans would want to come and enjoy our lower standard of living is beyond me. It is of course inconceivable that anyone on benefits in Germany would want to come here to increase his standard of living. This is not really about what happens inside Europe: it is about creating a barrier around Europe. It is a move towards fortress Europe, and the people who will suffer are those outside it.

I am always amazed by the naivety of so many Labour federasts, who keep pointing to all those dreadful Tories who pass all this awful racist legislation but who believe that, as soon as Maastricht is in place, everything will be wonderful and all the wicked legislation will be overturned. There are historic trends towards racism in Europe, and this House has pandered to them under Tory and Labour Governments—and Maastricht panders to them further.

Mr. Bill Walker: If the fortress Europe that the hon. Gentleman envisages become reality, is it not possible that people from South Africa who may want to come here if life gets extremely difficult there—I have written letters today about the grandchildren of Scots who want to return here—may be kept out?

Mr. Livingstone: Defending white racists from South Africa who deserted this country for a better standard of living from the efforts of black people and who think that they should be welcomed back here with open arms will not be top of my list of priorities for the rest of this decade. They made their bed; now they must lie in it.

Mr. Walker: The Scottish missionaries will be delighted to hear what the hon. Gentleman has just said.

Mr. Livingstone: I must tell——

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the 8 million or 9 million British citizens living in Commonwealth countries would experience little difficulty returning to any member state, including the United Kingdom? He is absolutely right to say that this provision is about creating a fortress Europe to ensure that as few black and Asian people as possible are allowed in. Is it not also deeply offensive that the 8 million non-EC nationals, predominantly black and Asian, will face grave difficulties in exercising their rights to free movement within the EC under this measure?

Mr. Livingstone: That is a worrying point. Black British people who travel to Europe are often already subject to appalling harassment by the French police as soon as they get off the boat. In the delegation that went to lobby on these matters at Maastricht, white British people were allowed straight through without being harassed, but even in Maastricht itself black Labour party members demonstrating against the treaty were subjected to considerable harassment. One of the problems as we move inevitably towards European union is that, although I am critical of the inadequacy of Britain's race laws, they are infinitely superior to anything on the stocks in Europe. Black Britons will find themselves disadvantaged and discriminated against in Europe on a scale that they thought they had got over in Britain.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): What is even more outrageous is that, in discussing Maastricht and all its industrial political and economic ramifications, the British Government have not even thought about the effect of the treaty and the Single European Act on black British citizens. Is that not a dereliction of duty?

5.30 pm

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The interests of black Britons have been left completely off the agenda in all these discussions and negotiations.

Mr. Macdonald: I do not understand my hon. Friend's argument. Surely black British citizens face great difficulty when they visit the continent because they have to deal with all sorts of passport controls. The whole point of the legislation is to remove those controls and make it illegal for them to be harassed when they try to enter other countries.

Mr. Livingstone: I was speaking not only about black British people being harassed at passport control but about the people who accompanied my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) who led the activities in Maastricht. Those people were harassed on the streets by the police zeroing in on them. Most of the other European countries have not given their immigrants equal rights. They have not given them the vote or protection.

One of my closest colleagues went to lecture to West German Social Democrats shortly before unification. The lecture and the debate was about what parties of the left should be doing for women. My colleague asked those who were, I suppose, the most progressive members of that party, the sort of people with whom we find ourselves in agreement, what programmes they had instituted for Turkish women who were living there, some of them for 20 to 30 years. The reply was, "We don't do anything: they will be going home one day." That is how much further many of our European partners have to go to catch up with even the limited anti-racist measures in this country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) made a brilliant speech. I do not think that he could see the approval, the absolutely elated look, on the faces of Home Office civil servants in the Box behind the Chair. They were nodding enthusiastically as my hon. Friend gave the most clear exposition of Government policy that we could have heard. The Home Secretary was nodding. He was clearly delighted, because, as he has told us, he has not read the treaty and could not have done anything like as good a job as my hon. Friend.

One almost had the feeling of watching an American gangster movie in which Mr. Big sits and beams with delight as his bright young protegé announces some new way of ripping off society and making them rich. It was like coalition government, and a perfect defence of the Government's position.

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friend is ribbing me for agreeing with the Home Secretary. How does he feel about being in agreement with the noble Baroness Thatcher and the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)?

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friend would find it interesting to go to the Library and look at the volumes of *Hansard* containing the debate on the Bill dealing with Kenya Asians in 1968. That was one of the most disgraceful periods in Parliament's history: overnight, after a wave of hysteria and racism in Britain, we stripped black British citizens of their right to come to this country. The legislation was overwhelmingly carried. Who was in the Lobby against it? There was a handful of left wingers and some honest right-wing Tories who thought that it was a disgrace.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the intervention by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was sickening and irrelevant to the important issue? Although he and I fundamentally disagree on almost every political issue, at least we both believe in the preservation of democracy. That is what is important.

Mr. Livingstone: Another consensus on the Front Benches is to make the whole debate so obscure that the British people do not know what is happening. That is why they are united on not letting the British people choose.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield spoke glowingly about the way that the Danish Government had consulted their people. He took so many interventions from my hon. Friends that he could not fit mine in. I wanted to ask why he spoke so glowingly of the Government of Denmark trusting its people when our Front Bench lines up behind the Government in an agreement not to trust the British people. If the treaty is so wonderful, why can the British people not decide on the issues?

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman may have one view on immigration policy—that is his privilege—and I may have a totally different view; I presume that is my privilege. We might vehemently disagree with each other, but the one thing on which we totally agree is that immigration policy should be decided in this Parliament.

Mr. Livingstone: I do not want to break this bipartisanship, but at the end of the day I am not terribly concerned about where it is decided. My concern is to defeat racist immigration policy. Therefore, I would have voted against all the immigration measures of the past 30 years, and I shall vote against this measure, because it will make it even more difficult for black people to get into this country. If I thought for a minute that the Maastricht treaty was progressive, I would vote for it, but I did not enter politics to vote to give bankers the right to run Europe.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would clearly explain the coalition between himself and some of his hon. Friends and what he called the honest right wing of the Conservative party. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) has said that he is against article 100c because it takes away our right to exclude people from this country and would open the door to unlimited immigration. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) says that he is against 100c because it is designed to exclude black people who would otherwise come here.

If either of them looked at 100c, they would see that it does not bear at all on the right to decide who comes to this country or on immigration control. Could they agree that one of them must be wrong? What is the reason for the objection to 100c that this hard-left, hard-right coalition somehow agree to see between the lines?

Mr. Livingstone: Not only does the Home Secretary not read the Maastricht treaty: he does not listen to his colleagues. They object because they believe in the nation state and in the right of the British people to determine these matters. I oppose it because I am opposed to racism wherever it raises its head. Those are the issues that will put us in the same Lobby.

When someone is in the Lobby only he knows why he is voting that way. I do not have the slightest qualm about

that. I have found myself in the Lobby with the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) on one or two occasions, but I imagine that neither he nor I would wish to tell our constituents too much about that. We were there because we believed that something was wrong. The reasons were irrelevant, because at the end of the day what matters is how one votes. I am voting against 100c because it is racist, and that is it.

While listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield, I was struck by the number of times that I have been involved in debating about high principle and policies and been carried away by it all. I came out thinking that I had achieved something, but six months later I asked myself, "What has happened to it? How was it translated into reality?"—because that is a different matter. I have sat on committees that took decisions which we thought were great, but a year later nothing had filtered its way down through the dross.

Our debates in Committee have to be considered in the context of what is happening outside, who administers the policy and who makes the day-to-day decisions. How will the immigration officer interpret what we say against the long background of tradition on how we approach these matters?

I am not happy with the origins of the measure. Many of my more naive colleagues pop up and down at party meetings and speak about awful happenings at Trevi, saying that this legislation will drag them all out into the open. It will not. Nothing in the treaty will bring Trevi decisions into the open so that they can be debated in Parliament, and to imagine that that will happen is an illusion. The treaty will legitimise what is discussed in private in Trevi. In effect, the situation is worse, because the structure includes the Schengen group, which has its own tightly defined agenda. Its members also attend Trevi meetings and dominate them.

People in the Labour party have been complaining for years that a party within a party can have disproportionate effects. That is why Militant was expelled. Half a dozen people can agree in private and dominate a bigger meeting because they work together. That is happening in Trevi. The reality is that, if there was anything of which the Government could be proud, they would publish it.

What happens at Trevi? Representatives from each of the Twelve sit around and decide how to keep people out of Europe. They work out which country has the most restrictive policy to keep Arabs, for example, out of Europe, and they all adopt it as the norm. They work out which has the most restrictive policy to keep people from the Caribbean out of Europe, and they all adopt it as the norm. That is why the meetings are not public. It is the most disgusting exercise of hidden racism that we have witnessed in recent years. I am not surprised that the Trevi group is not prepared publicly to state what is happening, or to open its meetings to the press and the public.

What is Trevi there to do? We need only to look at the list of policy areas that it considers—it is an insult. It discusses terrorism, arms, rabies, AIDS and immigrants. What does that list say about those who participate in Trevi and how they perceive immigrants to Europe? Immigrants are dealt with in a group whose remit is to tackle AIDS, terrorism and rabies. That does not fill me with enthusiasm about what Trevi discusses. I am happy to give way to the Home Secretary if he will say that he is prepared either to publish the details of those meetings or to argue at the next meeting that Trevi's meetings should be held in public.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am incredulous about the hon. Gentleman's extraordinary list. Trevi does not consider immigration—it is a group of Security Ministers. A separate ad hoc group of Immigration Ministers discusses immigration matters, but not in the terms described by the hon. Gentleman. His conspiracy theory misleads him. I do not know what he was reading a moment ago, but it was certainly not a description of the Trevi group, which does not have immigration within its terms of reference.

Mr. Livingstone: I am not at all surprised that those Ministers meet as a sub-group of Trevi. If the Home Secretary is so happy with its meetings, let them be in public. They are vital to the interests of the British people.

Let no one on the Labour Benches think that voting for Maastricht will open up that little nest; it will just institutionalise Trevi's secretiveness. What is decided at Trevi will be steamrollered through, and the House will have little opportunity——

Mr. Blair: Perhaps my hon. Friend would confirm that what happens in Trevi is happening now. It already exists. If it is wrong, it is wrong now, irrespective of Maastricht.

All that article 100c does is to lay down a procedure for agreeing those countries from which visas are required for their nationals and also a common format for the visa. Can my hon. Friend explain why co-operation on those matters is so appalling and must lead to racism? For the life of me, I cannot see that.

Mr. Livingstone: I am glad that my hon. Friend reminds me of that point, which is the very point that I raised yesterday, when I eventually managed to intervene in his speech. Having had so many interventions from his Labour colleagues last night, my hon. Friend staggered out of the Chamber saying, "If I had known it was going to be like that, I would have worn my shinpads."

Mrs. Dunwoody: Would my hon. Friend point out that the Schengen list includes Belize? Those of us who are concerned about the right of Commonwealth citizens to come here can only assume that, if that list is extended throughout the Community, the effect on them will be clear, damaging and unacceptable.

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

What worries me most about article 100c is a phrase that I mentioned yesterday in my intervention:

"a threat of a sudden inflow".

That clearly shows how the drafters of Maastricht see the people of the third world—a threat. That underlies the whole logic of the article. I fail to understand how anyone who professes to have any degree of socialism or even any commitment to social justice could vote for a treaty that includes such a phrase. It is blatantly racist. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield is grimacing, but that is what I believe. Anyone who is not prepared to vote against the treaty is acceding to racism and even supporting it.

Even if everything else in the treaty was wonderful, I would still vote against it because of that phrase in article 100c. Those of us who represent communities with large numbers of immigrants know how things work today, and we know that the treaty will make that worse. We are already operating an immigration policy—which, to our

[Mr. Livingstone]

shame, has been accepted and perpetuated by past Labour Governments. There has been 30 years of pandering to racism and introducing more and more restrictions to prevent people from coming to this country.

After housing, the second largest number of complaints I get from my constituents is about immigration policy. Those of us who represent areas with mixed communities know that, if one of our constituents married a white person from Australia, New Zealand or America, that partner would be in this country within weeks, if not days. If that constituent married someone from India or the Caribbean, it could be three years, four years or never before that partner was admitted to this country.

5.45 pm

That is the context in which we must consider the treaty. It does not start with a blank sheet of paper; it is laid on top of what already exists. It is a clear sign that the nations of Europe view people outside as a threat. We could not find any organisation among the black or brown people of Britain that does not see the proposal as a fortress Europe to exclude those from outside, to keep the wealth of Europe away from the third world and to keep the people of Europe pure from

"a threat of a sudden inflow",

as the treaty puts it.

I should be happy to give way to any hon. Member who could interpret that phrase in any other way. It is an attitude that we have seen before, including in the House.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): The European Community comprises only 12 nations. Outside the Community, there are many other nations in central and eastern Europe—including, of course, the former Soviet Union. I suspect that the reference to "a threat" in the treaty is concerned mainly not with countries outside Europe, but with the other countries of Europe where there may be severe problems, such as civil war. I think that that is what article 100c is all about.

Mr. Livingstone: I am not interested in defending only the people of the third world; I am also interested in defending the citizens of Russia. If a civil war breaks out in Russia or the Ukraine, should we send people back to die?

Mr. Radice: I was trying to correct my hon. Friend, who was directing his remarks purely towards the third world. I am trying to bring him a little more in touch with the reality of Europe at the moment.

Mr. Livingstone: When we talk to French politicians, it is obvious that their obsession is with the peoples of north Africa and the number of Arabs coming to Europe. I imagine that, in Germany, the obsession is with the east. In Britain, some politicians are obsessed with people from India, Pakistan, Africa and the Caribbean. Obsessions differ as we move around different parts of Europe, but at the end of the day the attitude is the same—keep them out.

Mr. Winnick: I know that my hon. Friend is not especially concerned about the nation state, but does he accept that the virtue of being, so far, an independent country is that we can decide our policies on immigration, whether negative—as, unfortunately, most of them are —or otherwise? If the treaty becomes law, we will talk about the issue, but the final decision will be made elsewhere.

Does my hon. Friend accept that those Labour Members who believe in the nation state are far from being racist? Like my hon. Friend, they are anti-racist. Some of them, including me, voted against the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968, which took away the rights of so many people who should have been allowed to come here. There were 61 of us, most of them Labour Members.

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friend is right. In this Chamber, we can fight against racist immigration policies, but under the Maastricht treaty, such policies will be decided bureaucratically. Ministers will come back to the House saying that they did their best but were outvoted, that they would have used their veto but we might have had money taken away from us as a result.

Mr. Bernie Grant: I agree with my hon. Friend's interpretation. The threats talked about by Le Pen, Jacques Chirac and others are posed by people of a different colour and culture. Is that not borne out by the fact that it is the clear intention to expand the EC to take on board countries such as Russia, Czechoslovakia and Poland, so that the people of those countries will not be seen as a threat? Therefore, the only threat that would be perceived would be from people of colour, not from people in eastern and central Europe.

Mr. Livingstone: A clear strategy is emerging, whereby the Nordic countries, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, perhaps Slovakia, will quickly be brought in. Many eastern European nations will be brought in, largely to provide cheap labour. As they come in, I suspect that restrictions on people from the third world will become stronger day by day.

Mr. Marlow: Is it not a matter of fascination and note that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), the Wykehamist old boy, intervened and, being more European than Mr. Delors himself, justified article 100c on the basis that it could be used by Europeans such as himself to keep Europeans out of Europe?

Mr. Livingstone: I find myself broadly in agreement with that. It is sad that, after years of defeat, years of being in opposition, and years of being ignored, Jacques Delors popped up at the Trades Union Congress, and the trade union movement was so delighted that someone in government somewhere would talk to them that they suddenly thought that Europe was the road to socialism —overlooking the fact that socialism is achieved by struggle. It is not handed down by European bureaucrats, any more than it is handed down by British bureaucrats. The whole Labour movement has gone mad and wild. They have disappeared so far up Mr. Delors' fundament that only the soles of their feet are visible.

Mr. Macdonald: On the implication of the sudden inflow of nationals, which my hon. Friend says clearly applies to persons from the Caribbean, India or Pakistan, he will see that article 100c, paragraph 2, concerns the need to introduce a visa requirement for countries which previously did not have such a requirement. The list of countries requiring visas produced by the Schengen countries includes the Caribbean countries, India and

Pakistan, and so on, and likewise with the United Kingdom list of countries whose nationals require a visa to enter this country.

Therefore, paragraph 2 cannot apply to those countries, because their nationals already require a visa to enter Britain or the EC. It must be directed at countries whose nationals do not presently require a visa—for example, Poland—where there might be some civil disruption which necessitated EC countries producing a visa requirement to cope with that emergency.

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friend is right. The present system is appalling, and this will make it worse. We have seen what has happened under visa restrictions. During the past few years, the Government have introduced visa restrictions for Sri Lankans, with the result that the flow of refugees from Sri Lanka has dried up. They could not get here. How could they? How can one obtain a visa while fleeing death? A person about to be bumped off cannot stand outside the British High Commission waiting for it to open in the hope of obtaining a visa to get out of the country. People escaping countries do so without visas or with false passports.

Then the Government introduced visa requirements for Ugandans, despite that holocaust, and that flow of refugees dried up. Then they did it for the Kurds and that flow dried up. Then they did it for the Yugoslavians, with the exception of people from Slovenia and Croatia, and that flow of people dried up. Visas are used to keep people out. They are used to prevent genuine refugees from coming here.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a deep strain of authoritarianism runs through the treaty? Just as the laws could be manipulated to work in the direction that he has described, so it would be perfectly possible, under the authoritarianism that underpins the system, for them to be manipulated to work in the other direction.

Once such powers have been handed over, and, as some people may have noted, the European Court, after certain procedures under article K.6 had been followed, could take up the running of all this, not only might the system deprive our own Parliament and people of making decisions, but the decisions could be taken with increasing authority at the centre, by the unelected bureaucrats in the EC.

Mr. Livingstone: I agree. However, the problem is that one does not get much joy now from this Government when trying to obtain visas. We are already in an appalling situation. My worry is that it will get much worse. It is difficult enough to persuade this Government to allow someone into the country without having to trundle off and raise such issues in Brussels, where everyone will be passing the buck, blaming the Council of Ministers, and saying that a decision was not their fault and that they would have liked it to go the other way. That is the problem.

If the Maastricht treaty created a democratic Europe, that would unite people across Europe. Instead, it is a treaty that creates bureaucracy and rule by bankers. I fail to see how anyone on the left of the political spectrum —after, in the case of some of my colleagues, 20, 30 or 40 years of struggle for social justice—could say, "Here we are—Nirvana. The bloody German bankers are going to

What nonsense. That would be to turn our back on everything that we had fought to achieve as a party. Not only is that the situation, but have people looked at the voting system for the central bank? It is not one vote per country, but one vote——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman's speech is entertaining, but it would help the debate if he returned to the amendment.

Mr. Livingstone: Decisions in the Council of Ministers about who should and should not obtain visas might one day be made under the same voting system as that for the central bank, so that the vote will be weighted by gross national product and population, with one nation having 25 per cent. of the votes. I hope that that will not happen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield made the most impressive presentation of Government policy that I have heard for a long time. He drew our attention to what has happened to asylum seekers during the past 20 years. He told us that, in 1972, 13,000 asylum seekers applied to come to Europe, and virtually all were granted admission. Last year, 600,000 applied, but only 20 per cent. were granted admission. I should have loved him even more if he had developed that argument to explain why.

Much of the argument on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill and now on the Maastricht treaty and article 100c is based on the concept of the economic migrant who is abusing the situation. Many people who have been in politics for a long time will remember having struggled to get out of the country some trade unionist from El Salvador who was under threat of assassination, or some opposition leader who was being threatened by some brutal dictatorship somewhere.

That is the concept of asylum that we have in the back of our minds. The United Nations definition of an asylum seeker is someone who is in fear of persecution. As the world has changed, those seeking asylum in Britain have come from areas of armed conflict. They did not come because our social security system is the envy of the world —that is about 30 years out of date. If that were their motive, they would go to Germany, which pays decent rates.

Applicants to enter Britain come from areas convulsed by violent struggle—Sri Lanka, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Often, they come from countries to which we have supplied arms, or with which we have some historic colonial link. They are not economic migrants, but people running in fear of their lives.

Let us consider the closest European conflict. The United Nations definition does not, we are told, apply to such people and to the 600,000 that I mentioned. Surely someone is in fear of persecution if that person is a Muslim woman being kept in a camp in Bosnia and raped daily by Serbian guards as part of a systematic campaign of terror and intimidation. I would say that such a person is a refugee, whether or not she fits neatly into the United Nations definition. I wish that my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield had gone on to argue that the United Nations definition was much too narrow.

Mr. Blair: If my hon. Friend will refer to column 1097 of yesterday's *Official Report*, he will see that I made precisely the same point. I said that many people not directly classified as refugees by the United Nations, because they are not subject to individual persecution under the United Nations convention, are none the less in

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desperate danger because of ethnic conflict or civil war. I made precisely the point that my hon. Friend accuses me of not making.

6 pm

Mr. Livingstone: I am delighted to hear that, and I shall be pleased to give way again so that my hon. Friend can explain how article 100c will assist such people to obtain asylum. Does he genuinely believe that the European bureaucrats will be more humane? Does he believe that the Council of Ministers, meeting in secret, will open its arms in a way that national Governments are not doing now?

Mr. Blair: Article 100c has nothing to do with asylum. That is dealt with by article K—and one does not even get to article K unless there is unanimous agreement. My hon. Friend may carry on making his point about article 100c, but it does not deal with the issue that he is raising.

Mr. Livingstone: We have seen that, whenever the Community reaches a crunch point, with half a dozen issues outstanding, there is a trade-off. The defence made so far in the debate is that unanimity is required, and that Britain will be able to operate its veto. What will happen in a crisis, when Britain's budget rebate may be at stake? Several other countries around the table could say, "If you are not prepared to drop the unanimity rule, we will vote not to renew your budget rebate."

That is exactly the kind of horse trading that we have seen in the Council of Ministers and at European summits. Our veto is not guaranteed for all time. A point will be reached at which a British Government will be prepared to surrender their veto, and that will be the end of it.

Mr. Marlow: Article K.3(2) states that the Council may

"On the initiative of any Member State or of the Commission, in the areas referred to in Article K.1(1) to (6)"—

which includes asylum policy—

"(a) adopt joint positions and . . . (b) adopt joint action in so far as the objectives of the Union can be attained".

There is unanimity, but asylum policies can be decided by article K.3(2). It is somewhat surprising that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is not aware of that.

Mr. Livingstone: Nothing is surprising. As was said yesterday in a point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones), the way that amendments have been submitted, collated, and selected, and the general confusion surrounding all that, makes for extreme difficulties. It comes down to opinion.

I wish that people's optimistic hopes about what the treaty would achieve were right. If so, I would vote for it. However, that is not the world that I know from my experience in local government and after six years in the House. One cannot work on the assumption that one can place the best interpretation on things, or that everyone will act with the best of motives. Usually, exactly the reverse is true: once people put their grubby little hands on a bit of power, they use it in their own interests.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that, under not only Court of Justice arrangements but those of another place, proceedings, debates, statements by Ministers, and interpretations placed by Ministers on such measures are likely to be taken into account as travaux préparatoire? Is it not possible that, if some of the statements made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, which are matters of interpretation, are proved to be wrong, the Committee may find that it was misled—perhaps in all honesty—because it did not understand what it was doing? As a result, we may find that we are caught in the very traps that the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) mentioned.

Mr. Livingstone: The one example used in all law courses about the problems of interpreting laws relates to a matter that is nothing like as complicated as the treaty. In 1968, the House passed the legislation on London Transport, which included a clause saying that the Greater London council should have the power to subsidise fares for whatever purpose. The then Member of Parliament for Finchley explained that that meant that there could be subsidised fare reductions, but when the Law Lords came to examine that legislation, they decided that it meant something completely different. If that is what the Law Lords can do with one simple sentence, I dread to think what they, or the European Court, could do with a treaty of such complexity.

When one compares the Maastricht treaty in all its complexity and deviousness—though perhaps one should not use that word—with the simplicity of the American constitution, one sees what a nightmare is being created for lawyers and judges.

I am drawing to a conclusion. I intended to make only a brief speech, but I received so much support from members of my Front Bench that I kept giving way.

I spoke earlier of the flow of refugees that had dried up as visa restrictions were imposed. As a consequence, of all those who sought asylum in this country every year, only about 30 arrived with visas. That is why the Government introduced carrier liability. One sees Mr. Big sitting on the Government Front Bench, saying, "This is all going to be wonderful," yet what was done by those who preceded him as Home Secretary—the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and Lord Waddington? Theirs is a record of restriction and control.

The Government now rely on foreign airlines to act as a policing arm for Britain, to keep refugees out. British immigration officers are sent to other countries to stand by airline desks and persuade airline operators that certain persons should not be allowed to enter Britain. That is the most appalling abuse. British immigration officers are sent to train airline officials in other countries how to decide whom to keep out of Britain. We talk about defending the powers of the House and of the British people, but in practice we are devolving those powers because there is a desire to keep people of colour out of Europe.

Also depressing is the fact that the new Europe will decide which countries are safe. It will be interesting to hear from the Foreign Secretary the thoughts of the Foreign Office on that aspect. The Maastricht treaty will be used to draw up a list of safe and unsafe countries before we decide who we will accept as refugees.

What will happen in the case of Turkey? Will it be decided that Turkey is a safe country because it is part of NATO and an ally—or will those responsible be honest and offend Turkey by saying that it is a very unsafe country if one is a Kurd and has been subject to abuse, bombing, intimidation, and the suppression of one's culture? What nonsense. I suspect that the Foreign Office

is not happy about that, and that it sees a nightmare of strange relationships as European Ministers sit down together and decide categories of safe and unsafe nations.

The truth is that at the end of the day this is part of a long degeneration and that is why it has been seized upon so eagerly by both Front Benches.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman will have adversely affected his Front Bench team's opportunities of being selected in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reshuffle, but I recognise that the Con-Lab Front Bench in this matter has thrown out of the window any regard for the power of the vote, the historic origins of the Labour party, the ability to change laws and hold to account Ministers, Executives and Cabinets for the policies that are the laws of this land.

That is the essence which the whole nonsense of Maastricht contradicts, that is why the House fights and that is why there is an identity on doing down the Bill, when both Front Benches are indistinguishable and are now jockeying to be included in a reshuffle.

Mr. Livingstone: Sadly, I have to agree with the hon. Gentleman. The Labour leadership does not find the Bill objectionable, largely because it has done so much to suppress democracy in the past 10 years. I would not worry about the power of the vote; in the Labour party, we are moving towards one leader, one vote.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I cannot find anywhere in the amendment reference to the Conservative or Labour parties. If we could get back to discussing the amendment, we would make some progress with the Bill.

Mr. Livingstone: I am sorry, Mr. Lofthouse, but I was led astray by an older man.

I see the measure as a further degeneration from a point of principle. Just over 30 years ago, the House debated immigration policy for the first time, when the Macmillan Government proposed restrictions to keep black people out of Britain. Now that the Cabinet papers have been released, we can see that there was a fear of racism and the fear that there would be a backlash. Rather than standing up to that and educating people, the Macmillan Government gave in.

I remember those debates—they were the first of which I was aware. I was 16 at the time, and I saw one figure of principle, Hugh Gaitskell, who opposed that law because it was racist. He believed it was racist, and he said so; he knew that he was alienating voters, but he fought for what he believed was right.

The treaty and the clauses are the result of 30 years of degeneration from that point of principle; 30 years of running in the face of racism rather than standing and challenging it; 30 years of pandering to racism by jacking up entry restrictions. Every time the Labour party has made a concession, racists in society have said that it is still too lax, and restrictions must be still tighter. We have reached a point where that means the most appalling injustice for many citizens of Britain.

If one marries a white person in America, Australia or Canada, that person will be allowed into Britain within days, but one can marry someone from India or Africa and never get them into Britain. Even after two or three children have been born into that marriage, an immigration officer can still say that he thinks it was a marriage of convenience. That is a disaster, and it has done a great deal to undermine morality in British politics.

I am not attacking only the Tory party, although it is marginally worse. I remember that it was a Labour Government who stripped British citizens in Kenya of their right to come to Britain. I sat through five years of Labour government between 1974-79 waiting for them to repeal the Immigration Act 1971 that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) had introduced and that we condemned in opposition but left on the statute book.

I remember reading in the accounts of that time, the biographies and diaries, the response to that wave of racism when Patrick Gordon Walker was defeated in the 1964 election. Were we principled? No. When Sir Frank Soskice, the then Home Secretary, presented a paper about immigration policy to the Labour Cabinet at the end of 1964, he said to the Cabinet: "Let us be absolutely serious about what we are talking about here. If we don't act to stop immigration, within a generation all our people will be coffee-coloured".

The debate on immigration has been a despicable record that besmirches the House. We have given in to reaction again and again and Maastricht is part of that. Finally, as I said earlier, even if everything else in the treaty were wonderful, I would vote against it because of this one clause.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I know, Mr. Lofthouse, that you are keeping a careful check on the length of speeches in debates on the treaty, so I shall attempt to be brief. I wish to make four or five points fairly rapidly.

The outstanding thing about the debate this afternoon has been the fact that no one has stated or acknowledged that the free movement of persons is in itself an enormously desirable objective. Surely the free movement of persons is a great advance in civilisation. It is a desirable and humane objective to which right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House should aspire.

6.15 pm

Although I fear that it is not practicable to contemplate the establishment of free movement of human beings all over the planet, at least a regime of free movement of persons throughout western Europe would be a significant advance of civilisation.

There is a great danger that we shall fail to see the wood for the trees and become so bogged down by the detail —constitutional, bureaucratic, administrative or otherwise—that we shall fail to see the great principles enshrined in the treaty and the Bill, which ratifies it. Surely the achievement of the ideal of free movement of persons, which is already enshrined in the Single European Act, is a positive step forward.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I take my hon. Friend's point about the free movement of people, but what will happen if they do not keep moving and all want to settle down and they gravitate to those countries where the benefits are most attractive? Those countries will have to cope financially. That is a practical effect of the free movement of people. What does my hon. Friend think that we can do about that?

Mr. Davies: I know that my hon. Friend shares with me a commitment to free market principles, so surely in the future it is right that people should be able to move. Market principles and constraints will operate so that if everyone wants to install himself in, say, London or Paris, rents will rise and wages will fall because the supply of labour will be greater than demand and people will move away again. Therefore, the natural economic mechanism will work towards equilibrium, even if we never finally achieve it. My hon. Friend should be satisfied by that response as I know she shares my faith in the economic mechanism.

The second thing that struck me about the debate was the suggestion that was almost explicit in the speech by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and was implicit in a number of interventions by Conservative Members, that somehow the establishment of the principle of the free movement of persons in the European Community would compromise the national sovereignty of member states. I thought that that was an extraordinary suggestion.

After all, before 1914 we had free movement of persons in western Europe. One could go to Victoria station and buy a ticket to Paris, Rome, Vienna or Berlin and travel to those places without any bureaucratic let or hindrance and without showing any passport or visa. One can make many comments about the world of pre-1914 Europe, but one thing from which it surely did not suffer was a lack of national sovereignty because we ended up with an appalling fractricidal conflict which was, I suppose, the ultimate proof of national sovereignty.

We need not feel that there is any conflict between the principle of national sovereignty and the free movement of persons. Surely the re-establishment of the free movement that was enjoyed in the civilised world before 1914 is a considerable advance. Thank goodness we can now look forward to it after the unhappy interval of most of the 20th century.

It is also more than a little naive of hon. Members, most of them Conservative, to believe that frontier controls are an effective way of barring the entry of illegal immigrants or criminals, including terrorists. So many millions of people cross internal frontiers in the Community every day that it would be impossible for immigration officers at those frontiers to examine microscopically every passport presented to them and ask the many questions necessary to make the controls effective. The only answer is to have better internal controls, and I hope we shall have them. We must vet social security registers and have more checks on employers suspected of employing illegal immigrant labour.

If we are to make a reality of the free movement of people in the Community—a desirable objective which every humane person supports—we must also strengthen controls on the external frontiers of the Community. I am not satisfied that we should leave it to, say, a Greek immigration officer on the Thracian frontier with Turkey to decide who shall and shall not come into the Community and thereby acquire the right to install himself or herself in Lincolnshire. A successful regime of free movement must be based on the same high standard of control of immigration applying at all external frontiers.

Sir Teddy Taylor: How?

Mr. Davies: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention, albeit sedentary, because it gives me the opportunity to come to my final point, which is that we need a mixed-man force of immigration officers who will be responsible for common external frontiers. They should be recruited from all the Community countries and be in the employ of the Community. That will ensure that the same criteria for admission are applied to the same standard and with the same effectiveness throughout the Community.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): This is the first time I have spoken on the Bill and on the treaty on European union, so at the outset I express my appreciation to the British Management Data Foundation Ltd., which was responsible for producing consolidated text without which I would have been in the same difficulty as the Home Secretary, who confessed his problems in coping with the legislation. Like him, I cannot claim to have read and fully digested the entire text, but without the document we would have been floundering.

There has been much discussion about the extent to which decisions on immigration policy would be subject to unanimity or qualified majority and the extent to which the competency of the Community could be extended to cover other matters. Assurances have been given by the Home Secretary and others about there being a double lock on those matters, so that we need not be concerned about whether there are adequate safeguards for national sovereignty and the authority of the British Parliament.

I intervened yesterday to point out that part of the difficulty stemmed from the fact that we did not have in the United Kingdom constitution an adequate procedure for dealing with those issues. We do not have an adequate ratification procedure. What in substance we are doing in these proceedings is ratifying the treaty on European union. We are doing that not by considering the treaty but by debating a short measure of two clauses. To smuggle in the substantive provisions of the treaty on European union, we must go through the elaborate procedure of tabling hundreds of amendments, some of which, according to our procedure, are selected and others are not.

In that context, I agreed with a point of order raised by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) about the difficulty in following the procedure. Life would be easier and our proceedings would be more coherent if we adopted the sort of procedure followed by other member states by which the treaty is embodied in legislation. Legislators can then discuss the provisions of the treaty in a coherent way.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman is dealing with an important point. Titles I, V, VI and VII of the treaty would be dealt with by the prerogative and would not necessarily be susceptible to a Bill. Does he agree that if the Government really believed in Parliament and had put down titles II, III, IV and perhaps part of title VI as schedules to the measure, we could have tabled amendments to those schedules, which would have been the text of the treaty, presenting us with a fair, open and democratic way of conducting these affairs?

Mr. Trimble: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and it would be opportune if, at an appropriate point in the near future, the House considered ways to ensure that we have more effective control not only over treaties but over the

issues flowing from them. The hon. Gentleman made an important point in referring to the use of the royal prerogative.

Many Community provisions are operated through the European Council. Governments are represented on that body—they may act by unanimity or qualified majority—and we are assured that, because of the presence of Her Majesty's Government, the national interests of the United Kingdom are protected. But we in Parliament will not have an opportunity to deal with many issues because they can be brought into force with the use of the royal prerogative or existing statutory powers. Only when fresh legislation is required can we have any effective control over what is proposed.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Given that we are now on our ninth day and are looking forward to several months of Committee stage, remembering that we started it all many months ago—in other words, we shall spend more time debating the Bill than any other legislature in the Community—may I ask the hon. Gentleman to say, given that he is not satisfied with the degree of attention that it is receiving in the British Parliament, how long would satisfy his needs?

Mr. Trimble: It is a question not of time but of the way in which we are dealing with it. As I said at the outset, we are not proceeding in a coherent manner. We are compelled by our procedures and by the way in which the Bill was drafted to proceed in a crab-like manner, a subject to which I shall return, if the rules of order permit me to deal with the issue.

I was glad yesterday to hear the Home Secretary express surprise that certain documents relating to the convention on frontiers had not been lodged in the Library. He promised to make them available and I am glad that he has done that. If we are to deal effectively with matters arising under the treaty—immigration, security, policing, justice and so on—we must examine the way in which information comes to us, in particular ensuring that it is readily accessible.

6.30 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): There are many aspects of immigration and refugee policy which are, in effect, decided elsewhere by the British Government through the Trevi group and other ad hoc meetings and which become Government policy because of the way in which immigration law is now drafted, which gives almost complete power to the Home Secretary. The hon. Member is pointing to a very pertinent example of a long-term and serious problem with immigration law which will be worse if the Bill goes through.

Mr. Trimble: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but I am not sure that I fully agree with it. However, I certainly agree about the unsatisfactory way in which the Trevi group has operated and I take his point about our Government's policy being decided in those discussions and, consequently, not fully debated here. Perhaps, as a result of those proceedings, we shall move into a slightly better phase and reform our procedures. The fact that the treaty on European union is putting ad hoc arrangements with Trevi on a more formal footing and providing a better basis for them to proceed may give this House, if it changes and adapts its procedures, the opportunity to have some involvement in matters that have hitherto been dealt with through Trevi and other ad hoc groups. So there might be some occasion for improvement, if we so decide, if we address ourselves, as I think we must, to the issue of dealing with policy matters, and if the treaty goes ahead. It is essential for the House to get to grips with the issue.

That was a comment on our discussions yesterday. Our problems would be eased if we had a proper application procedure.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The hon. Member is making an extremely thoughtful contribution to the debate on this series of amendments. My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) talked about the number of hours that the House will debate the Committee stage of the Bill. Is not one problem that the Government cannot afford to allow one amendment to succeed? All the discussions on the Bill, however valuable, can achieve nothing because the Government of this country have agreed to something before it has come to Parliament. Should it not have been the case——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must surely know that that is a procedural point and nothing to do with the amendment. Mr. David Trimble——

Mr. Winterton: If the hon. Member will allow me to intervene again, I will seek to bring my intervention within order, Mr. Lofthouse. We are dealing with justice, law and order, security and asylum. These are all matters which create tremendous interest in this House and about which most Members feel very strongly. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who led or who was certainly involved with the Greater London council for many years, made a very emotional and impassioned speech. We cannot improve this Bill without the Bill being destroyed. That is the point I am trying to make, and I agree with the hon. Gentleman.

The First Deputy Chairman: I hope that the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) will not reply to the procedural point but will stick to the amendment.

Mr. Trimble: I eschew the temptation to reply to that very valuable and interesting intervention. The hon. Member has a fair idea of my views on the matter, but I was reflecting on the difficulties arising because we do not have a procedure for ratification.

Dealing with the relationship between articles 100c and K.9, which was discussed at some length yesterday, another point that occurs to me is that with this procedure, as with so many things in connection with the European Community, we are dealing with a ratchet effect. The Home Secretary said that we do not have to worry, because there will have to be a unanimous decision before various matters move from unanimity to qualified majority. That is all right up to a point, but there only has to be one decision and it is over the dam and never comes back. We only have to have a Minister or a different Government who decide to adopt a different policy and it goes over the dam and moves from unanimity to qualified majority, and it never comes back. That is part of the problem.

I remember many occasions on which the former right hon. Member for Finchley, Baroness Thatcher, used to complain about the attitude within the British body politic about socialism and the ratchet effect. She was determined

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to unwind that, and succeeded. Unfortunately, it will take a considerable effort to unwind the ratchet effect that is operating here.

Hon. Members have pointed out that much of what we are dealing with here is related to free movement of people and passport and border control provisions. They flowed from the basic concept of the free movement of persons which was written into the original treaty of Rome and was one of its central provisions. If free movement is to be implemented, it produces a common travel area within the entire Community. It is extending to the entire Community the common travel area that exists within the British Isles. Perhaps that is not a very good point or a helpful or encouraging analogy, but basically that is what it is doing.

When people were expressing concern about whether extension of the common travel area would have implications for the powers under the prevention of terrorism Act or exclusion orders to deal with terrorism, the Home Secretary offered reassurance. I should like him to look more closely at that reassurance. He was referring us to paragraph 3 of article 48 of the treaties, which says:

"It shall entail the right, subject to limitations justified on grounds of public policy, public security or public health:".

At first sight, that seems to preserve measures such as the prevention of terrorism Act because they come under public security, but paragraph 3 of article 48 is under the heading "Workers" and paragraph 1 of the article is about freedom of movement for workers which shall be secured, and so on. Article 8a, which is about citizenship, will be discussed later. It says:

"Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory . . .".

There may be a difference of meaning between citizen and worker and I should like the Minister who is to reply to consider that. Am I right in suggesting that the power to have limitation on public security grounds operates only with regard to movement of workers and not with regard to the movement of people who are not workers? I hope that I am not right in that supposition, and I hope that it is possible to have restrictions on public security grounds generally, because they are extremely necessary and desirable.

If we move into this new era of freedom of movement and a common travel area within the Community, it also follows, as has already been said, that controls designed to prevent crime and terrorism will have to switch from borders to operate internally. If we are to enable those to operate effectively internally, it is no good requiring every citizen to carry a passport at all times, to enable them to establish their identity. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who was opposing the suggestion, said that an inevitable corollary of adoption of the travel area will be a requirement for identity cards and a power for the police to be able to stop people and require them to establish their identity. I agree with her that if we go down this road we shall go to that conclusion. She did not like that conclusion, but I have no problem with it. I think that it would be desirable and necessary, in order to have some effective control on drugs and terrorism, but it is only a small point.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) said that other steps would have to be taken to ensure that checks were made within member states. He pointed out, for instance, that checks would be necessary to ensure that people were not employing immigrant workers. That is an excellent idea; I hope that, at the same time, the authorities will check that employees are not "doing the double".

This group of amendments is headed "Justice and Home: Frontiers, Visas, Asylum". I want to concentrate not on the detail of article 1000c, as most hon. Members have, but on article K.1, and, in particular, paragraphs 7 and 9. I trust that I am right in thinking that I shall remain in order in so doing: I tried to track down all the amendments listed under that heading, but that proved very difficult.

Article K, and indeed title VI as a whole, set out provisions for

"Co-operation in the fields of justice and home affairs."

The concept of co-operation is fine in theory, and, were they to be implemented effectively, the provisions in paragraph 7 of article K.1, which refers to

"judicial co-operation in criminal matters",

and in paragraph 9 of that article, which refers to

"police co-operation for the purposes of preventing and combating terrorism",

would be excellent. I do not want my comments to be misinterpreted: I do not want it to be thought that I consider co-operation anything other than necessary and desirable. The effectiveness of co-operation, however—I refer to intergovernmental co-operation, under article K—depends crucially on the integrity of the Governments of member states, and on their willingness to co-operate.

I cannot discuss police co-operation in the handling of terrorism without mentioning the serious terrorist problem that exists within the Community. Co-operation is supposed to deal with that, but we must ask whether the necessary integrity exists. Progress will depend on a recognition by member states that they have a common interest, and should pull together. It ought to be incompatible with the existence of a European Community for one member state to have a territorial claim against another; it should be even more incompatible with the existence of such a Community for one member state with a territorial claim against another to pursue that claim actively.

Claims that are merely historical survivals, as it were, may not cause much of a problem. Within the British Isles, however, a member state has a territorial claim against another, and is actively pursuing that claim in terms of diplomacy and discussion. During the recent inter-party talks on Northern Ireland, we discovered that the Irish Government, far from eschewing their territorial claim, were using the talks to advance it. That is one of the reasons for the foundering of those talks.

Hon. Members who watched the BBC2 programme "Timewatch" last night will have noted that, in the recent past, the Irish Government even contemplated advancing their territorial claim by means of armed aggression: indeed, they put in train the necessary steps for a form of proxy warfare whereby they would support and assist a terrorist organisation. Moreover, they contemplated the further step of actual invasion. The programme referred to a planned invasion of the spring of 1970, but did not deal with the planned invasion of August 1969. I know that the programme makers gathered material relating to that invasion; I am surprised that no mention was made of it.

I observe some puzzlement on the Conservative Benches. I should be delighted to be able to go into the

matter in detail, but I shall not do so, Mr. Lofthouse: we are now dealing with the general principles of the treaty. My basic point is that co-operation on matters relating to security and terrorism depends on the existence of the trust and integrity that are so sadly absent now.

When I mentioned the matter in business questions this afternoon, the Leader of the House said that we should focus on the present co-operation. My colleagues and I believe that the present co-operation is a sham: we could demonstrate that time and again by referring to the tremendous incidence of cross-border-related terrorism, and to the conspicuous inability of the Irish army and police to prevent such crimes—or, except very rarely, even to detain those involved.

6.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: For the benefit of the many hon. Members who have been in the House for some years, and have often debated matters relating to security in Northern Ireland, will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether he believes that the treaty's ratification—and the enactment of the Bill—could be disadvantageous to the improvement of security for the people of Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom?

I feel that that is the crux of what the hon. Gentleman is trying to say. Perhaps, by implication, he has said it; but he has not spelt it out clearly. I hope that he will do so, because I believe that terrorism may flourish even more if the Bill is enacted, and that the people of Northern Ireland will be placed at a severe disadvantage.

Mr. Trimble: In so far as controls on movement within the Community are diminished, there is a real prospect of that. It will be easier for terrorists to move from one part of the Community to another. That has already happened in regard to Provisional IRA terrorist operations on the continental land mass: for instance, a terrorist cell that appeared to be based in Holland proved to be active in Belgium and western Germany, and to be moving easily between frontiers. Interestingly, they were the frontiers of the countries involved in the Schengen agreement—the countries that have gone furthest in achieving the necessary co-operation in dealing with cross-border matters. They allow a degree of what might be called hot pursuit; in some areas, joint patrols operate. Yet the terrorists were clearly exploiting the borders.

Greater freedom of movement will mean greater danger, and will lead to a need for further safeguards. I mentioned those earlier when I spoke of the need for identity cards. If we do not consider such matters, the position will worsen. Moreover, we may appear to endorse the Government's current belief that co-operation exists. Under article K, a new procedure will be established, a committee of officials will be appointed to consider the issues involved, and it may become easier for Ministers to lull themselves—or deceive themselves—into thinking that co-operation exists where, in practice, it does not. That is already happening, to an extent, in relations between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Irish Republic. Her Majesty's Government think that there is co-operation; but that co-operation is strictly limited and not entirely sincere. The enactment of the legislation will provide further opportunities to deceive an Administration who have already proved remarkably gullible.

As well as dealing with police co-operation on terrorism, article K refers to judicial co-operation. That, too, would be highly desirable if it were effective. I hope that the Minister will give us a progress report on what is happening in the Community.

The European convention on the suppression of terrorism, which was adopted many years ago, provides for extradition in certain circumstances. I understand that discussions about new extradition arrangments are taking place in Europe. I should be interested to know what is happening on that front. What are the current plans and proposals with regard to judicial co-operation relating to criminal matters? The European convention on the suppression of terrorism has not been a success. There are far too many loopholes in article 1, and unfortunately the provisions in article 2, which apply it to almost any offence, have not been implemented.

There is a paradox in regard to extradition to which I should like to refer briefly. If we are to have European union, with free movement, we ought to adopt measures such as those that were adopted in the middle of the 19th century in the British empire. In that case, the assumption was that Her Majesty's courts in any jurisdiction, being the courts of Her Majesty, were worthy of utter and implicit faith. In the middle of the 19th century there was introduced the procedure referred to as backing of warrants. A warrant in respect of a fugitive from one jurisdiction was automatically backed in another jurisdiction. There was no inquiry into the grounds on which the warrant had been issued; the courts were all Her Majesty's courts. Whether the incident involved a colony or the home country, the warrant was effective. That is how matters should be in a union.

One might expect that the courts in one jurisdiction within a European union would treat as valid all the actions of the courts in another jurisdiction in that union. That would represent movement in the direction of the backing of warrants.

In fact, in respect of extradition matters, we are moving in the opposite direction. Into our backing of warrants, the Government—at the behest of the Irish Government, I think—are introducing more pure extradition procedures by way of a speciality rule. It may be—who knows?—that they will move to a prima facie rule. In the area of judicial co-operation, it is curious that, in respect of these matters, we are moving in the direction opposite to that in which we should be moving.

I finish by making a simple point: while co-operation is useful, we should not be blinded to the fact that we shall have to do the job ourselves. There ought to be co-operation in respect of security, terrorism and judicial matters, but we ought not to lull ourselves into the belief that co-operation in itself will do the job.

The Government are not prepared to accept the European Commission's view with regard to immigration provisions. They insist on retaining some measure of control within the United Kingdom, even if only by way of requiring people to produce passports briefly. Implicit in that approach is that the Government do not intend to rely on the decisions of officials in Germany or Greece or Italy or Spain and that they want to reserve the right to make decisions on their own. It is right that they should do so, and the same approach should be adopted to co-operation

[Mr. Trimble]

in respect of terrorism and justice. By all means, let us have co-operation, but let us not believe that that in itself is sufficient. It will still be necessary for Her Majesty's Government to take care of their citizens' basic right to live free from terrorism and to enjoy a fully effective judicial system.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Before hearing the speech of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), I felt that the Committee was in danger of forgetting the very real value to British people, and indeed to the people of other countries in the European Community, of much closer co-operation in dealing with crime of all sorts. The hon. Gentleman has done us a favour by reminding us of that fact.

At a time when terrorists and drug traffickers do not respect national frontiers, when technology enables money to be transferred from country to country and from continent to continent at the flick of a switch on a computer terminal, it is clearly sensible to try to strengthen methods and institutions of international co-operation against crime.

The question that has divided hon. Members is the extent to which the provisions of the treaty are likely to be effective. Perhaps more significant—a great deal of time has been spent on this point—is whether the constitutional framework provided in the Maastricht treaty and in this Bill contains adequate safeguards for British national interests, adequate controls for the Parliament and Government of this country in respect of crucial matters of policy.

I am not completely uncritical of various aspects of the Maastricht treaty. It is a compromise, and it contains some provisions that I would rather not see there. However, I am genuinely suprised at the strength and passion of the criticism that some of my hon. Friends have levelled at those aspects—in particular, article K. Article K and the more general provisions intended to strengthen co-operation against crime and to control immigration are of positive value to the people of the United Kingdom.

I should like to deal first with a criticism that was expressed most strongly by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) but was echoed by several other hon. Friends—that the United Kingdom risks being invaded by hordes of foreigners and that, under this treaty, we shall surrender our right to lay down immigration rules. Certainly there is a problem about immigration control, but it arises from the Single European Act and from the differing interpretations of it by the Government of the United Kingdom and the European Commission, rather than from the treaty. I echo what several of my hon. Friends have said about the importance to this country of the preservation of good race relations and strong and effective control of immigration. However, even if the Maastricht treaty were rejected by the British Parliament, that dispute—that potential challenge to our control over immigration—would remain. It does not matter whether the treaty is accepted or rejected so far as that dilemma, that potential for argument and dispute, is concerned. It derives from the Single European Act, and it will remain.

Mr. Marlow: We all want firm and effective immigration policies. With regard to Article K.1(6) to (9), we are all in favour of co-operation with other European countries. However, the treaty would enshrine in legislation the means whereby competence in respect of these policies could be transferred from this country and from this House to European institutions. We want co-operation, but we are concerned about the loss of control and the inability ever to retrieve it.

Mr. Lidington: My hon. Friend echoes the substance of an intervention that he made earlier. The problem of the irreversibility of a decision to cede a particular aspect of policy to Community competence is not unique to the Maastricht treaty. It is something that is inherent in membership of the European Community itself.

If my hon. Friend and those who take his part on this point wish to say that the United Kingdom should withdraw from the European Community, that is a logical, coherent position to take. But if they believe that the advantage lies with the United Kingdom remaining a member of the EC, they must accept that measures ceded to Community decision-taking can only then be reversed either by agreement or by the very drastic step of seeking to bring into question our very membership.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend not accept that some of us who have been here almost from the beginning of the European saga—I refer particularly to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore)—see this Maastricht treaty as another turn or two on the ratchet, thus deepening the concern which we on both sides of the House already feel about the irreversibility of what is happening? Is it not therefore right that this concern should be spelled out and that those of us who believe that Europe should be developing in a different direction should have our say in the House?

Mr. Lidington: It is quite right that my hon. Friend and others who share his views should have their say, and they have been given ample opportunity to contribute in their particular and distinctive manner on the several days that the Committee has sat.

I go along with my hon. Friend to this extent. I too believe that we should seriously question the direction in which, it sometimes seems, the European Community is inexorably developing. I sympathise with those hon. Members who have looked back at the Single European Act and who feel that, whereas they signed up for a deal and were told that there were limits to Community competence, the goalposts have now been changed and we have gone back on what had apparently been firmly agreed.

I give strong support to article K and to the other intergovernmental pillars which form part of this treaty, because, for the first time in treaty form, they offer an alternative model of European co-operation, one which I think is more in the interests of the people of this country than the classic federalist model which is honestly and openly espoused by, for example, Mr. Delors, Mr. Kohl and even one or two hon. Members on the Government Benches.

7 pm

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend said that, because I and some other hon. Members were concerned about transferring competence over these issues to European

Community institutions, we were therefore against Community institutions having any competence whatever and we wanted to leave the Community. That is not so.

There are areas in which it is right for Community institutions to have the proper competence, but why does my hon. Friend think it necessary that potential competence with, in some respects, minimal parliamentary scope for intervention, on these sensitive issues should be passed by the House through this treaty to European institutions?

Mr. Lidington: As other hon. Members have said, the safeguards which are provided within article K are quite adequate to preserve the rights of the British Parliament and the British people to determine these matters. I want us now to use the intergovernmental framework which this treaty establishes, get it working and show our partners in the European Community that there is an alternative path which works with the grain of national sentiment and national tradition, and which we can set up in opposition to the federal path which others would prefer us to follow.

Then, when we reach the discussions scheduled for 1996 or thereabouts, we shall have a working model of intergovernmental co-operation which we can point to as a success, rather than being driven only into saying no to proposals which others put before us.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman refers to what I paraphrase as a satisfactory mechanism of parliamentary consent. Is he referring to the "respective constitutional requirements" of article K.9? If so, what does he think those requirements should be? Does he agree with new clause 12, which spells them out as an Act of Parliament? If not, why not?

Mr. Lidington: That is certainly the clause to which I was alluding. I believe that the respective constitutional requirements should be Acts of Parliament where a change in British domestic law is required, as we are doing with the treaty and as we have done in respect of other international conventions, freely negotiated by British Governments, in judicial and police co-operation—where we have negotiated conventions on extradition and on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, and they have been translated into British domestic law through Acts of Parliament, going through all their stages in both Houses.

I hope that, over the next 10 to 12 years, we can move away from the federal model of Europe towards one which is more confederal, under which we escape this idea of being bound on the travelator to some predetermined destination, and instead can co-operate, one country with another, ceding limited and defined areas of policy, like the single market, for decision on a supranational basis, but around that having a whole gamut of different areas and systems of co-operation to suit the particular needs of various groups of countries which are yet all members of one European union.

Intergovernmental institutions for co-operation against crime and against illegal immigration will form an important part of that Europe of variable geometry which I wish to move towards. I hope that we can ratify this treaty quickly and get on with the task of building intergovernmental co-operation because that, more than anything else, will put the United Kingdom in the strongest possible position when we approach the next round of EC negotiations.

Mr. Madden: This is the first time that I have sought to speak in the debates of the Committee. Last night, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), in a most eloquent and thoughtful speech, asked a number of questions, to which so far he has received no answer. I hope that the Home Secretary will seek the leave of the Committee to intervene again so that he can give full replies to the questions asked by my right hon. Friend.

For instance, will it be possible for EC nationals coming to the United Kingdom under the free movement arrangements to establish a business without any evidence of funds? Will it be possible for them to apply for local authority housing? My right hon. Friend asked a number of other questions and, before the Government seek to move the closure of the debate, I hope that we will receive answers to them. I shall be asking the Home Secretary a number of other questions, to which I hope we shall receive answers tonight.

Underlying this debate is the concern of many of us about the inbuilt unfairness, racial discrimination and other difficulties which non-EC nationals will experience in seeking to exercise their right to free movement, and the difficulties, racial discrimination and problems that non-EC nationals wishing to come to the European Community, including the United Kingdom, will experience.

Under the free movement arrangements, members of the family of an EC national are able to come to this country, including the person's spouse, their children under 21, their other children and grandchildren if still dependent, and their dependent parents, grandparents and great grandparents.

Many of us deal daily with the difficulties of many of our constituents in seeking to obtain permission for their spouses and dependent children to come to this country. Those difficulties are extremely protracted, and it often takes years to secure permission for spouses and dependent children to come to the United Kingdom. Our constituents in that position are very envious indeed of the extensive rights that are being given to EC nationals as far as dependent relatives are concerned.

I want also to point to the difficulties which the Government have in recent months put in the way of dependants of former detainees in the former Yugoslav states wishing to come to this country. Yesterday, I received a reply from the Under-Secretary to a parliamentary question, which reads as follows:

"My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has, however, decided that close dependants of the 1,000 former detainees will be allowed to join them for the duration of their stay. Generally, close dependants are regarded as the spouse and children under 18. However, in respect of the former detainees, we are also prepared to consider applications for visas from fully dependent and unmarried daughters over 18 and under 21, from elderly or sick parents, and from other relatives living in the most exceptional compelling compassionate circumstances.

The available information on other dependants of asylum applicants is that since the introduction of the visa requirements for nationals of certain parts of former Yugoslavia on 6 November 1992 about 20 people from the former Yugoslavia have been granted entry clearance to join relatives in the asylum-related cases."

I repeat, just 20.

"In addition, under the arrangements I announced to the House on 30 November 1992, 130 close dependants of the

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former detainees have so far been granted clearance to come to the United Kingdom. Sixty five applications by more distant relatives have been refused."

Sixty-five have been refused, and I understand that they include elderly grandparents. It is shameful that the Government, with the situation in Bosnia, about which we all know and which has been referred to during the course of the debate in the Committee, should be allowing only such a small number of very close dependants to come here. I believe that this is a matter which the Home Secretary should reconsider urgently.

Mr. Corbyn: I am very glad that my hon. Friend is drawing attention to this situation. Will he confirm that the number of asylum seekers coming from the former Yugoslavia to this country is the lowest going to any European country, and that the imposition of the visa requirement has made it virtually impossible for any to come, other than those listed by the Home Secretary in his statement at that time?

Mr. Madden: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I should be very grateful if the Home Secretary would intervene at some stage to tell us how many former detainees from the former Yugoslavia, particularly Bosnia, have to date been received in the United Kingdom. Why is he refusing to allow sons of former detainees to come here? It seems to me to be blatant discrimination to refuse to allow male children to come to this country. Is it a mistake, or is it the considered policy of Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman knows that he and I share very little territory with regard to immigration. However, he can make the speech that he is making now, he can hope that there will be a change of Government and that he will be able to make such speeches, and he can hope that there may be the kind of immigration policy that he would wish. He may wish very much to change our asylum and immigration rules, and he may be able to do that.

The hon. Gentleman will remember that we recognised Bosnia and Croatia; we did not want to, but it was done by unanimity because of pressures within the Community. Through the same sort of pressures, we could unanimously decide to transfer asylum and immigration policy to European institutions. It would come back here for a vote late at night to be ratified, and that would be it. Before there is a Labour Government, the Conservative Government could have done all that, transferred all those powers. I put it to him that this is of massive significance, and something that he should tell all his hon. Friends.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. This is a very long intervention.

7.15 pm

Mr. Madden: Nevertheless, I agree with the substance of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I remember that visas for Bosnia were introduced only days after the Second Reading of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill. Not a word was said by the Home Secretary during the course of that debate about the fact that three days later he was going to introduce visas for Bosnia. That was a shameful contempt of the House of Commons and of all hon. Members.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In response to the points which the hon. Gentleman made, on top of the 40,000 residents of the former Yugoslavia who had come here before I introduced visas, we have undertaken to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to take 1,000 former detainees, plus their dependants—about 4,000 in all. The first groups have arrived, and the second group is arriving imminently, dependent upon transport being able to get them out of Croatia, where they are making their way. We are certainly undertaking to admit close relatives of those persons.

So that the hon. Gentleman is not misled by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), if we pass this Bill and ratify this treaty, the powers of the House and the Government to determine those matters will not be affected by one iota. Under the Maastricht treaty, matters of asylum are not brought within Community competence. So the hon. Gentleman can happily keep on making these points, but I hope that he will concede that so far we have made a more generous response than any other state in Europe to the request from the UNHCR to take former detainees from the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Madden: I am grateful to the Home Secretary, but can he say how many have so far been received and how many are included in the second group to which he has just referred? Is the exclusion of sons of former detainees, who I would think are the closest relatives in most people's terms, a considered and deliberate decision of the Government, or is it simply a mistake in the written reply that I have received?

Mr. Clarke: We have so far received about 150 former detainees in this country, which is the total that the UNHCR and the International Red Cross have referred to us. We are expecting them to take up our offer in full, and, as I say, we are waiting for the second group. We are admitting their close relatives, which usually means spouses and children below the age of 18. We are looking at applications for the admission of relatives and deciding each case on its merits.

Having taken in refugees and their immediate relatives, we cannot accede to what the hon. Gentleman seems to want, and agree that elderly parents, brothers and adult children should all automatically be able to come as well. If we did, our offer of 4,000 people, or thereabouts, on top of the 40,000 would obviously be rapidly magnified.

Mr. Madden: I assume from that that the Home Secretary is affirming that the decision to refuse male children up to the age of 18 is a deliberate and considered decision of the Government.

Mr. Clarke: We are normally admitting children under 18. If the hon. Gentleman knows of a case in which he believes we have refused a child the right to rejoin the parents, I and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be happy to look at it. Normally, we are admitting spouses and children under the age of 18. We are looking at all these applications on their merits. We cannot undertake to take in what I might call a wider family of people who have some relationship to those we have admitted but who are in fact wholly independent adults living somewhere in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Madden: The answer to the written question to which I referred will certainly need to be clarified in the

light of the Home Secretary's reply. Nevertheless, it would be considered compassionate and understanding if "close relatives" were taken to mean spouses, children of both sexes up to 18, parents and grandparents. I should have thought that that would be a more sensible approach for the Government to adopt.

Mr. Clarke: I said that we consider cases on their merits. We are prepared to contemplate dependants of one kind or another. The hon. Gentleman's approach to immigration policy is sometimes quite extraordinary. If under the offer that we have made we admit a Bosnian Muslim who has been a detainee in a Serbian camp, we would obviously expect to admit his wife and children, but why should a grandparent who presumably lives in some other part of former Yugoslavia—for example, in Slovenia where there is not and has not been a war—also automatically qualify to come here as a refugee?

The hon. Gentleman cannot make sweeping assertions to the effect that the grandfather of every refugee we admit should also be admitted. As he always uses such amazing language to express his strictures on our immigration policy, it is not as outrageous as he suggests that we ask where the grandfather has been living and why he wants to come here.

Mr. Madden: I assume that many of the Bosnian detainees who have been admitted but whose close relatives are being refused admission will look in wonderment at the provisions to which I previously referred and under which very large numbers of relatives of EC nationals can come here with the greatest of ease, without the need for visas or checks. It creates a feeling of resentment, discrimination and unfairness.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary would not want to mislead the Committee or the hon. Gentleman. He said that immigration and asylum issues are not affected by the Bill. Will the hon. Gentleman draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend article K.3 (2) which states that, on the initiative of the Commission, the Council can take joint action with regard to article K.1 (1) to (6), which includes asylum policy and immigration? I am afraid that my right hon. and learned Friend was wrong.

Mr. Madden: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has made that point before. I hope that it may be sinking in with the Home Secretary.

Mr. Corbyn: I congratulate my hon. Friend on persuading the Home Secretary to get to his feet to answer questions on asylum and immigration—something that very few of us have been able to do. In confirming that the Council of Ministers would have the right to extend its jurisdiction to immigration and asylum policy, will he reflect that, whether decisions are taken unanimously or through majority voting, they are often taken on linked motives? For example, Croatia was recognised only under enormous pressure from the German Government.

In my hon. Friend's opinion, was it or was it not connected to the survival of the exchange rate of the pound and the deutschmark and to many other considerations? Does he not think that there are grave dangers in that process?

Mr. Madden Not for the first time, I agree entirely with my hon. Friend, who has made that point—as I have—throughout the Committee stage of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill. I am sorry if I irritate the Home Secretary from time to time with the way in which I seek to defend the interests of my constituents, but it is a cross that I am afraid he will have to continue to bear.

The determination of citizenship, which is the basis of today's debate, is a matter to be decided by each member state. Of course, it is clear that, for the United Kingdom, European Community nationals are British citizens, British subjects under the British Nationality Act 1981 who have a right of abode, and British dependent territory citizens who have that status by virtue of a connection with Gibraltar.

Various statements have been made in these debates about Hong Kong citizens and those of other former dependent territories. A contrast has been noted between the way in which France treats, for instance, the citizens of Guadeloupe and Martinique and Portugal treats the citizens of Macau. It is entirely a matter for the French and Portuguese to decide that the citizens of those territories are assumed to be EC nationals of those member states.

Only this week, I was in conversation with a number of representatives from Hong Kong who came to talk to hon. Members. They said that they would like to be treated by the United Kingdom in the way that the French are treating the citizens of Macau.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): The Portuguese.

Mr. Madden: Sorry—in the way that the Portuguese are treating the citizens of Macau. Such a view leads to justice and equality. The representatives also said that, last year, 60,000 Hong Kong citizens emigrated from——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I know that the debate is fairly wide, but the hon. Gentleman is trespassing into a group of amendments that we have not yet considered. I ask him to deal more closely with the subject now under consideration.

Mr. Madden: Indeed I shall, by saying that I hope that the Government will deal with the continuing problems in Hong Kong and take a more relaxed attitude to citizens than they have done hitherto.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I do not wish to question your ruling, Dame Janet, but may I say that, after 1997, the future of the people of Hong Kong will be especially relevant in terms of asylum. Large numbers of former dependent citizens of the United Kingdom, when they become a part of China although with special status, might claim asylum and seek to come to the United Kingdom. As he is talking about Hong Kong, will the hon. Gentleman refer specifically to asylum?

Mr. Madden: Yes, the hon. Gentleman is right. Of course, it is not inconceivable that, after 1997, a majority of states could require the imposition of visas. Bearing in mind the brave attempts of Mr. Patten to increase democracy in Hong Kong, the Government might say that they did not wish to, but were being forced to accept the imposition of visas on the citizens of Hong Kong by a majority of EC member states.

That is a graphic illustration of the difficulties that we could encounter in the foreseeable future, and it shows the ease with which the Government might be able to distance themselves from an extremely embarrassing situation by

[Mr. Madden]

blaming the provisions of the Bill and a majority vote of EC states. They could say that they had to acquiesce to the imposition of visas on the citizens of Hong Kong.

In a written reply last December, the Home Secretary said:

"I shall be considering what further changes might be made in the course of 1993 to United Kingdom immigration control arrangements, vis-a-vis other member states of the European Community, in the furtherance of our policy of reducing checks on EC nationals to the minimum level compatible with the retention of effective immigration control of third-country nationals together with adequate safeguards against the entry of terrorists and other serious criminals." —[*Official Report*, 17 December 1992; Vol 216, c. *446*.]

That was in the context of the draft convention on the crossing of external frontiers. When the Home Secretary was interviewed by *The Guardian*, he seemed aghast and astonished, and did not know whether hon. Members had even seen that document, let alone considered it. After an embarrassing hoo-hah, the document has at last been placed in the Library, as we heard earlier in the debate.

7.30 pm

The summary of the document is most interesting:

"Article 6: establishes the system for the application for controls at airports.

Article 7: sets out the conditions of entry to member states in respect of short stays.

Article 8: enables non-EC nationals who are lawfully resident in the European Community, to make a short visit or transit another member state without having to obtain a visa.

Article 9: Confirms that admission for stays in excess of three months is subject to national legislation.

Articles 10-13: provide for the establishment of a computerised common list of inadmissable and non-EC nationals and lay down principles for the treatment of non-EC nationals who do not meet the criteria for entry . . . Articles 15 and 16: provide for the removal of illegal entrants and overstayers.

Article 17: confirms the member states' commitment to establish a harmonised visa policy.

Articles 18-25: provide for member states to mutually recognise each others' short stay visas and, in the longer term, for the introduction of"—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. There is too much noise. The hon. Gentleman is giving a long recitation; we hope to hear a speech rather than a summary of a complete document.

Mr. Madden: I am referring to the draft convention, Dame Janet, which deals directly with the subject matter of the debate. There seems to be some doubt and uncertainty about the extent of the provisions that we are debating, and I am informing the House about the extent of the draft convention. I shall soon finish.

"Articles 18–25: provide for member states to mutually recognise each other's short stay visas and, in the longer term, for the introduction of a uniform visa valid for travel throughout the European Community."

I shall not complete the account of the rest of the articles, but I should be grateful if the Home Secretary would tell us when he believes that the convention will be agreed. I am grateful to the Library for producing research paper 93/7, page 12 of which says:

"Primary legislation would probably be needed to enable the UK to comply with certain of its provisions. The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill 1992-1993 provides that passengers in transit need visas, and additional powers may be needed to enable air transfer passengers not seeking entry to the UK to be examined and granted leave. It would be necessary to adjust the legislation or rules as follows: . . . to allow for short stays of three months as defined in the Convention. At present, the rules allow a maximum stay of 6 months".

Will the Home Secretary break the habit of a lifetime and tell the Committee clearly whether he intends to reduce the period for which visitors to the United Kingdom are allowed to remain here from six months to three months this year? That is a matter of considerable concern, because the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill has abolished the right of appeal for people refused a visit to the United Kingdom. If the maximum period of stay were reduced from six months to three months, that would compound the sense of anger, injury and resentment already caused.

If the Home Secretary would intervene and tell the Committee clearly one way or the other, that would be much appreciated by thousands of my constituents who are anxious not only about the Government's past actions on immigration policy in general and on visitors in particular, but about their future actions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is not talking about a piece of Community legislation within Community competence. He has not talked about anything to do with the Bill or the Maastricht treaty for some time. However, I congratulate him on at least looking at the document. He said that I was aghast to discover that it was not in the Library. I was rather surprised, and I put it there. It has not been there for months, and in congratulating me, the hon. Gentleman has become the first hon. Member to ask me anything about it.

We have not ratified the convention, and at the moment we cannot do so, because of a dispute between Spain and ourselves over Spain's wish to maintain its border with Gibraltar. When it is ratified, some changes will be needed to domestic legislation and rules to bring it into effect. That will be within the competence of the House, and I shall then be able to discuss matters relevant to that debate, which are not relevant now. I should be happy to answer detailed questions on a more suitable occasion.

Mr. Madden: I am equally delighted to have tabled a question for the next Home Office question time. I hope that the computer will be on my side and my question will be listed, which will enable the right hon. and learned Gentleman to give a direct reply to my direct question. I stress the great importance which many of my constituents attach to it.

My second point concerns the need to introduce visa exemptions for short-stay visitors who have visas or residence permits issued by other member states. Abolishing the visa exemption stamp and re-entry stamp was one of the silliest things that the Government have done in the past 12 months. It has caused considerable difficulty to many of my constituents. Again, the Government were rushed into that decision primarily on the grounds of cost rather than because of any other consideration.

The section also says that there will be a joint computerised list of inadmissible persons—those in prison for at least 12 months in a member state, or guilty of repeated immigration offences, for example. We are told that work is already under way.

Several hon. Members have asked today what the point of the visas is. What is the purpose behind the plan for common visas? Clearly it is designed to build up an enormous computer database.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is trying to return to what he was saying a moment ago. If we are not careful, he will soon be making a speech about the Dublin convention on asylum seekers. We have ratified that, through the ad hoc committee of Immigration Ministers. The convention that the hon. Gentleman is talking about is now before that ad hoc committee, and it has been agreed in principle but not ratified. Currently, I am afraid, it is not likely to be ratified in the near future.

Such discussions take place now. Like my predecessors, I regularly go to Europe and discuss such matters at meetings of the ad hoc committee of Immigration Ministers. That is my responsibility in government, and it also falls solely within the responsibility of this Parliament. I am accountable to Parliament for these matters, and no one has ever bothered to challenge them in the past.

The Bill simply puts arrangements which are already in place on a more formal footing. If Maastricht is ratified, the hon. Gentleman will get more information about these discussions than he has been able to obtain in the past. There will be no surrender of our sovereignty or control. Although this is an interesting debate, and I accept that I am accountable for what I have agreed to in the Dublin convention, it has absolutely nothing to do with Maastricht. The hon. Gentleman's right to raise these matters on behalf of his constituents is not even faintly affected by this debate.

Mr. Madden: The Home Secretary deftly seeks to encourage us to regard all these matters as separate boxes, but those of us who deal with them daily know that they are linked. There has been a coalition between Front-Bench spokesmen across the Chamber in this debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) was moved to say late last night that not only is there a coalition between them but they also all happen to be lawyers. They seem to be trying to kid us that these matters have no implications for other areas. In that they are terribly wrong. All of them are related, all of them are linked.

The main objective, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) said, is to keep out of fortress Europe as many black and Asian people as possible and to create as much difficulty as possible for black and Asian non-EC nationals living in the European Community who seek to exercise their rights to free movement within it.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend has an excellent point about these links. It may be convenient for the Home Secretary to say that the House will not be prevented from debating these issues: that may well be true. A county council is not usually fettered in what it can debate. The problem is that it does not always have powers to do anything. If Maastricht goes through, we will be unable to have an asylum and immigration policy different from that laid down by the European Community, because of the reserve powers that the Community holds to take asylum and immigration into its jurisdiction.

Mr. Madden: My hon. Friend is right.

7.45 pm

Mr. Cash: I have a great deal of sympathy in principle with the hon. Gentleman's notion—that under the treaty these matters will effectively be dealt with as if the Community were a single state. Implicit in that is the idea that no Community national would ever be persecuted in circumstances arising under article 1 of the Geneva convention. Given the unfortunate and depressing assessment of what is happening in Germany at present —the persecution of people who have gone to that country and the revival of fascism there—would the hon. Gentleman be satisfied if the same sort of principles were applied under the treaty as appear not to be applied to those being persecuted in Germany?

Mr. Madden: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman voted for the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill, which was an essential building block——

Mr. Cash: I am talking about the EEC.

Mr. Madden: That Bill laid down a number of important principles, which are a blueprint for fortress Europe. They will all be adopted by every other EC member state. Her Majesty's Government are in the vanguard.

When we challenged the Under-Secretary in Committee about what would happen when someone was returned, having sought asylum in this country, to a so-called safe third country, he said that he did not know—it was not his business. That shows the compassion of the Government.

The Bill also requires those seeking asylum to be fingerprinted. We could not even get the Government to set an age limit below which a child should not be fingerprinted. They even refused to exempt lone children seeking asylum here. As far as I know, only one Conservative Member voted against one of the most offensive clauses, although others abstained.

Conservative Members' education about these matters is not quite as good as it could be, but I trust that, when the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill returns from another place, where I hope that their Lordships will defeat clause 10, Conservative Members will not bring pressure to bear to overturn their Lordships' decision.

Mr. Marlow: I think that, once again, my right hon. and learned Friend may inadvertently be misleading the House. I draw attention again to article K.3(2). My right hon. and learned Friend said that we have a double lock on immigration and asylum issues, and that they are still under the control of the House, but under article K.3(2) it is possible that, late at night at a Council meeting in Europe, it will be unanimously decided to take joint action on an initiative of the Commission, or to agree to joint proposals.

Once we take joint action, a joint policy emerges, and once there is a joint policy at the European level, we can never take back control of it. My right hon. and learned Friend might have to come to the House to explain his decision, but by then the matter would be over and done with.

Mr. Madden: The Home Secretary has been listening intently; I hope that he is preparing to intervene to answer the questions put to him by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and other hon. Members, including myself.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I cannot remember how many times I have answered these questions in the past six or seven hours. We held an exhaustive discussion on article K.3(2) yesterday. Decisions under it must be taken unanimously. That means that the British and Danish Governments would have to agree to them, and it is quite plain that no foreseeable Danish or British Government would so so.

They also require the approval of the House, because, even under article K.3(2), conventions must be carried forward in accordance with constitutional arrangements in each member state. The double lock is most unlikely to be unlocked in the foreseeable future. That is why I say that, in this part of the treaty, nothing is being brought into the Community's competence except the list of countries from which we require visas, and the format of the visas.

Mr. Madden: When an EC national and his host of dependants comes to this country under these provisions, it will be necessary for that EC national to apply for residence after six months. What information will be required then? Who will make the decision? Will there be a right of appeal if the right of residence is refused?

These are important matters, directly bearing on the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, who asked what information will be required when an EC national, with his large army of dependants—they are unacceptable if they come from Bosnia—applies. I see the Home Secretary laughing, but these are serious issues. Let us not forget that 300 million EC nationals could come here if they wished to.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East that it is unlikely that 300 million EC nationals will seek to come to Britain. However, that might happen and even *The Sun* might one day be persuaded to issue some warnings about it. I urge the Home Secretary to think about that.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Dame Janet. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has asked the Home Secretary some questions, and earlier in the debate my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) asked the Home Secretary whether he intended to reply to the debate. The Home Secretary did not make that clear.

At about this time yesterday, the Home Secretary was the fourth speaker in the debate, and since then many questions have been put to him. The many hon. Members who are seriously debating these matters, let alone people outside who are concerned for parliamentary democracy, will not regard the debate as complete until there is a proper and considered reply from a responsible Minister to speeches made yesterday and today. Such a reply would be forthcoming in a Standing Committee.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The Chair cannot force any hon. Member to his feet. No doubt the Home Secretary will have heard the comments of hon. Members.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. You have said that you cannot force any hon. Member to his feet. You will be aware that there is an overwhelming desire in the Committee to hear from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who is courteous and who would wish to reply before the end of the debate.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. Never in my time in Parliament have I been surrounded by such a desperate demand to be heard at the end of a seven-hour debate during which I have intervened probably more frequently than any hon. Member. I assure the Committee that, if I hear a single point to which I have not already replied three times, I might be persuaded to my feet, but not otherwise.

Mr. Madden *rose*——

Mr. Shore: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Madden: Yes.

Mr. Shore: The Home Secretary protests too much. He has made that comment several times, but it does not mean that he has answered the questions that were put to him. The question to which he refuses to turn his mind relates not to the matters in article K and article 100c but to the basic matter in article 8a:

"Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in this Treaty and by the measures adopted to give it effect."

Will the Home Secretary address those conditions and other matters in the treaty so that we may know what right has been given to 300 million Europeans and so that we can judge how such rights compare with rights that may be extended to people from third countries, those who are not Community nationals?

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. We cannot have an intervention on an intervention.

Mr. Madden: I will give way to the Home Secretary.

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) spoke about article 8a of the Single European Act. At least three times in the debate I have restated the Government's policy on that article and its interpretation, which is identical to the interpretation that we placed on it when the Single European Act received the approval of Parliament many years ago.

Mr. Madden: The Committee will form its own judgment on that response.

I shall conclude by referring to the difficulties faced by many British citizens when visiting other EC states and outline a case with reference to France. Late last night, my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) raised the issue of the legal position of a French citizen who was refused the right to enter the United Kingdom. The Home Secretary looked a bit perplexed, and on brief reflection denied that a French citizen refused a right of entry to the United Kingdom had any remedy in the European Court of Justice.

One of my constituents, a British citizen recently refused entry to France, is seeking compensation from the French Government. If he is not given satisfaction, he intends, on legal advice, to take the case to the European Court. The incident occurred in early December, and my constituent, who was travelling on a British visitor's passport and also had in his possession his British citizen certificate, was refused entry at Calais by a French immigration officer who could not speak English, who did not endeavour to get assistance from a colleague who did,

and who did not bother to make any inquiries of officials in Dover or anywhere else. My constituent was back on the ferry within 14 minutes of seeking entry to France.

Mr. Macdonald: Does my hon. Friend agree that he is making a powerful case for the treaty and for opening the borders in a way that will enable his constituent to travel freely to France or to any other Community country? If my hon. Friend's constituent is denied entry, he can go to the European Court of Justice and base his case on the treaty's provisions.

Mr. Madden: I hope that I am making a powerful case to underline what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East and other hon. Members—that, far too often, immigration officials in the United Kingdom, other Community countries and elsewhere take arbitrary and unjust decisions based on the appearance of the person concerned.

My constituent is a British citizen of Pakistan origin. The French immigration official saw from his papers that he was born in Jhelum in Pakistan, and to him it was inconceivable that someone born in Pakistan could be a British citizen entitled to exercise his right of free movement. I hope that my constituent will receive assistance from the Government.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Dame Janet. For the first time in the debate, there is a large number—relatively speaking—of Liberal Democrat Members in the Committee. They have obviously been told by the Government that the Government intend to move the closure fairly soon. They have not told me. Have they told you, Dame Janet?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Who may be here and who may not is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Further to that point of order, Dame Janet. Is it not relevant for the occupant of the Chair to know who is in the Committee, so that hon. Members who wish to speak are not unfortunately overlooked?

The Second Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman well knows the context in which I made my comments.

Mr. Madden: On 4 January the Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), perhaps the most relaxed and laid-back member of the Government, told me:

"A copy of your letter has been faxed to the Consular Section of the British Embassy in Paris. They will take the matter up directly with the French Immigration Service. As you say this matter is distressing. It is very rare for immigration officers to take exception to British nationals travelling on British Visitors Passports. I will write to you again when we receive a reply from the French authorities."

No reply has yet been received. Although my constituent is a British citizen, he was travelling on a British visitor's passport because of the horrendous difficulty in obtaining a British passport. As the Home Secretary knows, long delays led to those who were entitled to British passports seeking visitors' passports at post offices. I hope that the Home Secretary will ensure that those entitled to British citizenship and to British passports will be able to get them reasonably quickly. I also hope that he will ensure that non-EC nationals settled in the United Kingdom will be able to travel to other EC member states for a period of three months without the need to apply for a visa.

8 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am following the hon. Gentleman's speech carefully; he has made some excellent points. Does he agree that the arrangement between the United Kingdom and the USA to dispense with the necessity for visas is beneficial and useful? As the USA is a major trading partner and many Americans live here, the arrangement is valuable. However, it might be scrapped if the sort of scenario outlined by the hon. Gentleman came about, which would be to the disadvantage of a major trading partner and a major friend of this country.

Mr. Madden: I agree that it is important to maintain the three-month tourist period on visits to America. I appeal to the Home Secretary to scrap clause 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill——

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 293, Noes 230.

Division No. 128] **[8.01 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Chapman, Sydney
Alexander, Richard	Churchill, Mr
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Clappison, James
Alton, David	Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Amess, David	Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Ancram, Michael	Coe, Sebastian
Arbuthnot, James	Colvin, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Congdon, David
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Conway, Derek
Ashby, David	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Aspinwall, Jack	Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Cormack, Patrick
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Couchman, James
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Baldry, Tony	Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*	Dafis, Cynog
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Dalyell, Tam
Bates, Michael	Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Batiste, Spencer	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Day, Stephen
Bellingham, Henry	Deva, Nirj Joseph
Beresford, Sir Paul	Devlin, Tim
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Dickens, Geoffrey
Booth, Hartley	Dicks, Terry
Boswell, Tim	Dorrell, Stephen
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia	Dover, Den
Bowden, Andrew	Duncan, Alan
Bowis, John	Dunn, Bob
Brandreth, Gyles	Durant, Sir Anthony
Brazier, Julian	Dykes, Hugh
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*	Eggar, Tim
Browning, Mrs. Angela	Elletson, Harold
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*	Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Burns, Simon	Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Burt, Alistair	Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Butler, Peter	Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Butterfill, John	Evennett, David
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*	Faber, David
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Fabricant, Michael
Carrington, Matthew	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*

Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Andrew McKay.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*

Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 70, Noes 281.

Division No. 129] **[8.14 pm**

AYES

Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cohen, Harry
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hawksley, Warren
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jessel, Toby
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Mahon, Alice
Marlow, Tony
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Pickthall, Colin
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Trimble, David
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Max Madden.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): I beg to move amendment No. 9, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 99 on page 16 of Cm 1934)'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to discuss the following amendments: No. 45, in clause 1, page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 99 in Title II thereof'.

No. 422, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 99 on page 16 of Cm. 1934, so far as it may relate to the ending of derogations permitting zero-rating of VAT in the United Kingdom.).'.

No. 423, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 99 on page 16 of Cm. 1934, so far as it may relate to further harmonisation in respect of excise or other internal taxes.).'.

Mr. Smith: Amendment No. 9, which would delete article 99 from the Bill, is not one that we shall pursue to a Division.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] It is a probing amendment, intended to allow the Committee an opportunity to debate important issues relating to the harmonisation of indirect taxation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Normally in Committee—certainly in the 20 years that I have been a Member of Parliament—right hon. and hon. Members try to refine a Bill. The whole purpose of the Committee stage is to go through a Bill in detail, change it as one goes along, improve it, and so on. We have another 17 Labour amendments to consider. What is the purpose of them when a member of the Opposition Front Bench pops up and says, "We've tabled this amendment but we're not going to vote for it. We are going to speak and vote against it." The whole thing is becoming a charade. What is going on?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that we will certainly be pressing a number of amendments to a Division—such as amendment No. 27, concerning the social chapter, and others that reflect Labour party policy.

Mr. Cash: Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that several titles in the treaty are not included in the Bill? He compounds the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), that this is becoming an absurdity on the part of the Opposition. Not only are they not prepared to put their votes where their windbaggery is, but they are including a whole range of matters that are not in the Bill.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is the last person to speak about windbaggery—and we will take no lectures from him on absurdity either.

Article 99 states:

"The Council shall, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee, adopt

provisions for the harmonization of legislation concerning turnover taxes, excise duties and other forms of indirect taxation to the extent that such harmonization is necessary to ensure the establishment and the functioning of the internal market within the time limit laid down in Article 7a."

It is important to emphasise the words

"to the extent that such harmonization is necessary to ensure".

Labour has not supported and does not support the contention that it is necessary to make indirect tax rates the same to ensure that the single market operates effectively.

In particular, we have vigorously opposed any moves to end the opportunity for Britain to levy a zero rate of value added tax. We equally oppose the move that the Government are reportedly contemplating, to impose VAT on newspapers, books and publications in the forthcoming Budget. Any such move would place a wholly undesirable burden on consumers and would inflict gratuitous damage on important national industries at this time of deep recession. What is more, such a change could not be justified as necessary for the functioning of the single market.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I did not wish to interrupt him, but I wanted to intervene on a specific point. I am pleased to hear what he said because there will be absolute unanimity among Opposition parties, except perhaps one, in agreeing with him. Can I take it therefore that the Opposition Front Bench will wholeheartedly support amendment No. 422 which has been selected as part of this group and which states that the Bill will not apply to anything which ends derogation of zero rating in VAT in the United Kingdom? From what he has said, I understand that my hon. Friend will be voting for that amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) which will be put to a vote. Perhaps he could give the House that assurance.

8.30 pm

Mr. Smith: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support for what I was saying about the importance of defending Britain's right to sustain zero rating. As I read amendment No. 422, it would not approve article 99 as it specifies:

"so far as it may relate to the ending of derogations permitting zero-rating of VAT in the United Kingdom".

As I have said, I do not accept that it would or should be taken to end zero rating derogation and therefore it would not be necessary to support that amendment to sustain the position that I have been advocating. However, I certainly agree with the spirit in which the amendment was tabled.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. This is Committee style, and I am quite sure that he agrees with this form of discussion.

Article 99 in its new form would surely give the Community that very power. Unlike the existing article 99, which is entrenched in the treaty of Rome, there is no escape clause, as the Home Secretary was vigorously advocating in the last debate saying that article 8a was not relevant because it already exists. This is a new article 99 and if the amendment is carried, as I hope it will be, the Bill will provide that no regulation or directive from the European Community can increase or apply VAT to anything which is at the moment derogated. I would have thought that that would have appealed enormously to my hon. Friend. Surely it is the legal and precise reading of such an amendment because we would have a new article 99 after the treaty of European union.

Mr. Smith: As I said, I do not accept that article 99 should be interpreted in that way.

I intended to press the Paymaster General on the very point that my hon. Friend raised about what powers specifically are granted under the treaty and what follows from the treaty in relation to Britain's ability to levy a zero rate of VAT. As I was saying, it would be especially damaging for such a change to be contemplated. Moreover, it would be inconsistent with the pledges that the Prime Minister made during the general election campaign.

It would also be inconsistent with what the Paymaster General said when he assured the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) in a letter on 6 January 1993 that there was no intention to extend VAT to newspapers, books and publications.

Mr. Michael Spicer: If the hon. Gentleman believes in that, and in my view it is wholly admirable, for various reasons which I hope to explain, why is he equivocal about pressing amendment No. 422 which the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has brought to his attention?

Mr. Smith: I have made it clear that I do not interpret article 99 as involving that danger. Moreover, I would not advocate supporting an amendment that would wreck the treaty.

In any event, it is somewhat ironic that we are debating this part of the Bill today, four weeks after the advent of the single market and the 31 December 1992 deadline set out in article 7a to which article 99 refers. The single market is of course already with us and this evening's debate provides us with an early opportunity to press the Government on their judgment of how well or badly the new arrangements are working out in practice and, in particular, on how things stand in regard to the operation of the new VAT regime.

The Minister will have seen many of the reports in the press highlighting the difficulties which are all the more serious because they impede consumers and businesses from making the most of the opportunities which the single market offers.

The Daily Telegraph of Monday 18 January reported a number of serious problems. It said that:

"Accountants . . . phone lines have been jammed by companies who cannot ship goods around Europe because of tax difficulties say the situation is chaos with no prospect for improvement for months yet."

Christine Sanderson of Price Waterhouse was quoted as saying:

"Many people do not understand what the changes are and so they are not properly prepared. But the most disappointing aspect has been that various countries are not prepared. We had believed that government would get their act together."

The article continues:

"Trouble spots have emerged in Spain, Portugal, Italy and, perhaps more surprisingly, in Belgium and the Netherlands where lorries have been kept waiting at customs points while officials checked documents which in theory should no longer be required."

The article goes on to itemise other difficulties:

"Huge backlogs in handing out VAT numbers on the continent. VAT registration is absolutely essential to the working of the new system."

[Mr. Smith]

Although Britain is well prepared in that respect, those other member states which have used other tax codes have now had to dish out many new tax codes specifically for the purpose of VAT. The article continues:

"Price Waterhouse estimate that there are 'millions' of VAT numbers to be issued, a process which could take years. Companies selling to buyers who have not yet received a VAT number could find themselves liable for the payments which may not be recoverable.".

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): When I paid one of my very rare visits to Brussels last November, we were given lectures by officials of the Commission and when we asked about the transition period beginning 1 January in regard to VAT in particular, they all confessed that it will be a sheer muddle because although the Governments had exhorted each other to obey the rules and to have everything in place on 1 January, there was no hope of that happening for some months.

May I also back-track to support the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who I call my hon. Friend for these purposes, in regard to his point about derogation. As leader of an Opposition party, I have always taken the view that whenever we are in doubt we should oppose the Government of the day, whatever colour it may be, to safeguard those who send us here. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues, in the light of what will be unsatisfactory assurances from the Government, will reconsider their decision not to vote on the amendment.

Mr. Smith: I agree with the first part of what the hon. Gentleman said. Clearly, it is incumbent on Governments to get their act together for the introduction of the new VAT regime. Can the Minister say what information the Government now have on the adequacy of those preparations and how far are other countries properly geared up to issuing VAT numbers and to the full and fair administration of the new system?

I now return to the other difficulties itemised in the article. They include confusion over goods currently in Customs warehouses awaiting export. The article stated:

"In Holland and Belgium, tax authorities have told companies they will not release goods that entered warehouses before January 1 unless VAT is paid first. This form of back tax is not legal, according to British tax opinion."

It would be helpful to have the Government view about that. The article went on to refer to what it described as "the EEC's infamous simplification directive, which was intended to make it easier for companies exporting to buyers in one EC country via a middleman in a third member state . . . That has already broken down in Spain. The Spanish have said they will not implement the directive until September, so British companies selling indirectly to Spain will have to register there temporarily."

It concluded by drawing attention to what it described as "the biggest problem yet to come."

That was the need for companies, by 10 February, to file details of their January exports and imports with national tax authorities. It pointed out that the relevant form

"asks 19 different questions, including the weight of the goods shipped, their value and a code number."

Although ignoring those is a criminal offence, the article said:

"one medium-sized exporter . . . reckons it will have to double its export clerical staff to deal with the new requirement, which in the past was handled entirely by government officials."

May we have the Government's estimation, on the basis of information available to them, of the extent of those difficulties and what is being done about them?

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): My hon. Friend is making a vital point. Whereas ordinary imports and exports can be dealt with—it will take time, but such matters will eventually be sorted out—the authorities have not got anywhere near sorting out the intercountry, third party trade, where a trading body buys from one country and sells to another, conducting a valuable wholesaling function. Proper provision has not been made for that. It may be months before those concerned even begin to work out satisfactory solutions. It is a serious matter for a trading country such as Britain.

Mr. Smith: I share my right hon. Friend's concern about that serious issue. I fear that the problems will result in what was intended to be a better system getting off to a damaging start. As he says, it could act as a great disadvantage to a country such as ours. A great proportion of our production goes for export, exceeded, sadly, by the faster rising level of imports. Are the problems to which I referred confirmed by the information that the Minister is receiving? If so, what action is being taken by the British Government and other member states to resolve them?

Further to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), will the Minister state the British Government's position on, and interpretation of, the Community's legal position on the future of the legally binding minimum VAT rate of 15 per cent., which the Chancellor conceded in July last year was part of the package which then enabled Britain to retain its zero rates, at least to the end of 1996, when the agreement comes up for review? An article in the *Financial Times* on 28 July last year said:

"There is still some confusion about whether member states have committed themselves to having a legally binding minimum VAT rate for ever. Mr. Lamont indicated that the directive would lapse if ministers failed to reach unanimous agreement on a renewed legally binding minimum before 1996. The Community would then be subject only to last year's non-binding accord."

It reports others as disagreeing, pointing out that Mr. Jorge Braga de Macedo of Portugal, who was the Chancellor's predecessor as president of the Council of Finance Ministers, believed that

"the legally binding minimum would be automatically renewed if they failed to agree. That would deprive dissenters, possibly including Britain, of any effective veto."

That issue is of great concern to hon. Members and I hope that the Minister will give a clear answer, including the benefit of the legal advice that the Government are receiving on the issue.

8.45 pm

Mr. Cash: In view of the case that the hon. Gentleman is putting on behalf of the Labour party, may I ask him to say whether he is in favour of what appears to be an argument for the harmonisation of VAT and if he appreciates the corollary to that, which is in the Onno Ruding report, published in the summer and clearly Commission policy, for the harmonisation of business taxes? Is that Labour party policy? Considering the date 1 January 1996 and all that will be going on at about that time, he might clarify whether Labour is also in favour of a single currency.

Mr. Smith: There will be other occasions to deal with matters such as those. I am anxious to remain in order and to relate my arguments to the amendments now before the Committee. I have already made it clear that the Labour party does not believe it necessary to levy the same rate of indirect tax for the single market to operate properly.

I have put a number of questions to the Minister. Given the importance of developments that will be occurring in future years on the subjects I have raised, perhaps the Minister will give the latest Government thinking on the arguments for a move to an origin-based system rather than the destination-based system of VAT that is now operating. The change has been advocated by the Commission and others. What is the Minister's response, for example, to the arguments advanced by the Simpler Trade Procedures Board, known as Sitpro, that an origin-based system would be an improvement because it would replicate the domestic system, dispense with the requirement for a European sales listing, eliminate the need for evidence that goods have left the country and avoid the complex problems of triangulation—or strangulation, as some in the trade are already calling it?

May we also be assured that if the Government were looking to an origin-based regime, as the Commission is likely to press member states to consider, our zero rates could be retained? It is important for us to know what stance the Government are taking on Community discussion of those important policy issues.

Have there been any developments since the draft 7th VAT directive was considered by the Standing Committee on 2 December? At that time we debated, in particular, the question of the rate of VAT on imported works of art. Hon. Members in all parts of the House expressed concern about the future of London's international art market, which is worth well over £1 billion a year, if the proposals set out in that draft directive and imported works of art were to come into effect.

The directive would impose VAT of at least 5 per cent. on art entering the EC, and that could have grave consequences for British and European culture, discouraging the repatriation of art which has already gone abroad and provoking an outflow of the national heritage. We have seen from the Irish experience what such attacks can do to the art market. We continue to urge the Minister to accept the recommendations of the National Heritage Select Committee and adopt a vigorous stand against those potentially damaging proposals. Will he set out the Government's position on that issue?

The Minister and I have exchanged correspondence about the bloodstock industry. The advent of the single market and the lower rates of VAT applied in other member states have presented a dire threat to that industry because of the obvious attractions for buyers and sellers to trade in markets where the lower rate of VAT is charged.

So serious is that situation that Tattersalls, in response to its clients' preferences, have moved their yearling sales to Fairyhouse in Ireland for next September and in a news release announcing this sad fact it said:

> This decision has been brought about by the United Kingdom Government steadfastly refusing to give the industry the competitive low rate available under EC law. Separately, they are considering the possibility of extending VAT registration to racehorse owners"

I will come back to that in a minute. I am aware that there are ongoing discussions between representatives of the industry and of the Government on this and of the fact that some schemes attempting to ameliorate the situation have been put forward, namely, proposals on distance selling, on dispatch and acquisition and the flat rate farming scheme which we shall be debating again next week.

However, there have been problems about this between the Government and the industry. In that same news release, Tattersalls said:

"in the last few days"

this was dated 24 November——

> "an unexpected change has emerged from discussions with Customs and Excise. Previously we had been assured by Her Majesty's Government that all horses coming to Newmarket from Ireland and France and being sold by United Kingdom Flat Rate Farmers would be sold free of all United Kingdom VAT,"

—as stated in its previous press release of 21 September.

> "Customs have now changed their previous interpretation so that all Yearlings, previously purchased with Irish or French VAT charged in either of these two countries, would have to be sold by Flat Rate Farmers with VAT in Newmarket or VAT would have to be charged on entry into the United Kingdom."

So I ask the Paymaster General, as those most closely involved in this remain very concerned about the situation and the implications for the industry, what the Government will do about this. It is an industry in which Britain is a world leader and many jobs depend on it. It is imperative that it is not damaged further. I ask the Paymaster General to assure the House that the Government will give urgent and sympathetic reconsideration to those matters. I think he should look again at the proposal to allow racehorse owners and traders to register, as they can do in nine of the 12 member states. That is one of the key steps which have been suggested by people in the industry as being of most assistance in resolving the crisis.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Does the hon. Member accept the statement by Tattersalls which he read out that there is a competitively low rate of VAT available in this case? Is he suggesting that VAT should be lowered in the way they are suggesting?

Mr. Smith: I did not make that suggestion, but I ask the Government sympathetically and urgently to reconsider the whole situation. It is not the only suggestion put forward to remedy the situation. I understand from Tattersalls that allowing breeders and owners to register for VAT would equally well meet the concern and prevent a valuable industry from being threatened and destroyed in the way that this industry otherwise looks likely to be destroyed.

Another specific area on which I would like the Paymaster General to elaborate is the ending of restrictions on the importing of goods for personal consumption and the consequent changes in Customs procedures. He gave me an estimate in a written parliamentary reply that the prospective revenue loss due to this is likely to be £250 million a year. Does that estimate still hold good in the light of the experience they have had so far of the new regime? Has he also been able to evaluate the likely extent of smuggling and other dealing in contraband as a result of the changes and what measures have the Government put in place to combat them? Is he satisfied that the Excise have the officers that they need properly to combat smuggling? Everyone in the House will be particularly concerned about the position with drugs and weapons. It is imperative that the staff are in place to do that job. There have been cuts in staff and

[Mr. Smith]

redeployment and the larger estimates made at one time of the numbers of officers which were likely to be needed to be appointed have not been met and there is concern among the employees of Customs and Excise about how far they are being given the resources to do the job.

It is important that the Government respond to that anxiety which is shared by most of the public. Has the Minister been able to evaluate the likely extent of smuggling as a result of the changes, what measures the Government have put in place to combat that risk and whether they are contemplating further measures?

The fourth area in which the House needs some assurances is the new Community VAT regime. There will be no intra-Community trades statistics for the first six months of operation of the new system of VAT payments and trade statistics. I can well understand, given the Government's abysmal record on trade, why it might suit them never to have trade statistics again but, given the obligation to publish them and their importance, I hope the Paymaster General can assure me that the system will at least be running adequately to provide statistics after the six months hiatus. Will the figures which are then provided be properly comparable with those previously gathered on the old basis?

I can see the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir. T. Taylor) shaking his head but, given the way that other important Government statistics, for example on unemployment, have been manipulated, it would not surprise me at all if we found as a consequence of this that valid statistical comparisons were made more difficult rather than being facilitated. I hope the Paymaster General will say that those fears are not properly grounded. Can he tell us whether the figures for the first half of the year will be made available and on what basis will the estimates be made?

Mr. Tim Smith: How were the trade statistics collected under the old regime and how will they be collected under the new one?

Mr. Andrew Smith: They are going to be collected under the new regime——

The Chairman: Order. I do not think we want a dissertation on trade statistics under this amendment. I would have pulled up the hon. Member if the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) had not asked his question so quickly.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I am sorry that I am precluded from giving the hon. Member for Beaconsfield a lecture on the collection and dissemination of trade statistics, but it is relevant to our debate that we are given assurances that the operation of the new system under the fiscal harmonisation provisions of article 99 will provide statistics that are valid and comparable for analytical purposes as they ought to be.

Will the Government publish any estimates of the underlying position during the six months that will elapse before the new statistics are available? Certainly, City analysts and commentators will publish estimates, perhaps based on financial flows.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of questions, and I would be the first to acknowledge that they constitute a valid basis for a debate in which we could engage at some point; but I wish to ask the hon. Gentleman a question that is limited to the specific confines of the Committee stage of this Bill.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the only change involved in article 99 of the Single European Act is the introduction of further consultation with the European Economic and Social Committee? In supporting the Act, did not the House effectively agree to the objective of harmonising taxation? The implementation of that objective is extremely interesting; but the commitment was made under the Single European Act, which had the support of the House—including the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

9 pm

Mr. Smith: That is certainly an interesting point, which the hon. Gentleman will no doubt debate with his hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). The VAT system, as operated in the Community, has developed since the passage of the Single European Act, but I think it entirely appropriate for hon. Members to have a full opportunity to question the implications of article 99—even hon. Members who voted for a very similar measure in the past. Implications tend to become apparent as systems develop, and as people analyse the legal ramifications. It is right for questions to be asked, and I only hope that the Paymaster General can answer them.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Year after year, Ministers have said that harmonisation is not necessary to the operation of the single market. Have they now changed their minds?

Mr. Smith: I shall add that question to the others that I have already asked the Paymaster General. I have already made Labour's position clear.

Mr. Sheldon: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend, who is doing very well.

I had some responsibility for the sixth directive: I was in the chair at the time. When we agreed the provision on harmonisation, no time limit was in operation. In the case of article 99, there is a time limit. That makes a world of difference: it is easy to talk about harmonisation in the distant future, but time limits force us to confront the realities rather more urgently.

Mr. Smith: That is a good point—especially in view of the fact that the time limit in question was passed before we embarked on this debate.

Opposition Members are anxious for the operation of indirect taxation in relation to the single market to be fair to consumers, to foster trade and to stimulate business. We should aim for a fair, administratively efficient system, which, while not imposing unnecessary standardisation for the sake of it, ensures that the single market creates a reasonably level playing field. It is clear that the present arrangements leave a great deal to be desired, and the Government owe the Committee clear answers to the questions that I have raised.

Let me also ask the Paymaster General to give an assurance that we seek, and that the country wants—an assurance that the Government will not extend or raise VAT in the forthcoming Budget.

Sir John Cope: Let me begin with what could be described as a health warning. Although the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith)—egged on to some extent by

interventions—trailed his coat quite a bit, and ranged widely in his discussion of the amendments, I hope that I shall not be expected to say anything about what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer might propose in his forthcoming Budget. I see that certain former Treasury Ministers on the Opposition Benches agree with my position. Nothing that I say should be taken as any hint at decisions which, in any event, have not yet been made. I shall be delighted—subject to your view of what is in order, Mr. Morris—to listen to any suggestions on this matter. However, I shall observe the tradition that applies to Treasury Ministers.

The Chairman: Order. I hope that hon. Members do not intend to make contributions or suggestions concerning the Budget. That would be out of order.

Sir John Cope: I think that that is a very proper ruling, Mr. Morris.

I have some sympathy with what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Oxford, East. My hon. Friend drew attention to the fact that the hon. Member for Oxford, East did not seem interested in addressing the amendments. Certainly he did not support them. Perhaps other hon. Members will address them.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There are many other things that I want to say. I hope that the early intervention of my right hon. Friend does not indicate that he will not speak later. If I catch your eye, Mr. Morris——

The Chairman: Order. Hon. Members make this point repeatedly. There is a clear convention that, in Committee, a Member moves an amendment, and a Minister responds. Whether the Minister intervenes later depends entirely on the course of the debate. It is not helpful for hon. Members to express the hope that the Minister will respond. It is a matter for the Minister to decide.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I am very grateful for your guidance, but I am sure that you will have noticed that there are two amendments in my name and the names of my right hon. and hon. Members. These have not so far been addressed in the debate, although there was a short exchange about their merits during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith). The Minister may make some observations about them, but until they are advocated it would be difficult to do more than that. In Standing Committees it is unusual for a Minister not to reply, particularly where there is a group of amendments. I hope, Mr. Morris, that you will bear that in mind. Can the overall debate be properly concluded unless there has been such specific debate?

The Chairman: Hon. Members seem to have forgotten —it may be some years since one or two of them have served on Standing Committees—that the normal procedure is that a Member moves an amendment and, especially if it is a substantive one, a Minister responds. Then hon. Members may seek to catch the Chairman's eye. Indeed, I have been noting the names of hon. Members who have risen, and I hope to be able to call them. It is normal for any new elements that are raised to be dealt with by the Minister if he feels that that is the proper course. This should not have to be put on the record time after time as amendments are dealt with. That simply takes up the time of the Committee fairly uselessly.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. While I accept your ruling entirely, may I ask you, in deciding whether to accept a closure motion, to bear in mind the convention in Standing Committees—on many of which I have served in various capacities, recently and in more distant times—that the Chair gives the Government an opportunity to respond? I realise that we shall not get a definitive ruling in respect of every Government reply, but may I ask whether, in your decision on a closure motion, you take into account the possibility that the Government will reply to debate that has taken place after the Minister's initial response?

The Chairman: I take all matters into consideration. It is particularly important to ensure that an amendment has been moved properly and is properly dealt with. That is the key determinant.

Sir John Cope: I had better turn immediately to the amendments. The first two on the list, Nos. 9 and 45, seek to remove the alterations to article 99 which are proposed in the treaty and to leave it as it is at present. If they were to be put into effect, the only result would be to delete the proposed new requirement that when indirect tax proposals were put forward the economic and social committee should be consulted.

Nothing was said from the Opposition Front Bench and I am not clear, therefore, what Opposition Members have against consulting the economic and social committee and what led them to move an amendment which would remove that consultation.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I made it very clear that this was a probing amendment in order for us to have this debate and to allow me to put important concerns to the Minister. It is a perfectly normal convention and I am surprised that he does not understand that.

Sir John Cope: As long as the hon. Gentleman appreciates the limited nature of the amendment that he has moved. We do, however, consult widely on proposed tax changes in this country. Treasury Ministers are frequently asked in Finance Bills to consult more rather than less, so to be asked to consult less is a slightly novel experience.

Amendments Nos. 422 and 423 are also puzzling in their intentions, if one reads them carefully and tries to apply them. Amendment No. 422 implies that deleting article 99—something which is not proposed by the treaty, the Bill or any of the amendments, so no one is supporting it—might somehow lead to an end to the derogations that permit the United Kingdom to have its various zero rates. But it is the sixth directive and its children which embody the agreement to the continuation of our zero rates. If, which no hon. Member on either side of the House is suggesting, we deleted article 99 and did not replace it, it might be said that there would then be no vires for the sixth directive, and that would include both the agreement for us to continue our zero rates and, for that matter, the part of the agreement under which otherwise we could not have the zero rates.

Amendment No. 422, therefore, would not in any way safeguard our zero rates, and the hon. Member for

[Sir John Cope]

Oxford, East was quite correct, if I understood him aright, in what he said about the effect of his hon. Friend's amendments.

Amendment No. 423 uses a different approach. It proposes that we should not have the authority to make any further agreements for excise or other internal taxes. That would be a mistake. After all, there may well be moves for further or other simplification of value added tax, for example, or other changes proposed for the protection of the United Kingdom revenue which might become necessary, and we might think it desirable to propose such changes to our colleagues in the Community for Community law or to the House, or to both. It is likely that in the future hon. Members on both sides will wish us to press for items of simplification and other changes which might be made but which would be prevented if amendment No. 423 were carried. It would freeze the indirect tax system from the moment that the treaty came into force.

I could not recommend such a course to the Committee and it may be that no hon. Member will, on reflection, want to pass any of these four amendments on their own merits.

9.15 pm

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Financial Secretary. He is absolutely right about the intention of amendment No. 423, and if I catch the Chairman's eye I may be able to take up the point that he has just made. It was difficult to draft amendment No. 422, but the intention is other than as he interpreted it. The intention is that article 99 remain, but, in so far as future use of it may, as stated in the amendment, end current derogations, it should not have that effect. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, under the sixth directive it would be possible after 1996 —admittedly, it may be a matter of unanimity—for those existing derogations to disappear. We are suggesting in the amendment that that power be not available under article 99. I hope that the intention is clear, even if the drafting is defective.

Sir John Cope: The hon. Gentleman has been kind enough to make the intention clear. He is right in saying, of course, that it would require unanimity. That is something which we have stuck to rigidly; indeed, we have not had to hold out for it, as all the member states are satisfied that unanimity is the right way to settle these tax matters, although sometimes it is quite a laborious process to arrive at proposals that are satisfactory to all. The difficulty of arriving at unanimity has been evident in connection with the various directives regarding VAT, some of which were passed later than we would have wished, in the interest of making good preparations.

I was asked to comment on the progress that was being made on this in other member states. The hon. Member for Oxford, East drew particularly on one press cutting in asking his questions. I am glad to be able to say that, if he refers to some other press reports, which are substantially confirmed by the information which the United Kingdom Customs is receiving, he will see that there have been relatively few problems at the borders. According to the *Financial Times* of 22 January, for example,

"the Internal Market has got off to a good start."

As far as we can see, the frontier Customs staff in all the other member states have, in the main, turned out to be well prepared. There have been some exceptions. Some late decisions were taken, on about 29 December, in Spain and Portugal about certain agricultural and transitional Customs duty arrangements, which led to some early confusion, and there were also some commercial movements of excise goods about which there were misunderstandings in several member states regarding requirements for special accompanying documents, leading to delays in some circumstances.

There have also been some very encouraging reports about terrific improvements in delivery times, for example, for British exporters as a result of the elimination of routine Customs controls at the frontiers. One company reported a reduction of 17 hours in the journey to Spain as a result of the absence of Customs formalities at the United Kingdom end or at the various countries in between and the Spanish border itself. That highlights one of the important advantages of the single market for United Kingdom business.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned particularly in this context difficulties in issuing VAT registration numbers and asked what progress had been made. My advice is that only Germany has still to complete issuing VAT registration numbers. It may surprise hon. Members that Germany might be a laggard in a bureaucratic matter of this kind, but apparently it has had to change its system to take account of the new arrangements. I am sure that Germany will complete the process by the end of this month. The feedback from various consultative bodies, such as the VAT Practitioners Group, or the London part of it, and the Joint Customs Consultative Committee is that things are going well. There are a few teething problems, but they are being sorted out by working groups in Brussels.

At this week's meeting, Spain agreed to complete the necessary simplification provisions as a matter of urgency and is no longer requiring middle men in the triangular transactions to register for value added tax, one of the points to which the hon. Member for Oxford, East referred. All in all, it means a major reduction in the bureaucractic burdens on business. An independent consultant drew up an important report for us, which stated that the reduction in bureaucracy from the new system would be worth £135 million a year to British business.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I do not expect the right hon. Gentleman to answer me off the top of his head. Among the teething problems to which he referred was that of plant disease. Has it been resolved? Early last year there were difficulties caused by the movement of potential or actual plant disease across frontiers. Has anything been done about it? It is clearly a very difficult matter.

Sir John Cope: The hon. Gentleman rightly supposes that I cannot answer off the top of my head. I shall consult my colleagues at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are especially expert and I shall write to him.

The speech of the hon. Member for Oxford, East ranged much more widely than the amendment. He spoke in general about the harmonisation of taxation and said, among other things, that the Labour party was not wedded to unity on taxation rates across the Community. Nor are the Government.

It is perhaps necessary to make a musical analogy when discussing this issue. People sometimes confuse harmony with unison. When musical instruments or singers play or sing in unison they use the same notes. Harmony involves different notes that blend with each other to create a pleasing overall sound. It is the notion of different notes leading to harmony that we seek in the tax system, rather than the unison or unity which is sometimes mistakenly mentioned in these discussions. Tax harmonisation does not mean that every member state has to have exactly the same tax system or rate. The differing systems should be able to work together, and that is what we have been thinking all along.

The hon. Gentleman drew attention to the next possible stage, the move to the origin system. The next step will be proposals from the Commission. I can see that there are some advantages in the origin system—the hon. Gentleman quoted the Simplified Trade Procedures Board in that context—but it is much too early to express a view, as the Commission has not produced its proposals. In fact, I believe that they are only in their early stages, if they exist at all. The Commission is not due to produce any proposals until the end of 1994, so there is no question of our discussing them. However, I understand the hon. Gentleman's point.

In talking about the future, the hon. Gentleman mentioned the 15 per cent. minimum rate of VAT. I can assure him that in the absence of further agreement between the member states, the agreement lapses at the end of four years.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Hear, hear.

Sir John Cope: I am glad that that has my hon. Friend's support.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East drew attention to several specific matters. Works of art are still being considered. We have not altered our position. The hon. Gentleman and the Committee know that the exemption of imports would be the best way to preserve the United Kingdom art market in a healthy state. Both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I are keeping in close touch with the art trade as the discussions proceed.

As for racehorses——

Mr. Dykes: Before my right hon. Friend starts talking about racehorses, I apologise for not having been here earlier when he started speaking——

Sir Teddy Taylor: You are never here.

Mr. Dykes: I have been here most of the afternoon—but I shall ignore that sedentary interruption from my hysterical hon. Friend.

Will the Minister reassure the Committee that the Government will keep open the idea of reducing the time for which duty-free facilities are to remain within the single market? Such facilities are an illogical contradiction in the single market, yet the transitional period has another seven years to run. Will the Minister reconsider the arrangement, just for the internal market in the member states?

Sir John Cope: The present agreement is for duty-free arrangements to continue for a bit. Recently most attention has been paid to the amount of duty paid, but I shall return to the subject of cross-border shopping in a moment.

I was about to mention racehorses, which are not, I admit, immediately relevant to the amendments—or, indeed, anything to do with them. The hon. Member for Oxford, East was correct to say that the horse racing authorities have told us of their proposals, which I hope will enable more owners to register for VAT under the present rules. Customs and Excise are preparing a technical paper on those matters, and I am keeping in close touch with all the relevant interests.

I promised to return to cross-border shopping and other such matters. The hon. Member for Oxford, East asked me if I could revise the estimate of £250 million given in the Red Book for the previous Budget as the likely loss of revenue resulting from cross-border shopping. It is difficult to make an accurate estimate, and we have no reason to revise the original estimate at the moment. We do not have sufficient information about the amount of cross-border shopping and its effects on revenue to carry out such a revision.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I am sorry to be so slow in responding to my right hon. Friend's comments about VAT on horses, but I have just come into the Chamber, and I ask him to forgive me. Will my right hon. Friend give me some idea of the time scale of the review in which his officials are considering the technical aspects, especially the comparison between VAT levied in our country and in others? Will that take place soon, please?

Sir John Cope: Yes, I hope to be able to come back to my hon. Friend soon. We are in discussion, and it is not for us alone to decide how quickly the matter can be resolved. The Customs and Excise are one side in the discussion.

Cross-border shopping does not take place all one way. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) seems to have left the Chamber for the moment, but he will know that in Northern Ireland the land border provides a lot of scope, especially for shoppers from the Irish Republic, with its separate tax rates, to say nothing of the present exchange rates.

There have been various reports recently, notably the BBC "Food and Drink Programme" the night before last, which pointed out, I am told, that many of the more expensive wines are cheaper here than in France. So even with wine, cross-border shopping does not take place in only one direction. Apart from the legitimate transfer across borders for personal consumption of goods on which duty has been paid in other Community countries, there is also smuggling. As the hon. Member for Oxford, East said, goods on which overseas tax has been paid are brought across borders for resale in this country.

We have set up some flexible anti-smuggling teams and appointed some Customs officers who are devoted to the task of chasing up breaches of the law in this respect. I am glad to say that they have already had some success. Nearly every day they have managed to charge someone with this offence. I can give the Committee an absolute assurance that anyone who we have reason to suppose has brought goods across for sale will be hounded, and prosecuted when that is appropriate, to ensure that those who smuggle goods across and resell them feel the full strength of the law. They must be left in no doubt that this activity is illegal.

9.30 pm

The Customs have been enjoying a certain amount of co-operation from legitimate traders who realise the dangers. I welcome that; I encourage legitimate traders and members of the public who have information about offences of this kind to contact Customs and give them every assistance in this important aspect of their work.

I have covered most of the items mentioned by the hon. Member for Oxford, East, although a great many of them were well outside the terms of the amendments—which in any case should not commend themselves to anyone in the Committee.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I was rather struck by the Paymaster General's musical analogy—of harmony rather than unison. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who was struck by it too, would agree that we regret the decline in our nonconformist chapels of the practice of singing in four-part harmony and its replacement by the practice of singing in unison, which reduces the force and quality of the singing. When I thought about it, however, the analogy seemed slightly far fetched. Different factors are at stake in taxation.

My enthusiasm for the analogy was much greater than my enthusiasm for amendment No. 9. My lack of enthusiasm for that amendment was even more profound than that of the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), who damned it with very faint praise. It would remove from the legislation what we already understand to be the law and practice in our relations with the Community in tax harmonisation matters, and it would not impose on us new and unjustified requirements of harmonisation.

I say that as one who shares the scepticism expressed around the Chamber tonight about undue tax harmonisation. The crucial phrases that will appear in the Act and which appeared in the treaty of Rome and our Single European Act commitments relate to harmonisation

"to the extent that such harmonisation is necessary to ensure the establishment and functioning of the internal market".

That, and that alone, is justification for harmonisation. There is a powerful case for harmonising taxes if differing tax rates can be used to favour the goods of the home country as against those of the country in the Community seeking to export to that country. That is what it is for and, in the case of excise duties, it can be significant.

This is a difficult area to resolve—there are health and social policies at stake—but it is significant if a product made in the home country is taxed much more favourably than a potential substitute product imported from another country. All the arguments about wine, beer and cider come down to this in the end: how to avoid one country favouring its products at the expense of the products of other countries in a supposedly single market.

That consideration, however, does not bear on the sale of similar goods in any one country. If lawn mowers are taxed at the same rate at the point of sale, it does not make much difference if they are charged at another rate in another country—except to the extent that that promotes cross-border shopping. Up to a point, cross-border shopping is not all that deplorable. At least to some extent it encourages people to move around the Community and has brought many of our citizens to the realisation that, far from these islands being the sole civilised parts of the world, there are many good things going on in other parts of Europe. People have become more enthusiastic about going there and enjoying them.

At some point, cross-border shopping becomes such a threat to the trade and industry of some countries that they are led, for normal market reasons, to seek to harmonise tax rates. That is the natural way in which tax harmonisation will be achieved, and it will occur if individual member countries think that it is not in their interests to maintain the disparity. To that extent, our ability simply to please ourselves about our tax rates is reduced by the amount of trade. However, we want trade and a single market will enable people to pursue it.

Mr. Michael Spicer: If the normal market arrangements would result in some form of normalisation, why do we need to have a law about it?

Mr. Beith: To a large extent, normal market operations will bring about the necessary degree of harmonisation. There are instances—I have quoted some from excise duties and there are also some in the VAT field—of countries preserving a differential to protect a home-produced product against competition from a similar, imported product. It would usually have to be because the products are slightly different but still capable of being substituted one for the other and serving the same purpose—perhaps of inducing a state of alcoholic cheerfulness or whatever. The denial of equal treatment for the imported product is normally what is at stake.

There have been profound differences of view between this country and the Commission about what is necessary for the achievement of the single market. The differences were widest when Lord Cockfield was at the Commission. When Madam Scrivener took over, a significantly more amenable attitude was apparent. The noble Lord Lawson of Blaby described the replacement of Lord Cockfield by Madam Scrivener as the replacement of an English dogmatist by a French pragmatist. That was the case. I found Lord Cockfield's attitude on this issue extremely dogmatic and, although it was elegantly expresssed, it was a quite unnecessary promotion of harmonisation. It is a pity that such a good servant of the European cause felt that he had to go so far over the top on this issue. I welcomed the subsequent changes of policy because they represented a much more realistic approach to tax harmonisation.

Dr. Marek: The right hon. Gentleman says that Lord Cockfield went over the top. Does he agree that Madam Scrivener understood what was necessary and that the necessary law for harmonisation relates to the bottom limit? Plainly, one needs a minimum standard rate of VAT to stop the bidding down of one country by another so as to favour its own goods.

Mr. Beith: I reiterate that if all similar products sold in a country are taxed at the same level there is no compelling need for harmonisation whether from the top or from the bottom. I can buy a newspaper or a book in this country free of VAT. I can choose either *The Times* or *Le Figaro* and my purchase is not influenced by different tax rates. There is no need for the Government to slap VAT on books or newspapers for there to be a free market in those goods. It is only when the lack of harmonisation distorts the marketplace in favour of the product of one country over another or if the amount of cross-border shopping is

great that a problem arises. In the first case, because the Government are normally trying to favour their own producers, it may be necessary for the Community to take action to secure harmonisation. In the case of cross-border shopping, it is much more likely that normal market considerations will lead the country concerned to say, "We are putting ourselves at a disadvantage and will have to modify our tax regime even if we might not otherwise have chosen to do so."

Those are the natural ways to proceed, and the article that we are discussing in no way impedes that process. I see no reason to change it, not least because it is already our law on the basis of our previous treaty commitments. It is quite unnecessary to amend the treaty in this way.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Three arguments have been adduced for voting against amendment No. 9. The first is that made by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith)—that there is no need to vote on the amendment because it was tabled merely as a means to provide a good debate. That point was sharpened by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in a speech yesterday, when he said that the Committee was all about having little debates, not about trying to amend or change the shape of the Bill.

That is the Labour party's position, which is very much supported by the Government, because it suits them just to have little debates that proceed along regular lines and move the Committee stage on—but not too fast. The Government are committed to not having Third Reading before the Danish referendum.

The Chairman: Order. The pace at which the Bill proceeds is entirely a matter for the Chair; it is nothing to do with the Government or the Opposition. I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that. He has not been here for all the debates. He has been here for a fair number, but certainly not all. The amendments are fairly specific. Although we can debate indirect taxation, we certainly cannot debate when Third Reading may or may not take place, or any other general issue about Maastricht.

Mr. Spicer: I accept that, Mr. Morris. I only made that point as it was part of the reason given for voting against the amendment. The Opposition made the point that they did not want a vote on the amendment—they just wanted a debate. I was making a passing remark that that view was supported by the Government, because it is in their interests to keep the debate moving a little, but not to vote on amendments.

The second reason for voting against the amendment is that suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), who has been here for many of the debates. He said that it had all happened, everything had been done and article 99 was already in the treaty. A few commas may have been changed, but I accept that it is basically the same article that was in the main treaty. My hon. Friend felt that, because it was already in the treaty, there was no point in voting against the amendment. Confirmation of that view, if any were needed, is the agreement reached by Ministers on 27 July to harmonise VAT.

The Opposition have posed some interesting questions, and people are beginning to take note of some of the effects of this aspect of the treaty. The Opposition's questions to my right hon. Friend the Minister, as far as they went, were good. The general point was made that one learns by one's mistakes. However, it is not a good or conclusive argument to say that, just because something exists, we should not at least consider whether it needs amending.

One thing that a treaty amending the mainstream treaty of Rome does is to give us the opportunity to amend the mainstream treaty if we do not like its provisions. There are at least one or two good reasons for seriously considering whether there should be an article in the treaty that provides for the harmonisation of indirect taxation, for whatever reason.

The market reason is not an especially good one. The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) answered his own point. If there is an internal market and there are distortions in, for example, indirect taxation, there is at least an arguable case for saying that they will right themselves. Otherwise people will find themselves at an unfair advantage or a disadvantage and will set their own taxes in some kind of harmony—to use the phrase that has emerged during this debate.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does my hon. Friend accept that the present harmony of the natural harmonisation would mean the loss of £3,000 million on excise duties, which would have to be made up somewhere else, either through VAT or income tax? That is not a happy thing. A harmonisation of tax on alcohol and cigarettes on some base level would mean that the poor old Chancellor would lose £3,000 million, which he would have to find from somewhere else, and that somewhere else may be quite nasty. Therefore, it is not all sweetness, harmony and light, as the Liberal Democrats were trying to tell us.

9.45 pm

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. If he says that the figure is £3,000 million, it is. His figures are always impeccable. They are never questioned or doubted by spokesmen on either Front Bench. If there is any advantage in having a debate as opposed to voting on an amendment, it is that my hon. Friend and others bring out such facts which have not previously been appreciated by the Committee.

In considering whether article 99 is good or bad, one should consider whether it is good or bad for a nation state and a Parliament, sovereign still, responsible to its people, to give away a large chunk of its right to determine the balance of indirect to direct taxation. There will be great debate——

The Chairman: Order. I imagine that there will be great debate on that matter when we come to economic policy, but not under this amendment.

Mr. Spicer: I do not want to question your judgment, Mr. Morris, but we are talking about the harmonisation of indirect taxation. If laws are established to impose harmonisation on a Government, it is reasonable to argue that that forces upon that Government a choice in the balance between indirect and direct taxation. That is the point that I am making.

The Chairman: I understand the point, but it is out of order on this amendment. It may be in order when we come on to economic policy. If the hon. Member wishes to catch my eye on that occasion, I shall do my best to call him, but the matter is out of order on this amendment.

Mr. Spicer: I find that a strange ruling, if I may say so.

The Chairman: Order. I am sorry that the hon. Member finds it a strange ruling, but it is a ruling. I hope that the hon. Member will kindly observe it.

Mr. Spicer: I have probably made my point anyway, so I can move on.

Perhaps I could try this one on you, Mr. Morris. Part of the argument in favour of harmonisation—it was made by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, so I hope that you will allow me humbly to join in the debate—concerns the even playing field. I hope that that is in order, because that is the point that I want to address for a moment. The argument about an even playing field at least needs to be considered.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): It is an awful cliché.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is right. All clichés need a little discussion from time to time.

If the even playing field argument is taken to its logical conclusion, we must invent sun for the whole of Europe and all grow olives. Where do we stop?

Anyone who is genuinely looking at Europe's trading future must take into account the concept of comparative advantage. That is what trade is all about. Different countries have sun and water—and different countries have different Government policies.

Mr. Dykes: In his previous argument, my hon. Friend remarked that he was concerned about the possible loss of sovereignty as a result of these processes. Why is it not a loss of intrinsic sovereignty for nations to agree similar tariffs between each other in international agreements, but a terrible loss of sovereignty for nations to agree harmonised or approximated indirect taxes?

Mr. Spicer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point, in his usual helpful way, and I will address it in a moment.

As to even playing fields, a part of comparative advantage is the advantage that some countries have in the way that they are governed and the economic policies that flow from that. One snag in being an Italian citizen is that one does not pay direct taxes.

Mr. Dykes: Rubbish.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend says that that is rubbish, but he must accept that Italy's black economy is larger and more thriving than that of many other countries. As people do not pay direct taxes in Italy, it has indirect taxes. If one is a direct taxpayer, that is an advantage—but it is a disadvantage if one is an indirect taxpayer.

Why should the British, who are rather good at paying their direct taxes, suffer just because the Italians do not pay their taxes? Why must everything be evened out across an even playing field? Adam Smith's concept of trade was all about comparative advantage. It seems that we are talking about a trading bloc, and comparative advantage is important in that. If the argument is based entirely on even playing fields, as it so often is, it is in many respects specious.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is not my hon. Friend's argument against a level playing field an argument against the whole single market programme?

Mr. Spicer: Not at all. The original thrust, which I supported when I voted in favour of the Common Market, was against direct trade barriers. It was never part of any argument to which I subscribed that one could invent some kind of Utopia, some might call it—I would call it a nightmare—having a single identity that was precisely the same in all its aspects.

Mr. Cormack: Did my hon. Friend vote also for the Single European Act?

Mr. Spicer: I did, and I am directly addressing that point. I conceded that article 99 is associated with the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act. I was making the point that one learns from one's mistakes. In this specific context, some of the implications of article 99 are very disturbing.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Perhaps my hon. Friend will ask my European enthusiast hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) to explain how on earth one can secure peaceful harmony on, for example, wine duty when in Britain it is 94p a bottle; in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany and Greece it is nothing; and in France it is 2p a bottle? How can harmony be peacefully applied in that case? It would mean slashing the dependence of the British Government on that duty and increasing taxes on items that people use and need.

Mr. Spicer: In answering that question, Mr. Morris, I must ask for your guidance as to whether or not you would rule that I am responsible for the remarks, feelings and thoughts of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). I do not think I am, but the Chair may rule differently.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) makes an important and exacting point. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East is robust in his views. He is a great personal friend of mine, and one of the people who is honest about his intentions; he is a genuine federalist. Although I cannot really debate the matter with my hon. Friend because of his beliefs, there are others who believe that the Maastricht treaty is innocuous and is not leading in the direction that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East wants.

Mr. Marlow: A few minutes ago, my hon. Friend said that the levels of indirect taxation in Italy and the black economy there meant that we should have higher indirect taxation. It is possible with the development of Conservative philosophy that we shall decide to put all our taxes on expenditure and none on income, although we are not suggesting that at the moment.

The Chairman: Order. I have already ruled that the debate is not about direct taxation. Sadly, the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was not in his place and probably did not hear me, but that is out of order.

Mr. Spicer: I agree with you, Mr. Morris. My hon. Friend and I will have this discussion afterwards. I wanted to talk about it, but you wisely ruled it out of order.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman has only just come in. He has not listened to any of the speeches that have been made, and he is now leading the hon. Gentleman astray. Mr. Spicer.

Mr. Randall *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: First, I give way to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall).

Mr. Randall: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He normally speaks with clarity, but I must confess that I am utterly confused. Does he believe in harmonisation so that the single market can work, or, if not, what is his message to British industry if he does not believe in ensuring that there is a level playing field which relies entirely on some harmonisation in the single market?

Mr. Spicer: My message to British industry is that it should make use of the fact that we are now outside the ERM. We are allowed to have low interest rates, investment and productivity. British industry should go for it in a market which will have variety and, because we are stronger because we are outside the ERM, we can compete effectively against countries that are shackled by all the talk of harmonisation, social policy and high VAT.

Mr. Whitney *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: I shall give way once more; then I must get on.

Mr. Whitney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but I feel that he has not responded to the serious concerns expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) about the difference between taxes on wine in France and here. Where in the Maastricht treaty, the Bill or the amendments are provisions requiring a British Government to lose the tax revenue which so concerns my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East? Where is the provision which would have that catastrophic effect?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East will no doubt pursue that point. However, I think he accepts that harmonisation would lead to some loss of revenue.

The problem about article 99 and the concept of harmonisation and the interventionist policies that would necessarily go with it is that it has to be seen in the wider context of moves towards central taxation as a matter of principle.

Because I have developed the point in previous debates, I will simply reiterate that, with a single currency, because of the need to compensate for the problems that arise between different countries with different wage levels but with similar price structures as a result of that single currency, there must ultimately be single taxation and a single expenditure authority.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does my hon. Friend recall any time, during the 50 years or more that we shared a single currency with the Republic of Ireland, when we had what he described as a single expenditure authority?

Mr. Spicer: I do not deny that there have been examples of different countries coming together with single currencies. My argument is——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Motion made, and Question put,

That at this day's sitting, the European Communities (Amendment) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

The Committee divided: Ayes 285, Noes 238.

Division No. 130] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman

Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Khabra, Piara S.
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John

Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Spicer: Before the interruption I was engaged in a brief—and I mean brief—intervention.

The Chairman: Order. I must ask hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber to do so quietly, and I hope that those staying will listen to the debate.

Mr. Spicer: As you, Mr. Morris, have ruled, this is a very tightly drawn debate on VAT harmonisation. I want to have article 99 removed. So, according to its amendment, does the Labour party. But it has now decided otherwise.

Sir John Cope: The amendment does not seek the removal of article 99; its purpose is simply to avoid the alteration to article 99 that the treaty makes, and that concerns only the economic and social committee.

Mr. Spicer: My right hon. Friend is, of course, absolutely right, and if what he has indicated were achieved, it would be helpful from my point of view. I concede that this is part of the existing treaty. The problem is that it is the thin edge of the wedge. The problem concerns the context of the Maastricht treaty. Someone said earlier in the debate that this was all in the Single European Act. Article 99 is not a bad example of the kind of text that might help us if we were to look at it in isolation. The words of the existing treaty are in some cases identical to those of the proposed treaty. But the words have to be looked at in context if the differences in their significance as between treaties are to become apparent.

In this case the context is the concept of a single currency. That is the core of the Maastricht treaty. We have been told that the pillars are there, that we are taking an important step forward in claiming back national sovereignty. But looking at things on an inter-governmental basis is not a great new backward step, as is obvious if one considers the context of the treaty and its new objectives. This was pointed out very well by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith). The new objectives of the Maastricht treaty must be related in the way that the European Court of Justice will undoubtedly relate them. Under Roman law—alien law—which is what we are going to have, it is the context of words, rather than the pure text, that has to be considered.

This is a learning process, but, in the past, British negotiators made the mistake of looking simply at the text of the main treaty and not considering the context. That was a very serious mistake. In some respects, the new law will supersede our domestic law. The context and objectives will be taken fully into account in a way that does not apply in British law. This is one of the fundamental problems that we face as we approach the treaty. The entire treaty, its context and objectives have to be taken into account. In this case we must consider the question of harmonisation in the context of a single currency, which, in my view, will lead to a single taxation system.

Mrs. Gorman: Before my hon. Friend leaves the discussion on VAT, I hope that he will apply his mind to its effect on small businesses. After all, one of the supposed desires of the Common Market is that small business shall flourish, yet VAT, being the most hated tax that the small business man has ever had the misfortune to have to collect for Government, has had a profoundly adverse effect on that objective. Would my hon. Friend like to apply a few of his thoughts to the effect of VAT on business and on the spirit of enterprise?

Mr. Spicer: I am extremely interested in that intervention by my hon. Friend, and I think that the whole Committee will be interested in it. If we compare our system of VAT with indirect taxation systems in other countries outside Europe, we see that my hon. Friend's point is a very important one. I have heard it argued that this is the real deterrent to capitalism, to innovation and to new business. But although it is a fundamental point that my hon. Friend has raised, and although it is important for it to be laid before the Committee, it is not the point that I was speaking about.

Mr. Marlow: The amendment does not talk about VAT; it talks about turnover tax. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) has said what a pestilence VAT is. We used to have purchase tax. Is it the understanding of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) that, should we wish to at a later stage, within this amendment we could go back to purchase tax? Or are we stuck with VAT?

Mr. Spicer: One of the thrusts of my argument is that Governments should be able to decide these things. I would disagree with most of the things that are said by Opposition Members about taxation. I am sure that they would be in favour of greater direct taxation, whereas, on the whole, most Conservative Members would favour greater indirect taxation in some form, although the points made against VAT are good ones. What I suspect is common to hon. Members on both sides who are worried about the treaty is that we believe that the House and our Government should determine these priorities. That is what lies at the root of my concern about the treaty when it is seen in its full context—and this particular article about harmonisation must be seen in a wider context.

We are moving towards a centralised form of federal taxation. If the single currency is to mean anything, it must

[Mr. Spicer]

mean a single price system, accompanied, because the economies will not have converged—we will certainly not find the Greek economy converging with the German economy in time for any of these things to happen—by unequal wages. There will be, because it is structured into this treaty—this article is part of the process of centralisation—an automatic move towards a central taxation and expenditure system. It is my fundamental concern about the treaty. The instruments associated with it are undemocratic. The central instrument associated with it is to be the central bank——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman is quite aware, because the Chairman drew it to the Committee's attention earlier, that this is an amendment about indirect taxation, and the hon. Gentleman tends to stray from it. I hope that he will get back to the amendment.

Mr. Spicer: I understand that, Mr. Lofthouse, but the instrument associated with this particular amendment is the central bank, and it is ironic, on the day after——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The central bank can be debated in other amendments later on, when no doubt the hon. Member will have an opportunity to catch the Chairman's eye or mine.

Mr. Spicer: I understand that, Mr. Lofthouse, and I will not stray on this, but I beg you to accept the point that I am trying to make, which is that these textual points must be seen, are rightly seen and will be seen by the European Court in their wider context. One cannot debate these individual textual matters other than in their proper context. That is precisely the way in which the court will judge these matters. So it is very difficult and restrictive, and against the spirit of the new age and the new law that we are to have in this country.

Mr. Ian Taylor: May I help my hon. Friend back to his central point, which is to address this particular amendment? The reality is that VAT is still to be levied by the national Governments. Harmonisation is a single-market factor, which can be discussed in that context. He is talking about the resources of the Community. This question was dealt with effectively at the Edinburgh summit and the new budget arrangements now last through almost to the end of this century. That rebuts the point about centralised taxation; it is off the point of this amendment, which is entirely to do with what we have already confirmed in the House in the Single European Act, with the exception that now we are also to discuss with the economic and social council.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will now accept that what we are discussing is indirect taxation, and will stick to it. If not, I shall have to rule him out of order.

Mr. Spicer: I understand and I am very grateful for the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Esher. For a very short time he was out of the Chamber when I addressed a point that he raised earlier in this context. His argument—which he has just repeated—it is that we should reject this amendment because it is already in the treaty. I am glad to be able to tell him that I do not accept that point. Just because it is in the existing treaty, that is no reason for not taking the advice of Opposition Members and others who have made the point during the debate that one should learn by experience and by one's mistakes. Part of the argument for accepting this amendment is precisely that we have been able to learn by our mistakes. You would call me to order for repetition, Mr. Lofthouse, if I went over the arguments with which I supported that point, but my hon. Friend will be able to look at the record tomorrow and see how I developed my argument.

Mr. Skinner: Would it be fair to argue that if, for instance, we managed to rid ourselves of the yoke of the Maastricht treaty and some of the other things connected to the Common Market, this Parliament or another one would be able to levy taxation as it thought fit? There have been references to purchase tax. I would argue that it would be better to have a range of purchase tax rates than to have VAT. That is why I voted against VAT. That is why every Labour Member in the House at that time voted against it. So, in this new regime, assuming that we smash the Maastricht treaty, which is what we are here to do today—it may be that the Chair and others are not in that game, but we are——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The Chair is in no game, only to chair this debate quite impartially. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that.

Mr. Skinner: All I want to emphasise is that I want to be able to hear statements from any part of the Committee in favour of getting back to purchase tax. If we did get back to purchase tax, it would mean that the Bank of England, as opposed to a central bank, would have a say in the matter. That means that, if we do not get back to purchase tax and controlling matters in the House, it follows that we cannot talk about VAT unless we talk about the central bank, which is the idea within the Maastricht treaty. That is the point that I am making.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has made his point very clearly and it is one with which I agree. One of the reasons why the media will be turned on to what he has just said and why everybody will be writing about it tomorrow morning is that what he says in the Chamber matters still. The fact that he believes in purchase tax matters. Through the Executive, our Parliament still largely determines what form of taxation we have. The hon. Member for Bolsover is right to say that article 99 is a part of the process of losing control of our taxation system. Control of that system is a central aspect of a nation's sovereignty. I shall not stray too far, because I see that you are looking restless, Mr. Lofthouse, but in years gone by and on both sides of the Atlantic, taxation was considered to be the principal element of sovereignty to be fought for.

10.30 pm

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Spicer: Before I give way, may I say, Mr. Lofthouse, that I am trying to bring my remarks to a close.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend has extensive experience of the United States. Does he agree that the experience of harmonisation of VAT across Europe would not correspond to the position in the United States where there is a different sales tax in each state? Even according to the

objectives of the federalists in all parties, the proposed harmonisation will not work. I and my colleagues seek to ensure that we have our own system.

Mr. Spicer: All that I can say in response is that, at least at the moment, we are able to determine these matters. Some people want a purchase tax—indeed, I am coming to the view that there are great inadequacies in the VAT system, and the idea that it be harmonised for ever is disturbing for the reasons outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). There is no question but that the proposals contain highly bureaucratic elements which will greatly disadvantage the smaller companies.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I want to come straight to the specifics of indirect taxation and VAT. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that in Europe there is already tremendous pressure for the harmonisation of VAT and for us to abolish our zero rate by including items that are currently zero-rated among those covered by this country's standard rate. As an example, the inclusion of domestic heating oil would mean a huge additional impost on thousands of families in this country. It would inevitably increase wage demands and inflation. There is a great difference between various countries—the need for heating oil in Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal is very much less than in north European countries. Such an impost, because of the culture of this country, would be intolerable. For that reason, harmonisation of indirect taxes would be a massive disadvantage to our people.

Mr. Spicer: That was a useful intervention. It enables me to say that on 27 July when we secured a great victory and managed to safeguard zero rating, we also conceded the principle of harmonisation at ministerial level. That is one of the problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is correct to say that there are exemptions that it would be extremely difficult——

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. At 10 pm we voted on whether to carry on, and we voted in favour. One of the reasons that the vote was carried was that the Liberal Democrats voted in favour but they have now gone missing. It is a scandal that people vote to continue beyond 10 pm but do not have the guts to stay—no wonder they are called Captain Mainwaring's army.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. That is not a matter for the Chair, and the hon. Gentleman well knows it.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I cannot take further comments on a point of order that never was. I call Mr. Michael Spicer.

Mr. Spicer *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. There was no point of order.

Mr. Marlow: On a different point of order, Mr. Lofthouse.

The First Deputy Chairman: A different point of order?

Mr. Marlow: An absolutely, completely and utterly different point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I assume that the Government always keep you in the picture. Obviously there is now a coalition between the Government and the Liberal Democrat party—a Con-Lib coalition. I assume that you have been informed of that—*[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am having great difficulty in hearing the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Marlow: My point is simple but important, Mr. Lofthouse. Until recently hon. Members were not aware that a Conservative-Liberal coalition was running this country. In your important position——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. That is not a point of order for me, and the hon. Gentleman knows it. Mr. Spicer.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse.

The First Deputy Chairman: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Cryer: No, it is an entirely different one. This is a point of order for you, Mr. Lofthouse, because you have the power to suspend the sitting. May I request that you do so, so that, in view of the Liberal Democrats' recent vote, we can send for some of them to join the Committee?

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) may request that I suspend the sitting, but the answer is no. I call Mr. Michael Spicer.

Mr. Spicer *rose—[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It is difficult to hear what the hon. Gentleman is trying to say. If the Committee would settle down a little we might be able to hear him.

Mr. Spicer: The Liberal Democrats have probably disappeared out of shame. The one word that cannot be used to describe the harmonisation measure is "liberal". It is illiberal, so that puts the Liberal Democrats in a difficult position.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend will know, because he has studied such matters in great detail, that one of the major changes involving amendment No. 9 and article 99 is that, although—as usual—such matters are based on a proposal from the Commission, in this case not only was the European Parliament consulted, but so was the economic and social committee. In Labour-speak that is the social partners; in Conservative-speak it is the corporate state. Can my hon. Friend tell the House how important or damaging that involvement could be?

Mr. Spicer: It could be extremely damaging. My hon. Friend makes by implication the point that I should have made earlier.

In drawing my remarks to a conclusion, I shall address one of the arguments against my proposal. If the measure is seen within the broad context of the whole treaty, especially those parts of it that lead towards a single currency and, thus, in my view, towards a single taxation system, one of the arguments would be that we have opted out of the arrangments that might push us towards a central taxation system.

At least one of my hon. Friends has accused me of having rather sharp views on the British opt-out. I have

[Mr. Spicer]

said that I do not really believe in it, because I cannot see how in practice one can set up all those institutions, get all that harmonisation going, and then opt out of it. I hope that I did not give the Committee the wrong impression. I cannot foresee any circumstances in which I would argue against maintaining the opt-out—but the force and weight of all the measures would be compounded one upon another. We are talking about a cumulative process, about adding extra centralisation. I know that my hon. Friends argue against that, but I suspect that we should be ruled out of order if we did so now. Yet the argument whether we are compounding the process of centralisation is crucial. I should dearly like you to allow us to argue it through a little now, Mr. Lofthouse, because the argument is certainly relevant to the subject of harmonisation.

I believe that all this is a process of centralisation. That process is apparently inexorable. If we take the terrible decision to ratify this treaty and then come later to debate an opt-out from it, we will face an enormous weight of argument along the lines that we face now—article 99 was all arranged in the past; it cannot be changed now. People will say, "Where were you, Spicer?", to which I will reply, "I was here, debating the matter." Nevertheless the force of future arguments will be that that the institutions have already been set up and the dispute is over.

This is why we need to debate these matters now. We should at least be able to argue them through. That is why I agree with the amendment. We need to revise the treaty so as to accommodate the lessons that we have learnt from passing previous legislation——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend is developing an argument that should be deployed before a much wider audience than the one we have here tonight. The motivating force behind the European Community is the desire to widen the direct tax base. We have already come under pressure from Europe to do that. Heating oil is currently exempted and zero-rated. Food is another case in point. Most of it is zero-rated in this country. If we succumbed, as I believe that we inevitably would if the treaty were ratified, to putting VAT on food, the public revolt over the community charge would seem like a Sunday afternoon tea party by comparison. It would affect all our culture, customs and traditions, and it would disadvantage our economy. Any Government who were found guilty of imposing it would be kicked out of office at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend says, first, that it would be wrong to widen the European indirect tax base. Secondly, he says that it would be wrong to impose VAT on food. Whether or not I agree with him is not really the point. What matters is that my hon. Friend can contribute to debates on such policies as they affect our country. It is the removal of our powers to make decisions on taxation that we are really debating tonight. We are moving in the direction of a federal form of taxation—a hugely important matter of principle which goes well beyond issues of rates of taxation generally.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): We have had a long debate on the merits of direct and indirect taxes and on whether purchase tax is preferable to value added tax. I oppose both purchase tax and value added tax. I hesitate to ask a Conservative Member of this House how a socialist can support value added tax.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman speaks in a noble tradition. On the whole, the Labour party believes in greater direct taxation. That is why it loses most elections——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is in danger of tedious repetition. If he continues in this vein I shall have to consider asking him to resume his seat.

Mr. Spicer: I certainly want to conclude and shall shortly do so. The hon. Gentleman's belief in direct taxation is a matter for him. As I say, he may lose elections because of that belief, but that is a matter for the hon. Gentleman's conscience and his party. It is his prerogative to hold that view and make his own decision and I say, "Good for him." Soon, when everything moves to another place, his views will not matter any more because this place will have ceased to have power.

10.45 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I do not want to prevent any hon. Member speaking, but the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), who has just finished his speech, spoke for about an hour on 13 January and for about an hour today. I do not question that, but I have spent two days trying to speak in a debate.I do not want to speak in today's debate and, therefore, have no personal interest in my point of order. In the interests of fairness, if in future I am competing with the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South, will I carry a clean licence whereas the hon. Gentleman will have some penalty points.

The First Deputy Chairman: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Chair takes all such matters into account.

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Please do not think for a moment that I am questioning the Chair's judgment, far from it, but, inevitably, the incidence and fanaticism of the anti-Europeans in Committee——

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It will be difficult for me to rule on a point of order that I cannot hear.

Mr. Dykes: It is a genuine point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I shall rephrase my description and say that the incidence and presence of the anti-Maastricht debaters in the Committee makes it inevitable that they will have much more time to speak than pro-Maastricht hon. Members. *[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is getting close to criticism of the Chair. *[Interruption.]* Order. As the hon. Gentleman knows, any criticism of the Chair should be directed in the usual way. It is not good parliamentary practice to attempt to criticise the Chair under another guise. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not trying to do that, but that is the way his point of order is coming across.

Mr. Dykes: I am grateful for that guidance, Mr. Lofthouse. I deliberately said that I was not doing that, because I said that the inevitable result——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot say that he was not doing that while continuing to do it.

Mr. Dykes: May I plead for a better balance between the pro and anti-Maastricht speakers?

The First Deputy Chairman: At the end of the day, the Chair will decide as fairly as possible. The debate is on a difficult subject and I shall continue to do my best and be as fair as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I should like some clarification. Am I right in understanding that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) withdrew his unparliamentary allegations against those of us who are critical of the Maastricht treaty?

The First Deputy Chairman: I am sure that he did.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Perhaps it would help the Committee and reassure the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) if you told the hon. Gentleman, who has been here longer than I have, that there is plenty of time in Committee and there will be opportunities for him to speak.

The First Deputy Chairman: That is right.

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Mr. Spearing: I should like to speak to two of the amendments in the group tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and others. The first relates to the derogations on VAT —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Is it in order for hon. Members to chat across the Chamber?

The First Deputy Chairman: I have not heard anything untoward.

Mr. Spearing: Amendment No. 422, which refers to article 99, provides that it should not apply to

"the ending of derogations permitting zero-rating of VAT".

Amendment No. 423, which refers to the same article, provides that there should be no

"further harmonisation in respect of excise or other internal taxes."

Although I may be a little technical, Mr. Lofthouse, I hope to be in order because my remarks will be entirely related to both those taxes.

Before we discuss the merits of those taxes, it is important to explain a little about the history of VAT and its operation. Most Conservative Members entered this House at a time when they were already paying VAT. However, some of us remember the debates about the merits of VAT, which the Government of the day told us had nothing to do with entry to the Common Market, as it was then called.

There were heated debates on value added tax, especially on children's shoes—which are currently derogated from the sixth VAT directive. Indeed, the exchanges in those debates were even more heated than those to which we have just listened. The then hon. Member for Finchley—now Baroness Thatcher—was inveigled into the Lobby to vote against an amendment tabled by shadow Treasury Ministers to exempt children's shoes from domestic VAT. Such was the pressure on Conservative Members that even the noble Lady voted against derogation at that time.

That sixth directive was introduced in 1979 by a previous Labour Administration, interestingly enough under the signature of John Silkin, the then Agriculture Minister. One of the technicalities of the sixth directive was that it was passed not at a meeting of the Finance Council —no doubt the sort of meeting that the Paymaster General is used to attending—but at a meeting of the Agriculture Council. That directive, on which all these matters rest, was passed by the Agriculture Council. I have explained that as a point of information for the Committee because it shows the degree to which these matters are constitutionally complicated within the EC.

The sixth directive is still in force and it was referred to in exchanges between the Front-Bench spokesmen earlier. The Paymaster General reminded us that we are now in the third or fourth amendment to the sixth directive, which will last to 1996. Then, the whole matter is open to renegotiation. If I am wrong on that point, I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will correct me. He knows that there are so many complications in these matters that those of us who observe from the outside are not always absolutely right.

Sir John Cope: Technically, the hon. Gentleman did not express the matter quite correctly, but I do not think that the differences between the way that he put it and the facts of the matter are likely to be material to his argument.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. Translation of these complicated matters is important for those who are listening to us or who may read our words. I shall try to use non-technical language.

The imposition of the sixth directive, which Britain is still under in its present guise, has not always been open.

Hon. Members will remember that, about half a dozen Budgets ago, the noble Lord Lawson, then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced a Budget with a great mystery in it which related to VAT on building repairs. There was enormous concern about it on the Government Benches and particularly among charities and churches. Estimates of all sorts, including housing estimates, were put under question. No one could discover what that imposition of VAT on building repairs, which were hitherto exempt, was about.

The Select Committee on European Legislation took evidence from a predecessor of the Paymaster General, the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), and we asked him about the imposition of VAT on building repairs. In a note to us afterwards, he agreed that that was due to some correspondence that he had had with the Commission, and pointed out that, under the sixth VAT directive, Britain was under an obligation to charge VAT on building repairs.

That was done subfusc, it was not publicised in any way and it came out only in a footnote to the evidence given by the right hon. Gentleman. I pay tribute to some of his work on the Finance Council. The Paymaster General will know something of that. The right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South did some sterling work and he admitted that as a fact.

No one in Britain at the time, or perhaps since, was aware that the imposition of that controversial tax was a direct result of the treaty and of letters passing between the Commission and the Treasury, making the Treasury change Britain's taxes without admitting the origin of the new tax.

That matter was not as open as matters are after the Budget when we go to the Vote Office to collect reams of paper with all sorts of details. Millions of pounds must have been paid then and since. There are similar incidents in relation to spectacles and construction. I think that I am right in saying that VAT has now been levied not just on repairs but on new construction as well. Subject to anything that the Paymaster General says, I believe that they stem from the same source.

Mr. Tim Smith: Was not VAT imposed on new construction following infraction proceedings against the United Kingdom in the European Court, introduced in the 1988 Budget and implemented in the 1989 Finance Act? I should have thought that that was all straightforward and above board.

Mr. Spearing: It was not done subfusc and secretly. If it was done on that occasion, as the hon. Gentleman

correctly, I think, reminds me, it was done as a result of a court action. But the origin of that tax and its enforcement was the same place. One tax was completely secret, one was completely open. But there can be no doubt that their imposition was against the wishes of the Treasury which fought it in the court, lost and had to come to the House and admit that that was what they were having to do. I see that the hon. Gentleman nods and I thank him for his correction. As I said earlier, I want to deal with these complicated matters in language that those outside can understand and so understand clearly what is at stake in this debate and in this treaty.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, as a result of those wonderful infraction proceedings moved against the United Kingdom, the Avenue baptist church of Southend, a worthy organisation, having just raised more than £300,000 to extend the church premises for youth and other work for recreation, has been advised that it will now have to pay £65,000 in VAT? Is not that a matter of real concern? What good does it do for anyone, and what good does it do for our democracy, when we have simply to say to the Avenue baptist church, "I am terribly sorry, you may have raised all that money, but you will have to pay £65,000 to the Government because of infraction proceedings"? Surely it makes us look stupid to do something that is basically wrong and against all that is good in society.

11 pm

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and to the hon. Member for Beaconsfield for emphasising that point, because references to the court have been made in recent debates—particularly in relation to coal, which I must not mention in this context; unless, of course, heating will be subject to VAT. In some parts of the Community, VAT is imposed on not just industrial heating—when it can be passed on as part of the VAT chain—but the heating of domestic premises. Coal and oil are very relevant in that respect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is right. The court may think differently about certain cases. Is that consistent? It may be helpful in certain cases, but in others it may not. It certainly was not in the case of the construction industry, when the court ended the most effective derogation that we had at that time.

Mr. Leighton: When VAT was imposed on various forms of construction against the wish of everyone in this country, was that done at the same time that VAT was levied on health and safety boots and helmets for British

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend reminds me of that package, but I am not sure that was done at the same time. It was certainly at about the same period—and there was also shock, horror over a measure concerning spectacles. I distinctly remember a wave of two or three judgments coming to the notice of the House, and embarrassed Ministers at the Dispatch Box facing enraged right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. We could experience that again and again and again, for reasons that I will state—and I suggest that the Financial Secretary cannot deny the possibility that the loss of derogation will continue. No one can prove that that will happen, but I shall explain why I believe that is very much on the cards.

Passing amendment No. 422 would put a stopper on all that. The Committee will have grasped by now, because the Chair made it clear, that this debate enables us to put a filter or stopper on any of the additional obligations that the treaty places on the House, the nation, Her Majesty's Government, and Her Majesty herself—who will no doubt become a citizen of the European union, as will any future British monarch. Amendment No. 422 would stop the future loss of derogations that we have gained and take it out of the ring in negotiations.

After the phase of derogational loss by a letter of infraction and court procedure, we saw the coming of the single market. Lady Thatcher sent a technician, Lord Cockfield, to Brussels, and he went about his work with a real will. Under the Single European Act he had been given the task of creating the single market by 1 January 1993. We had a long list of 295 regulations and vast numbers of suggestions and papers. Among them was a stringent proposal for harmonising VAT and excise duties.

During one of my visits to Brussels as a member of the Select Committee, I discussed those proposals with officials. The proposal for VAT was contemplated with some horror as many of the countries in the Community put VAT on food, water, public transport, heating and, above all, newspapers, books and magazines. Lord Cockfield said that if we were to have a single market we would have to harmonise all that.

In an earlier debate today, the Paymaster General very neatly made the point that harmony was sometimes more attractive than unison.

Sir John Cope: I said that they were different and tried not to take sides about which was more attractive in the musical sense. Later I was taken to task about which was more attractive in chapels. I made the point that they were different musically, but certainly in taxation harmony is more desirable than complete unanimity.

Mr. Spearing: I shall return to that later, as it is a helpful analogy, even in the unlikely sphere of finance.

Lord Cockfield produced a drastic proposal for the harmonisation of excise duty. There may have been some advantages to some countries involving petrol and diesel oil, but the biggest change affected alcohol. We all know the level of taxation on alcohol in certain of our continental neighbours. They are quite entitled to that and I do not blame them. They have different traditions, climates, crops, methods of farming and so on. As long as we do not have to pay for their surpluses, good luck to them. However, the duty they place on alcohol per degree proof is extremely low.

I was talking to an official in the Berlaymont building and I said, "Don't you realise what you are proposing? Our Exchequer gets something like £3,000 million a year from alcohol duty. If it were reduced to about £700 million, the effect would be enormous, not just on the Exchequer, because taxes would have to be raised elsewhere; we would have to raise income tax or increase VAT on a whole range of things. Perhaps you do not realise that in the traditions of our country that particular taxation has a social side."

He replied, "The social side does not matter. That is for the social and economic committee and the Social Council." At that stage, at least at the official level, there

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was a lack of recognition that in Britain the excise duty has a multiple objective which, at least in principle, has the agreement of many people.

Most people in the Community found that the Cockfield medicine was a bit too strong and after a couple of years the proposal was withdrawn.

We have before us a proposal for two broad bands of VAT. One is for necessities, with a rate of 3 to 5 per cent., and the other is for a standard VAT target of between 12 and 20 per cent. At the stage when our rate was 15 per cent., we were in the middle and we regarded the position as satisfactory, as the Chancellor of the day did not have to increase the rate in the Budget. Now, with the rate at 17·5 per cent., he has less of a range within which to operate, but I must not try to anticipate his Budget.

In the proposals negotiated at that stage, we kept those derogations. But, as the Paymaster General agrees, they continue only until 1996. "Everything will be all right on the night," say the Government, "because the decision must be unanimous. Article 99 requires unanimity, which gives us a lock on the door," which the Home Secretary was keen to call a double lock.

If that lock is unlocked and the Government of the day pass through the door—nobody can be sure of the type of Administration who will be in office in 1996; I hope it will be the Labour party—they will face a dilemma. Whatever the reason for passing through the door, once they are through it, the door will be locked. Whatever the issue that led to our passing the lock—or passing the second lock to which the Home Secretary referred—no Government of their own volition will be able to change the position existing then.

It can be changed, but not just by a majority vote by friends who may agree with us. Remember, the people about whom we are speaking when we talk of "us" will not be us. They will be here 20, 30, 40—goodness knows how many—years in the future. We are legislating for people yet unborn who have not had a chance to vote. They will not be able to change the position.

Some people are inclined to say of us that we cannot achieve change, that we are like putty, that we come here to play and achieve little. I try to persuade them otherwise. Up to at least 1973 we could do something about legislation. Indeed, I had the privilege of making the last speech from the Back Benches on the European Communities Act 1972. No longer can we say, "Change the party, change the policy, go to your MP and get him to change it in Parliament."

Doors have been locked behind us one after another during the last 20 years. The occasions when we can make such statements to the rising generation in defence of representative democracy are growing fewer and fewer, just as their discontent is growing greater and greater, particularly in matters of taxation. That makes the amendment especially important. The position is not, as the Financial Secretary recently assured me, fully safeguarded. It is safeguarded only until 1996, after which it will be up for grabs.

Mr. Dalyell: Is my hon. Friend aware that I find the rising generation in my constituency very pro-European?

Mr. Spearing: Can I take this to the tax issue? I am not sure that they are very keen on European taxes, because, I suggest to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I do not think the rising generation in Linlithgow, Newham, Stepney, Beaconsfield, Aldridge-Brownhills, or in Harrow—and I see that the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is not here now—know very much about EEC taxation.

The bulk of EEC taxation is in VAT-related charges. I have one more point on 1996, but before that I give way.

11.15 pm

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend accept that whatever part of the country one visits, if one discusses the Common Market, as soon as one gets on to the common agricultural policy, which is a form of taxation amounting to £17 a week for every family in this country, people very quickly become disillusioned about the Common Market if they were not already?

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend has a good point because taxation of food was only introduced in this country in 1973, after we joined the Community.

Mr. Llew Smith: My hon. Friend mentioned parliamentary democracy. Listening to him, it seems to have little relevance to the taxation issue that we are discussing. I was listening to him and some other hon. Members some weeks ago when they seemed to imply that there was little democracy in terms of the regions and some weeks before that I heard some hon. Members saying that there was little parliamentary democracy about the central banks.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member has been sitting here for some time and he will have heard me rule an hon. Member out of order for speaking about the central banks. This is about indirect taxation and he must stick to that.

Mr. Smith: I am responding to the point which my hon. Friend made about the importance of parliamentary democracy. I was going to make the point that I represent an area which is famous for Chartism and recently celebrated the history of the Chartist struggle for the right to vote.

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Member may wish to do so, but that is nothing to do with this amendment.

Mr. Spearing: Taxation and representation go together. If the Chartists were not very keen on taxation, they were keen on representation.

That brings me to the other point about 1996, and the fundamental change that is almost bound to come then in some form or other. We have been told by the Home Secretary and the Paymaster General about the double lock. They said that it was a unanimous lock, and that we could do something about it. Indeed previous Ministers, including Baroness Thatcher, often said that it was unanimous and was therefore okay, implying that we had to get agreement before there would be any change, and she or the Minister in a Department would not budge on anything because it had to be unanimous. It was a sort of black ball in reverse. If one did not get agreement, stationary would be the position. That is the implication we have had, time and again, even at the time of the referendum. No British Minister in Brussels——

Mr. Quentin Davies: The hon. Member is always well informed on European Community matters and I listen to him with great interest, but I do not share his Doomsday fears about British democracy. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member can think of nothing better than personal insults, it shows a tremendous bankruptcy of ideas.

To return to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), he accepts the principle of the single market and of the free movement of goods within that single market, I think. Does he not acknowledge that inevitably, if one has a single market of that kind, the extent to which member states' indirect taxation rates can vary is necessarily constrained and that that is necessary for economic reasons? Otherwise there is price arbitrage created by consumers and we are already facing an element of that with the tobacco and alcohol purchases across the continent. If the hon. Gentleman wants a single market, as I believe he does, will he acknowledge that a de facto move towards greater equality of indirect taxation is inevitable?

Mr. Spearing: I will reply to the hon. Gentleman's main thesis when I have completed the next section of my argument, which concerns the importance of VAT within the financial structure of the Community. I think that you will agree, Mr. Lofthouse, that that is central to our consideration, and additional to the points that I have already made. I must, however, make one factual point now: I do not think that I have ever gone on record as being in favour of the single market. *[Interruption.]* Well, I must have expressed my opinions in a very muted way. I am glad to say that the reason for that no longer exists, and I can now be absolutely frank.

I have never been in favour of the European Community, as set out in the treaty of Rome; I am in favour of a real European community, which is not in the treaty of Rome. That is a long-standing belief of mine, which I shall be happy to debate with anyone at any time, especially in the constituency of the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). Of course the hon. Gentleman is not too worried about the demise of democracy, which is already proceeding apace in this country, mainly because of the European Communities Act 1972.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. About half an hour ago, in another point of order, the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) asked you to take into account the fact that he was never called. I think that he added that I was often called—although I have been called only three times in about 11 debates. Should it not also be taken into account that the hon. Gentleman is usually not present? I have just looked across at the Opposition Benches, and noted that he is not present now.

The First Deputy Chairman: I have already ruled on that point of order. As I said then, the Chair takes everything into consideration.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding is here, however—which reminds me of a conversation that I had with an eminent banker. No doubt the hon. Gentleman, who I believe is also a banker, is not too worried about the demise of democracy, as some of my hon. Friends and I see it. In the Maastricht treaty, taxation and banking are closely related, and we seem now to have a Government of bankers, by bankers, for bankers.

Was not the Prime Minister a banker? And the Secretary of State for Transport? They, and the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding, are not too worried, because the treaty favours bankers. The hon. Gentleman is a thorough believer in the conspiracy theory of history. I am not; I believe that people who occupy a privileged position through statute in their own nation will always seek to extend that advantage.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The hon. Gentleman is dealing very gently with my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). The whole basis of this part of the treaty is the subject of our debate. The hon. Gentleman accepted the contentions of the article, expressed in the form of an assertion by my hon. Friend, as if they were fact; in truth, they are false coinage.

We are discussing why it is necessary for a common market to require harmonisation of tax levels. No economic theory asserts, as has my hon. Friend, that such harmonisation is a prerequisite to the achievement of a market: we have seen that in the United States and elsewhere. So please bash him down!

Mr. Spearing: I love bashing bankers, and I have done so on occasion; but one must deal with other hon. Members on an equal basis, without having one's cheque book handy or one's mortgage around one's neck. However, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I told the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding that I would deal with his point at the end of my speech. I said that, in the meantime, I would deal with two other matters —what will happen in 1966; and the part that VAT plays in the financial structure of the Community.

Following some refreshing exchanges, I come now to the question of what will happen in 1996. I have referred to the oft-repeated remark of the noble Baroness Lady Thatcher and her Ministers that everything would be all right on the night because we had the veto. But what happens in practice? Conservative Members have memories, and two of my hon. Friends who were Ministers know what went on.

Mr. Cryer: Three.

Mr. Spearing: Yes, three. I do not always associate my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South with these things. I am sure that if I have got this wrong, the three former Ministers will put me right. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) not only agrees with what I am about to say but has related spicy anecdotes to back it up.

It is not simply a question of the Council of Ministers sitting round a table; it is also a question of the pyramid of officials in the various offices, including the committee of permanent representatives, a reference to which, incidentally, appears somewhere in the treaty. Certainly there are now more committees of officials. What do they do? And what does the Foreign Office do? The internal department of the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister's office are co-ordinating all the time.

Mr. Cryer: Four Ministers.

Mr. Spearing: Yes, four Ministers. They know all about it.

What happens when important negotiations take place? Do they confine themselves to the narrow issues involved, as, under our procedures, we attempt to do? Members of

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the House of Commons are able, individually and collectively, to separate issues from one another. Of course, there have to be deals in respect of certain matters. I do not know how far common sense extends, but it is at least apparent. But what happens when there is to be a big Community deal on finance? Are such things as airport slots and agriculture entirely irrelevant? Of course not. When representatives get round a table at Holyrood or the Champs Elysées, these things come together.

Let me give an extraordinary example relating to finance and taxation. The rebates negotiated by the then right hon. Member for Finchley, Mrs. Thatcher, at Fontainebleau about 10 years ago were presented as a great triumph for her. A short time previously the Heads of Government met at Stuttgart and issued a solemn declaration on European union. When these matters come up for debate in 1996, other issues will be on the table. Is the Minister to tell us that the continued derogations for which his successor will fight will be isolated and considered purely on the merits of taxation policy? Are we to be told that that Minister will not deal with some other treaty that is up for renewal at that time? In fact, he will have to deal with an across-the-board package. Nobody can pretend that there will not be a range of considerations involved in some sort of deal. Taxation, because it is money, will play a very important part.

It would be a matter of what is possible. If any hon. Gentleman of any party, who is in a position of ministerial responsibility at that time, thinks that he can get away with a certain derogation on something that will not raise the ire of the populace as much as something else might, he may as well deal that card in order to get something else. That is the way that finance and other matters in the Community work, and everybody knows it.

11.30 pm

That brings me to the question of VAT within the Community itself. There was a time when everybody thought that 1 per cent. of what was spent in VAT went to the Community; some people still think that. Do hon. Members remember the ceiling that Lady Thatcher came up against, and instead we had an intergovernmental agreement to raise the money? It is no such thing: it is 1 per cent. of a VAT assessment. The assessment is not the amount that we get; it is an assessment by the Commission and the finance officers of the Community of the VAT-able turnover of the country. They say that we should pay across 1 per cent. of that figure. If we do not put VAT on some of the derogated items, as we do not, we have to make up through some other form of internal transfer the money that we have received in the Exchequer through VAT. In other words, VAT as an income and as a tax is not directly linked with the VAT assessment made by the Community, but the amount of money that we can raise and devote to that end is.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, if I may have his attention for a moment, asked about his young people there. I wonder whether they know how much of their equivalent of VAT goes to the EC. I can tell them: about £4,000 million a year, in 1991 values, went to the EC in 1992. In broad terms—the Paymaster General may be able to confirm this when he replies, as I hope he will—it is somewhere between 10 and 12 per cent. of the VAT take. It varies up and down, according to the basket of the ecu and the level of sterling. I assume that what has happened is that, as sterling has gone out of the exchange rate mechanism and we have rather less, the amount that we are having to put across in our VAT contribution to the Community will be rather less than it once was. But in 1992 it was around £4,000 million. I will quote all figures in 1991 values, for reasons that I will make plain in a minute.

Sir John Cope: I did not want to interrupt the flow of what the hon. Gentleman was saying, but the net contribution to the European Community in recent years has been about £2,000 million. The hon. Gentleman should compare that with the yield of value added tax in this country which, last year, was just over £35,000 million. He was drawing attention to one part of the way in which the contribution of member states to the Community is calculated, the so-called third resource, which is done on what, to use shorthand, I would describe as a kind of artificial VAT base, that is, one which is calculated, as he indicates, on the same basis for each of the countries. An adjustment is done to the figures to make sure that it is done on the same basis for each country.

Mr. Spearing: I am very grateful to the Paymaster General who, like his predecessors—and I must say that—has been a rather different order of Minister in these matters, perhaps because finance is an exact mathematical matter and it is less easy to change the nuances in financial matters than it is in others. I am grateful to him because that is what I was coming to.

When we completed the transition period and had the full finance going, VAT contributed, I think the right hon. Gentleman will agree, about one third of our contributions to the EEC. At that time Customs levies were the biggest resource that we paid over, but he will also agree, I think, that the net figure, which he correctly quoted, is a result of what is paid over compared to what is coming back, adjusted by the Berlaymont abatement.

I am coming to that, because I think the figures ought to be advertised, particularly the VAT ones, since they are not generally realised, even by the strongest critics of the European Community and its finances. They really are quite startling.

I will take the 1972 figures, again quoting in 1971 values. I have had these calculated by the Library, which has also provided me with a wonderful graph, which puts it all even more simply than words, but I cannot show it visually.

The figures show that £4,000 million went to the EEC from VAT and £1,600 million from Customs, and from the gross national product—the fourth resource, I think—broadly £1,100 million, making a total contribution of £7,000 million. That was our 1972 contribution to the EEC. But the receipts—and of course the bulk of those were in the agricultural fund—amounted to only £2,900 million: less than half our contribution; indeed, only three quarters of the VAT-related contribution. That was all we got back. There was a deficit, therefore, of £4·2 billion. That was our imbalance. We were net contributors, after the rebate, of £4·2 billion.

It is true—and Treasury Ministers always mention it—that that was after the rebate, but the rebate, of course, if I am correct, is also on leasehold. The rebate has been successfully maintained, but it is coming up again, if not in 1996, not very long afterwards.

Sir John Cope: All this has nothing to do with article 99, or the amendment, or anything that we have been discussing this evening. It has to do with the contribution to the European Community. However, the hon. Gentleman will no doubt be pleased to learn that at the Edinburgh summit a short while before Christmas the United Kingdom abatement was extended to the end of the century. Thereafter, of course, another decision will require to be made.

He may also like to know that the third resource, the VAT resource, was reduced in its importance by various extra restrictions, which it would be improper of me to go into at this point. But if he consults the evidence that I gave only yesterday to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, when it is published in due course, he will see some more details. The proportion of the Community contribution which is to come from the VAT resource in future will reduce over the period of the financial perspective—that is to say, between now and 1999.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Paymaster General for giving us that information. I said that I knew that it was some time in the future. He has now told us that our VAT-related contributions will be going down, but of course the amounts may well be rather big. I was rather surprised, his having agreed with me the net figure of £2·4 billion after abatement, which he mentioned himself a little while ago, at his reaction to my going through the figures, because it is not possible to find them very easily.

Mr. Leighton: Is my hon. Friend saying that we are sending vast amounts of taxpayers' money to Brussels, where they are translated into 11 languages, as it were, and that a small proportion of them is returned to us? Surely we are subsidising countries that are much richer than the United Kingdom. Is this true?

Mr. Spearing: I shall not go down that road, Mr. Lofthouse, because if I were in your position I would pull myself up. I say only that this year about a third of what we contributed was paid back. That is without the Fontainebleau arrangement.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding has challenged me by saying, "You can't have a proper and common single market without a single system of taxation." I think that that was the burden of his remarks.

Mr. Quentin Davies: With respect, that is not what I said. I was not suggesting that any formal harmonisation was required. I said that if we agree that there should be a free exchange of goods across frontiers without controls and restrictions and that my constituents and the hon. Gentleman's, for example, should be able to go to France, Belgium or Germany to make their personal purchases and bring them back to the United Kingdom—I thought that he agreed with that liberal development, but perhaps he does not—we must agree also that the corollary of such a single market is that the scope within which individual member states can vary their rates of indirect taxation must, de facto, be reduced by market pressures. People will not cross the channel or drive hundreds of miles to save 1 or 2 per cent. on the price of goods, so some variation in indirect taxation will be possible and sustainable. That is what happens in the United States. On the other hand, people will travel long distances to save themselves 10, 15, 20 or 25 per cent. There is that market constraint. That is what I was talking about. That is very different from formal and deliberate harmonisation, which I do not believe is necessary.

Mr. Spearing: But article 99 says that it is necessary, and that is something which the hon. Gentleman clearly supports. However, I do not agree—I was grateful for the intervention of the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) earlier—with the hon. Gentleman's premise. Instead, I believe in common sense in the face of article 99 and variations in VAT or excise duty. It is in that light that the amendments are designed to protect the people of the United Kingdom, and that protection could be forthcoming. The acceptance of the amendments would mean that the Government would be instructed by Parliament to say, "We shall go along with article 99 as long as it means that we do not have to have any more derogation losses on VAT. We shall go along with article 99 as long as there is no further harmonisation of excise."

It is not necessary to take these matters to the degree of a mathematical level table. The Community has said, "We shall get as reasonably close as we can to a unified system on the basis that it is a mechanism that does not distort the market very much in practice." In other words, it is willing to make a compromise. That is the position that the Community has reached.

That brings me to harmony. It is said that we can achieve what are considered to be the benefits of a single market without frontiers and barriers—I happen to think that such benefits do not exist—by bringing together different notes to produce the whole. It is said that there is no need for that to happen in unison. In other words, we do not have to lose our derogations from VAT on necessary items and we do not have to put up with the harmonisation of excise duties. That is why I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will support the amendments.

11.45 pm

Mr. Tim Smith: (Beaconsfield): It would be nice to be able to say that this has been an illuminating debate, but I fear that there has been some obfuscation—some deliberate and some voluntary. However, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) gave us an illuminating account of the history of value added tax in the European Community.

Article 99, as amended by the treaty, makes no significant difference to that article as it appears in the Single European Act. It merely adds consultation with the Economic and Social Committee. If one reads the reports of the debates on this subject in 1986, one finds that the fears expressed then are similar to those being expressed now. The only substantial change in VAT since 1986 arises from the infraction proceedings to which I referred earlier.

Those proceedings were based on the sixth EC VAT directive of 1977, which the hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned. That directive was agreed by the previous Labour Government, and the hon. Gentleman told us that it was agreed by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I was not aware of that, but it could explain a great deal. It is that directive with which we have to deal, and it is based on the original article 99 of the treaty of Rome.

Even with the Single European Act, article 17 of which amended the original article 99, there has been very little change to the treaty of Rome. Therefore, in many ways,

[Mr. Tim Smith]

this debate is irrelevant, because the Maastricht treaty makes no substantial change to the arrangements of indirect tax harmonisation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer)——

Mr. Wilkinson: Just because the provisions in the proposed treaty on European union differ only in minute detail from those already enacted in the Single European Act is no reason not to examine them critically or to draw sensible conclusions, especially as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer consciously forwent the perfectly sensible, independent option of lowering VAT, if necessary below 15 per cent., in favour of adopting a European directive requiring a minimum level of 15 per cent. That was the first instance in recent days of the potential damage to the Treasury's independence which the provision encapsulates.

Mr. Smith: I was about to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South had made that very point, that it was perfectly legitimate to scrutinise these issues again. He was straightforward in saying that he had previously got it wrong—he had voted for the Single European Act and article 99 as amended by article 17 of the Single European Act, but he was now worried about what might happen in the future.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) is in the same position, and I do not dispute the fact that it is perfectly legitimate to scrutinise the proposals again. My point is that similar fears were expressed in 1986, and the only substantial change which has taken place since is that to which I referred.

Mr. Cash: Answer his point.

Mr. Smith: If my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) will be a little patient, I shall come to that.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Address the Chair.

Mr. Smith: I apologise, Mr. Lofthouse.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood referred to the recent agreement reached by the Council of Ministers on a minimum standard rate of VAT of 15 per cent., but that does not arise from the Maastricht treaty. It has nothing to do with the treaty but arises from the existing article 99. I read the record of the debates that took place then. We should remember that article 99 is subject to unanimity. During the Second Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford said:

> "We tend to exaggerate the dangers of majority voting. We live in a global economy but have to keep our interests ahead of other people's. We must have regard to our own interests while working in the EC."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 378.]

I am sorry that he does not feel the same now. Very little has changed in the intervening period—all that has changed in relation to VAT is the decision of the European Court.

Mr. Cash: I do not depart from one word of what I said then, and I repeat it. There are a tremendous number of benefits to be derived from the single market, but the difficulty is the way in which it is being manipulated, and the Commission's complete failure to subscribe to the rules, so that we frequently operate on illegal treaty bases. That throws up considerable doubt, which the Select Committee on Trade and Industry is now investigating.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. That is in no way concerned with direct taxation.

Mr. Smith: To return to the subject of indirect taxation, when the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) moved the amendment, which would have no significant effect——

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Smith: I think that I had better press on.

Mr. Marlow: May I make a brief but important point? My hon. Friend says that all that stuff about indirect taxation and VAT has to be decided by unanimity. We all know that our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not want to agree a minimum rate of VAT at 15 per cent. Yet, despite the fact that he did not want to agree, and despite the requirement for unanimity, that rate was agreed.

Does that not point to many sections of the treaty which require decisions to be made by unanimity but on which, despite the fact that the Committee is told that we shall have safeguards and that there will be no majority voting, the Government will be pressured into making decisions that they do not want to make?

Mr. Smith: Unanimity means that, if the Government take the view that our vital national interests are at stake, they will not make the concession that other members of the Council are making. In this particular case——

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Smith: I am trying to answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), and I am only halfway through doing so —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] But I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) in due course.

What was the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North asked about? Oh yes, it was about unanimity. If the Government thought that our vital national interests were at stake, of course they would use what is effectively a veto. But in this particular case, our standard rate of VAT is 17·5 per cent., and I do not believe that the Government have any intention of greatly reducing it, so there is no practical effect.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend explain to me how the Chancellor's decision on the 15 per cent. base rate could possibly help this country, when, as a result of it, the horse racing industry, for example, is decamping to Ireland, where the rate is 2·5 per cent.? Why does unanimity appear to apply to us but not to our competitors?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend has my total sympathy; I agree with her. It is not our Government but the Irish Government who are at fault, and the matter should be dealt with by the European Commission. The hon. Member for Oxford, East referred to that matter, among other things. It is important, but it does not arise directly from the amendment, which the hon. Member for Oxford,

East said was a probing amendment—*[Laughter.]* That is what the hon. Gentleman said, and the amendment has enabled us to have a useful debate. But now we should agree to throw it out so that we can have article 99, as amended, in the treaty. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree to that.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) made a marvellous speech which showed a complete grasp of the technicalities of VAT, but I must correct him on one matter—not only for myself but on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who chaired those wretched meetings which finally arrived at the sixth directive. Perhaps we were all in the agriculture Committee—I do not know. Brussels is a funny place at 3 o'clock in the morning, and one sometimes does not know exactly which Committee one is in. Perhaps one final comma was approved at the end of the day by John Silkin in the agriculture Committee. I assure the Committee that we had night after night of discussion on that wretched VAT directive.

We have also heard about a purchase tax. It is perfectly in order, Mr. Lofthouse, to discuss indirect taxation. The article mentions turnover tax, which is probably VAT, and goes on to mention other forms of indirect taxation. I tend to agree with hon. Members who feel that VAT is not the best form of indirect taxation for the European Community. Some time ago Treasury civil servants were asked by the Japanese Government to go out to Japan to advise the Japanese Government on whether to introduce the kind of VAT that operates in the Community. I am told—this is all hearsay—that those civil servants had to consult Ministers on whether to go. Treasury Ministers were apparently enthusiastic that the permanent secretary to the Treasury should go to Japan. Some Ministers believed that one way of stopping the Japanese economic miracle in its tracks would be to export this crazy tax—which was invented by a French tax inspector and a German philosopher a long time ago.

The Japanese, clever people that they are, did not fall for it. They have no intention of introducing VAT; nor has the United States——

Mr. Richard Shepherd: It is too regressive.

Mr. Davies: Precisely. The pass was sold on this one. The Labour party voted against it in 1972, but the pass was sold. The tax is convenient for the EEC, but it will put Europe at a disadvantage in the competition that it faces and will face from Japan and other Asian countries, and from the United States.

So much for the history. We are saddled with the tax now, even though it is bureaucratic and rather inflexible.

I, like many other Members, have some dificulty with article 99. Either it is terribly important, or it is not important at all. My problem is with the words

"within the time limit laid down in Article 7a".

As has been said, article 99 of the Maastricht treaty is not really different from article 99 in the treaty of Rome—except that that talking shop, EcoSoc, as we used to call it, has been incorporated in the new article 99. That is fine; if it wants to discuss these matters, no one objects.

Meanwhile, article 8a, in which the time limit is supposed to have been laid down, has become article 7a. The treaty of Rome used a capital "A"; this treaty uses a little "a". I suppose that lawyers would call that "de minimis", but we should not worry unduly about it.

At all events, article 8a—now 7a—gives the time limit as 31 December 1992, by which time all the harmonisation was to be carried out to ensure the establishment and the functioning of the internal market. As far as I can tell, once we have reached 31 December 1992, the article becomes defunct. Perhaps the Paymaster General will be able to tell me that I am wrong. Unless I am greatly mistaken in my interpretation, however, the article should not be included at all. It seems that the clever guys who drafted it have made a mistake——

Mr. Wilkinson: Will the right hon. Gentleman, who has one of the best legal minds in the House, elicit from the Financial Secretary a definitive answer to this important question? It will be germane to the whole debate on these amendments. Will he ensure that the Financial Secretary replies soon, and specifically?

Mr. Davies: The Paymaster General and not the Financial Secretary will no doubt reply to the debate. If we are right we can all go home and need not have this nice debate about VAT and unanimity or about the future of democracy or anything else. Perhaps I should move to another issue.

12 midnight

Sir John Cope: I can explain now rather than leave it until later. The passing of the deadline does not in any way invalidate—it would be wrong if it did—the measures already passed, starting with the sixth directive and others which are based on article 99. Therefore, that article needs to continue after the deadline. The single market must continue to function effectively. There is case law to show that the passing of a deadline in a treaty article of this kind does not remove the obligation on Community institutions to take action which is prescribed within the deadline. I would not be surprised if in future hon. Members and people elsewhere in the Community draw attention to matters of indirect taxation which need to be based on article 99.

Mr. Davies: The Paymaster General has given the game away. He said that the obligation is to carry out the orders of the article within the deadline. I do not know what happened to the obligation, but the deadline has passed.

Sir John Cope: I have just explained to the right hon. Gentleman that the obligation does not end with the passing of the deadline: it continues and, as I said, there is case law to that effect. We and the other members of the Community have done our best to put the system in place. It is largely in place, but corrections and refinements may need to be made in future, and we need the treaty base to do that.

Mr. Davies: The obligation was to do something within the deadline, and the deadline was 31 December 1992. The Paymaster General can cite as many precedents as he likes, but that deadline has passed and the obligation can no longer exist.

Sir John Cope: The obligation remains. The primary obligation was to achieve as much as we could by the deadline. As I have already explained, there are perfectly good precedents, case law and all the rest of it, which the

[Sir John Cope]

right hon. Gentleman can look up if he wishes, to continue the obligation insofar as it has not been fulfilled by the deadline, should that be necessary. In addition, article 99 is needed because it is the basis of the sixth and other directives. The right hon. Gentleman is not being as sharp as usual on legal matters.

Mr. Davies: The right hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that. We all know that the sixth directive exists and that steps can be taken without any of these measures because countries can get together and agree to amend the sixth directive and to harmonise. I do not care what case law says because there is no need to go to case law. The document states in clear language that the obligation is to do something by 31 December 1992. That deadline has passed and, as the condition precedent for the obligation is that the actions have to be completed by 31 December 1992, the obligation no longer exists.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Dame Janet. You will have heard the exchange between the right hon. Gentleman and the Paymaster General, who has said that there are precedents for what is being done. Does the Minister not have an obligation, in this case if nowhere else, to present the precedents to the Committee, failing which may I ask you to suspend the sitting?

The Second Deputy Chairman: That is not a point of order for the Chair, although it would make an intervention.

Mr. Davies: I do not want to labour the point. As I understand it, the article was incorporated into the Single European Act and provided for certain things to be done by the date when the internal market came into operation on 1 January 1993. It makes perfect sense against that background. It was inserted into the treaty of Rome because the Single European Act was inserted into the treaty of Rome. Then, someone did not get it quite right, so somebody else said, "We must put EcoSoc in there." Nobody really noticed that it was defunct because 31 December had gone.

Mr. Cash: The right hon. Gentleman is making a brilliant speech and raising many practical points. Has he noticed that article 99 merely provides that we should carry out that form of indirect taxation

"to the extent that such harmonisation is necessary"

to assist the internal market? Therefore, the arrangements being proposed by the Government are not necessary. Not only is the right hon. Gentleman right about the fact that the obligation had to be fulfilled by 31 December 1992, but it is not necessary anyway to go down this route to achieve the Government's objectives.

Mr. Davies: I agree that to some extent what is necessary is a subjective matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) was terrified of even considering a vote on the amendment because he said that it was a wrecking amendment. Apparently, the whole of the Maastricht treaty would be destroyed if the Committee dared to remove this wretched article 99, which does not mean anything anyway. Terrible things would happen and the whole of western Europe would collapse. My hon. Friend began to sound like the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office discussing the social chapter yesterday. "It is terrible", he said, "we shall have to have a conference." Of course, it might last only 30 seconds.

I am becoming worried about the Con-Lab pact; my hon. Friends are sounding more and more like Ministers. That is extremely worrying for Back Benchers. I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East to go for a vote on the amendment this time. The whole of Europe will not collapse. Mr. Kohl will not be on the doorstep of No. 10 tomorrow morning berating the Prime Minister about it. They will call an intergovernmental conference, it will last 30 seconds and they will sort it out. It is not really important, so why suggest that it will wreck the treaty?

Let us suppose that the matter is important. I do not believe that it is, but the Paymaster General has a large brief and he believes that it is important. He has spent a great deal of time going back and fro to Brussels to discuss these wretched VAT directives. He has to believe it to be important. How on earth could he do his job if he did not?

Sir John Cope: I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I would not have taken the job if I did not believe it to be important, and I do. It was necessary to create the single market and now it is necessary to ensure that it functions effectively. Article 99 is all about it functioning effectively and we need to retain it to ensure that it continues to do so, especially with regard to the matters that we are discussing.

The right hon. Gentleman did not correctly understand some of the remarks made earlier by his hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) and by some Conservative Members, including myself. If the amendment were carried, it would not remove article 99 from the treaty. Its only effect would be to insert EcoSoc into our deliberations, which a few minutes ago the right hon. Gentleman said he would be happy to accept.

Mr. Davies: I understand that and I pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman. I do not want to sound patronising, but he is an excellent Minister. He understands VAT. He is an excellent accountant. His law is a bit weak, but he is a good accountant. I am sure that he works hard. Customs and Excise has done well in trying to put into operation some of the complicated rules that have arisen.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has said that the amendment will not remove article 99, but the amendment says that it will.

Mr. Davies: The Paymaster General did not mean that.

Mr. Spicer: That is why I am asking. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) can give a good interpretation of what my right hon. Friend meant. But he said twice that the amendment will not remove article 99 when it says that it will. I do not understand the point that he is getting at.

Mr. Davies: The Paymaster General meant that if we remove the present article 99 we shall still have the old article 99, but EcoSoc will not be in it; it will be either article 8a or article 7a—I am not sure.

We have also discussed the binding obligation of the directive whereby we are now apparently not allowed to reduce VAT below 15 per cent. That may be the only time that a British Government have agreed to a binding directive—it may be only until 1996, although that is not

clear either—denying the House the opportunity to reduce a major tax below a certain level. That is a substantial derogation from the sovereignty of the House.

In theory, we could reduce the tax below 15 per cent. in a Finance Bill, but any importer, exporter or business man in Britain who suffered damage as a result of that would be able to take the British Government to court and eventually the case would wind its way up to the European Court and the British Government would lose. An action was recently brought against the Italian Government for not carrying out a directive on redundancy payments and the Italian Government lost. Therefore, we have lost our sovereignty, certainly until 1996.

Mrs. Gorman: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is an attempt to eliminate VAT between countries —to have a zero rate? However, the complications are such that the directive comprises 650 pages of closely typed instructions which business men on both sides of the transaction are supposed to read and understand. Does the right hon. Gentleman think that that will help or hinder matters?

Mr. Davies: That makes it more complicated. That is part of the Government's problem. That is why Lord Cockfield or the Commission later suggested that the tax should be charged at the point of production.

That binding directive is a major derogation from the sovereignty of the House. During the passage of the European Communities Act 1972, we were told that all taxation directives would have to be passed in the House through a Finance Bill, but even if we do that through a Finance Bill, it still does not mean that we have any real power. If a Finance Bill contradicts a directive, we can be taken to court. I do not think that a Finance Bill is even necessary. The detail of the directives is lifted in detail into the Finance Bill. Anyone practising in the VAT sector now has to look at the directive itself because the courts construe the directive.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Is not the right hon. Gentleman highlighting the totally unsatisfactory nature of the European Community processes inasmuch as the Council of Ministers will agree something which merely has to be ratified by the House. He referred to the minimum rate of VAT. The House never debated that with the opportunity to reverse it. The Government of the day, with its supporters here in a majority, would have said that we were letting them down if we went back on what they had agreed in a nice cosy little Council of Ministers. This place is becoming irrelevant. The British people no longer have a Parliament of their own.

12.15 am

Mr. Davies: We shall be told that this is a wrecking exercise. Perhaps the Paymaster General can advise the Committee whether this legally binding directive, which will prevent Britain from reducing VAT below 15 per cent. and from taking other action, will appear in this year's Finance Bill. I know that the right hon. Gentleman is in purdah, but perhaps he can say whether it is likely that the directive will be incorporated in a Finance Bill.

Sir John Cope: No.

Mr. Davies: Will the House be able to debate and amend a directive which will be legally binding?—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] So the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is right. We cannot amend much of the Bill either, because when we attempt to do so Members on both Front Benches say that we are trying to wreck the Bill. The Committee can debate but not amend a rule which will continue to exist until at least 1996, that VAT shall not be reduced below 15 per cent. That is a further derogation from the power of Parliament to make changes.

I have totted up those derogations. Under monetary union, we shall have no control over interest rates. Neither shall we have any control over public expenditure—and now taxation. Those are all matters over which Parliament and the Government will have little control. That may have one good effect—we shall not need as many Treasury Ministers. Once we reach 1996, we shall not need four or five Treasury Ministers, though we shall need a Paymaster General to write the cheques.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The right hon. Gentleman is right. We must see this in the context of the Government and their allies—members of the Labour Front Bench—being intent on building a European state with all the attributes, taxation and absolute rights which will enable it to determine such matters. That is all that the Bill is about. It is a major step on the way to acquiescence by the British people, through their leadership, in accepting new institutions and national arrangements—the Eurofed.

Mr Davies: It is a Eurofed which will not even have the virtues of a federal system. I do not want to be out of order and to prolong the debate on that ground, but we are transferring powers to non-democratic bodies having no Executive recognised by the people.

Mrs. Gorman: Will the right hon. Gentleman give the Committee the benefit of his extremely intelligent analysis? He will recall that the Government of the day used VAT for their own convenience, whacking on 2·5 per cent. to mitigate the effects of the community charge. That is a very cynical use of a tax which we were given to understand was meant to be imposed on services and goods, but which is apparently used sometimes for the benefit or convenience of contributing nations in dealing with their domestic difficulties.

Mr. Davies: That is something like hypothecation, is it not? The Paymaster General was not listening, but the Treasury does not like hypothecation—so in effect it hypothecated 2·5 per cent. for local taxes.

It is said that there must be unanimity. As many right hon. and hon. Members have argued, that may sound good in theory but in practice it is not so easy for a Minister or a Government to stand up against the 11 other member states. The Maastricht agreement had to be unanimous. The British Government had a veto, and if they had shown any courage and vetoed the treaty it would have collapsed completely. I do not believe that many other countries were too keen on it either, but the momentum carried it forward. That is a purely personal view—and no doubt an eccentric one. The agreement was not vetoed because the pressure was so great that one country could not really veto it. It will be the same with taxation. We cannot use the veto. It is like firing off a nuclear deterrent: once it has been used, the deterrent has failed. So I do not believe that the unanimity rule will be very helpful.

[Mr. Davies]

I predict that in 1996 we shall be moving gradually towards a system of VAT being collected at the point of production and not at the point of consumption. The Paymaster General said very little about it but, as I understand it, the British Government were opposed to proposals that VAT should be imposed at the point of production instead of at the point of consumption or importation. The German Government were in favour, of course, for the simple reason that Germany is a country of producers and Britain is a country of consumers.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 202, Noes 65.

Division No. 131] **[12.20 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macdonald, Calum
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bennett, Andrew F.
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Enright, Derek
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hall, Mike
Heppell, John
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McMaster, Gordon
Mahon, Alice
Marlow, Tony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Murphy, Paul
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*

Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Dr. Tony Wright.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 39, Noes 196.

Division No. 132] **[12.31 am**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bennett, Andrew F.
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Corbyn, Jeremy
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hall, Mike
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Mahon, Alice
Marlow, Tony
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Alan Simpson.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): I beg to move, That the Chairman do report Progress and ask leave to sit again.

Question put and agreed to.

Committee report Progress; to sit again tomorrow.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

SEAT BELTS

That the draft Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 10th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 207, Noes 9.

Division No. 133] **[at 12.47 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushf)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'll)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heppell, John
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macdonald, Calum
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L.
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Simpson, Alan
Sims, Roger
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Loyden, Eddie
Mahon, Alice
Skinner, Dennis
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Alan Meale and
Dr. Tony Wright.

Question accordingly agreed to.

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

SOCIAL SECURITY ACT 1993

LONDON UNDERGROUND (KING'S CROSS) ACT 1993

Ministerial Responsibility

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

12.58 am

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I am grateful to Madam Speaker for having selected this subject for the Adjournment debate. I am asking the Government to respond to the case that I am making because I believe that the rights of the House are being steadily eroded by the Government's actions. It is extremely important that we try to call a halt to what is being done.

The House, with its votes, can make and unmake Governments. Right hon. and hon. Members have no power and no privileges as individuals. It is right that we should have no privileges other than the two rights that we have as elected Members. Those two rights are exercised on behalf of our constituents. One is the right of completely free speech in the Chamber and in the relevant parliamentary documents which accompany our work in the Chamber. The other is the right of access to Ministers.

Ministers derive their authority from the House and should be accountable to it. It is an inalienable right of our constituents that we, on their behalf, should have access to Ministers. We should have the right to go to a Minister and to ensure that he is compelled to consider the needs and interests of any or every citizen in the land, whatever his or her status or occupation.

The right of access is an issue which affects every right hon. and hon. Member, regardless of political party, but the Government are steadily eliminating that right and are consequently diminishing the rights of the House, of individual hon. Members and of the constituents whom they represent. In so doing, the Government are diminishing parliamentary democracy.

The Government are engaged in a massive transfer of responsibility from Ministers into the hands of executive agencies. Previous Governments of both parties have sometimes made individual transfers of responsibilities, but nothing has been done on the scale of what this Government are engaged in. Labour Governments created publicly owned industries which were not directly responsible to Parliament for their day-to-day operation, but the nationalisation of those industries made them more publicly accountable than they had been, because they had previously been privately owned and had no accountability to Members of Parliament. Of course, privatisation has ended even the former limited accountability that public ownership provided. When some of my right hon. and hon. Friends recently met the President of the Board of Trade to discuss redundancies at British Aerospace, he made it clear that he had no power and he washed his hands completely of any accountability of that industry to Parliament. More and more Ministers are now washing their hands of responsibilities to the House for which, until recently, they were fully accountable to the House.

In the past four and a half years, responsibility for numerous Government activities affecting many millions of our citizens has been hived off to 78 so-called next steps agencies. They range from the Building Research Establishment to the Central Science Laboratory, from the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland to the social security Benefits Agency. Two hundred and thirty-eight thousand people are employed by those agencies and, what is more, the Government have plans to establish 29 more, employing 109,000 more people. Huge areas of Government activities are being removed from Ministers and transferred to unaccountable bodies headed by officials who are generously—often over-generously—recompensed. Rights are being taken away from hon. Members in the process.

Until recently, hon. Members had the right to table parliamentary questions on individual cases and to get a ministerial reply. Now, what we get—and it took a battle to get that—are letters from heads of agencies, which are published in *Hansard*. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) gave me a substantial pile of letters that he has received in place of what should have been ministerial replies to him.

What is more, by doing that, the Government are eroding the rights of Parliament in another sense because until now only Ministers, as Members of Parliament, had access to *Hansard*. Now, non-parliamentarians have access to it.

Furthermore, Members of Parliament have the right to write letters to Ministers and receive replies from them —or rather, Members of Parliament used to have that right. Now, instead of a Member writing to a Minister, as he has always been able to, and receiving a ministerial response, the Minister simply acts as a postbox, passing on the Member's letter to an agency which may—or, it has to be said, very likely may not—reply.

The postbox function is not confined to next steps agencies. The Secretary of State for Health simply passes on letters about Members' constituents' health problems to a health authority or a trust. The Home Secretary passes on immigration cases, to which he used to reply, to immigration officers, so that hon. Members who accept that practice have to haggle demeaningly with civil servants rather than argue with Ministers, as is a Member of Parliament's right. The Foreign Secretary passes on immigration cases within his purview to something called an immigration correspondence unit, which was set up by Lord Howe when he was Foreign Secretary.

Instead of an individual's case ending up on a Minister's desk, with the Minister, whether or not he or she bothers to read the letter, having to sign it and so take responsibility for its contents, that individual and his or her poverty, needs or suffering are swept off the Minister's desk and out of the Minister's mind.

I do not know why we need so many Ministers to do so little work, for that evasion of parliamentary responsibility is being carried out by members of the largest Government this country has ever had—with 111 Ministers of various ranks. The biggest Government in this country's history are doing less and less work more inefficiently, and at higher and higher costs.

The gradual transfer of responsibilities to agencies and units may or may not be irreversible. I hope that it is not. But the evasion of ministerial responsibility and accountability to the House is not irreversible. I am determined to play what part I can in reversing the trend. One individual Back-Bench Member may not have power, but he can be a nuisance. I am determined to be a nuisance to the Government—not for the sake of protecting my own status, whatever that may be. That is of no importance whatever to me.

When Lord Howe was Foreign Secretary I argued with him when he tried to pass off my letters to his immigration correspondence unit, and he very sulkily wrote to me

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

saying that he was ready to reply to me if I insisted on my status as a member of the shadow Cabinet. I wrote back saying that that was not my purpose at all. My purpose was to ensure that a Member of Parliament has the right of response from a Minister. For the sake of protecting the rights of my constituents, I intend to continue a campaign which may, I hope, have some success.

From time to time, it may be in my constituents' interests for me to contact the local office of some agency, as I have done in the past. That is for me, representing the constituents who have sent me here, to decide. But when I decide that it is in the interests of my constituents, who have sent me here to serve them and to protect their rights, to contact a Minister, I shall do so, and I shall expect a response from a Minister and from no one else. I have made it my firm practice to send back to Ministers any letters that I receive from agencies to which my constituents' cases have been sent, and to insist on a reply from the Minister to whom I have written. I am pleased to say that some Ministers are responding in a forthcoming manner.

The Home Secretary is now responding to cases that I send him—and not only to immigration cases. When last month his office wrote to tell me that a constituent's passport problem that I had sent him had been forwarded to the Passport Agency, I told the right hon. and learned Gentleman that it was him whom I wanted to hear from. Last week he wrote confirming that he would respond to me.

I also acknowledge the positive response from the Secretary of State for Employment with regard to the agencies hived off from her Department. She replies to me on these matters. So does the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with regard to the immigration correspondence unit. When he recently sent one of my cases to the unit, I sent him his letter back and told him that I wanted to hear from him. He writes to me.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has gone much further and I give him full credit for acknowledging the rights of Members of Parliament. Last month, on behalf of the Chancellor, the Paymaster General wrote a letter to every Member of Parliament concerning Members' correspondence on subjects relating to the work of agencies. He said that letters will be forwarded to the agencies for reply "unless, of course, you"—that is, the Members of Parliament—

"indicate that you require a Ministerial reply."

He made it clear on behalf of Treasury Ministers that a Member requiring a ministerial reply would get one. He said the same about other agencies: that the letter will be referred

"to the agency Chief Executives to reply direct, unless, of course, you indicate that you require a Ministerial reply."

That last is underlined in the letter. I give the right hon. Gentleman full credit for recognising that he has a responsibility to Members of the House.

In accordance with this policy, I received a letter in the past few days from the local Customs and Excise office in Salford, making it clear that while the official concerned is ready to reply to me about my cases, if I want a ministerial reply I wil get one. That is good. I give the Chancellor all credit for acknowledging his accountability to the House.

I have also written to the Prime Minister praising the Treasury's practice and asking him to instruct all Ministers to follow it. The Prime Minister customarily speedily acknowledges all letters that I send him, and replies as soon as he can. Curiously, in this case he has neither acknowledged nor replied to the letter that I sent him last month or the reminder that I sent him last week. I am aware of the Prime Minister's great courtesy in respect of ministerial correspondence and I am confident that he has not ignored my letter—that would be wholly uncharacteristic of him. I hope that his delay in replying is due to his careful and positive consideration of the proposal that I have made: that all Ministers in all Departments be instructed to respond to Members of Parliament in the same way as the Chancellor and Treasury Ministers do.

Such response is necessary because some Ministers are still determined to act as overpaid post boxes. By far the worst of these—I saw him during the Division a few moments ago—is the Secretary of State for Social Security. I have made it clear to him that I do not wish to hear from the agencies to which he forwards my letters against my wishes. I have made it equally clear to the principal culprit, Michael Bichard of the Benefits Agency, that I do not wish to hear from him. Yet both carry on—the one dodging his responsibility to Parliament, the other sending me letters against my will, which I then send back to the Secretary of State, as I have advised him I shall continue to do.

I do not know who is the more arrogant—a Secretary of State who regards himself as above Parliament, or the unaccountable head of a quango who insists on writing to a Member of Parliament when that Member does not wish to receive communications from him.

It so happens that Mr. Bichard is unbelievably inefficient. He is paid £79,000 a year to make decisions affecting the lives of the poorest in our community, and he makes a botch of his job—losing files, making mistakes all the time, taking months to reply and helping to plunge further into despair some of the most desperate and despondent members of society.

Any other Minister would sack Mr. Bichard; so would any private enterprise employer. But this Secretary of State regards him as a convenient receptacle, enabling him to avoid his ministerial responsibilities to Parliament, for which I am sorry to say he appears to have little or no regard. I hope that the Prime Minister will require that Secretary of State and all others like him in the Government to conduct themselves in the democratic manner that the Chancellor and other Ministers are accepting. It may be difficult and strange for the Secretary of State to conduct himself in that manner, but I hope that the Prime Minister will lay down standards for all Ministers.

No doubt from his lofty height the Secretary of State and those like him may regard my stand on this issue as petty and finicky. After all, what does it matter who sends a letter, he may ask. If he does not understand that, he does not understand parliamentary democracy. Democracy in this country will not be destroyed in one blow—our people are too attached to democracy to let that happen—but the erosion of democracy through the erosion of the rights of Parliament is taking place now and emerging in its place is a corporate state. Some 346 years ago Thomas Rainbrough said:

"The poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he."

Parliament is more important than any Member of Parliament, whether he is a Back-Bench Member or a Minister. We all have our day and then pass on.

I have sat in the House for 23 years and, with the consent of my constituents, I hope to sit here for many more. I do not intend to sit here quietly and allow the rights of my constituents to be stolen away from them.

1.16 am

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) for raising this important issue. He speaks for the whole House and it is appropriate that a junior Back Bencher should say thank you to a very senior if recently returned Back Bencher for raising issues that go to the heart of what the House does and what our system is about. I think that we all feel that what might be called arm's-length accountability is beginning to develop in the system. When we try to raise issues we are directed away from Parliament. My right hon. Friend spoke about that in relation to agencies, but it is happening on almost every front.

This week I tried to ask questions about constituents who have been denied hospital treatment, and I was referred to contracts being made by health authorities which have an arm's-length relationship with Ministers. That is happening across the whole spread of Government. Ministers appoint people to bodies that are no longer directly accountable to the House. When we seek to ask questions about the health service or schools we are directed somewhere else, and when we ask about public utilities we are directed to regulators and told that they are concerned with such matters from now on. New bodies are being created to carry out whole tracts of public administration but, increasingly, those bodies have no direct accountability.

By addressing the issue, my right hon. Friend is getting hold of a thread that is beginning to unpick the nature of our system. Something called ministerial responsibility is supposed to define what goes on here, but in so far as Ministers are becoming ever less responsible, the basis of the system is beginning to erode. It is significant that almost everyone who commentates on the British system points to the erosion of accountability of Ministers to Parliament. The system of ministerial responsibility is being transformed into a system of ministerial irresponsibility. That will soon be the way in which the text books will begin to describe what is happening to our system. This week senior figures in the civil service are beginning to talk about fragmentation and the dissolution of accountability in the system.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for raising an issue which I hope we will pursue on other occasions. The issue certainly will not go away; it will become central to what Back Benchers will want to argue about their role here.

1.20 am

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): I welcome this opportunity to put clearly on the record the Government's position on ministerial accountability to Parliament in relation to the agencies that now constitute more than half the civil service.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that the rights of the House were being eroded. The point to make at the outset is that we are not talking of anything new in accountability to Parliament. The next steps programme, establishing executive agencies within government, was launched in 1988. In its first report on the next steps programme, which covered the very subject of this debate, the Treasury Select Committee said:

"We certainly do not advocate abandoning the principle of ministerial accountability, but modifying it so that the Chief Executive who has actually taken the decisions can explain them, in the first instance. In the last resort the Minister will bear the responsibility if things go badly wrong and Parliament will expect him or her to put things right, but the process of Parliamentary accountability should allow issues to be settled at lower levels, wherever possible"

That report reflects clear all-party support, both for the next steps programme and for this approach to handling its operational consequences. Moreover, the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), is on record talking to the Royal Institute of Public Administration in May 1991. He quoted approvingly from the 1968 Fulton report the doctrine that:

"To function effectively, large organisations, including government departments, need a structure in which units and individual members have authority that is clearly defined and responsibilities for which they can be held accountable. There should be recognised methods of assessing their success in achieving specified objectives."

The common ground in the debate is, of course, that parliamentary accountability remains fundamental. There is no question of the Government's washing their hands of that, as the right hon. Gentleman suggested. It is right that Members of Parliament should be able to question Ministers on Government policy. It is also right that Members should be able to follow up the cases of individual constituents. However, the thought behind the creation of agencies is the need to improve and to clarify the way in which that necessary accountability to Parliament is exercised. There is felt to be a need to get a clearer focus at the strategic level and an improvement of accountability at that level. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) is a former lecturer in politics and I think that he understands that point.

Ministers should be responsible to Parliament for the policies pursued by their Departments, for setting the targets and standards to be delivered, for allocating the resources and for ensuring that systems are in place to deliver the policies. The fact is, as I shall demonstrate, that at this level accountability to Parliament has been strengthened.

The trouble with the position taken by the right hon. Member is that he seems to think that accountability is simply a matter of being able to intervene in detailed and day-to-day management issues. That is a mistaken view and I am not breaking any new ground in asserting as much. To quote from a letter sent by Ministers to all Members of Parliament:

"As you know there are continuing calls to avoid excessive centralisation of Government and to stop the growth of the civil service. The way to prevent over-centralisation is to foster a sense of local responsibility and accountability. But all too often we erode the position of local people by referring matters to Whitehall without any compensating reduction in effort locally."

The letter goes on to address the specific issue raised today by the right hon. Member for Gorton—ministerial accountability to Parliament. It says:

"It is essential that we preserve entirely intact our Ministerial responsibility to Parliament. In particular, we fully accept that members will want to raise with Ministers any cases where they feel dissatisfied with the result of inquiries at local level or within independent agencies or which raise general issues of policy and perhaps serious complaints against local administration or conduct. But,

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

confident that this is in the best interest of both Members and their constituents, we do ask you to make initial enquiries at local level in all appropriate cases."

That letter, which sets out the Government's position in the debate so well, was not sent by any of my right hon. Friends. It was a letter sent jointly by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer and the then Secretaries of State for Social Security and Employment in May 1977. In other words, it was sent by a Government of whom the right hon. Gentleman was a distinguished adornment as a Minister of State at the Department of Industry.

It is well-established practice, dating back to a Government of which the right hon. Gentleman was a member, that Members of Parliament should, in their constituents' interests, seek replies at the operational level. The creation of the so-called next steps agencies has clarified the responsibility for providing such replies by publishing details of chief executives' responsibilities in addition to the information that is available to Members of Parliament about local managers. But the accountability of those civil servants is still through Ministers to Parliament. It is still the case that, where an hon. Member is dissatisfied with the reply that he receives from the chief executive, he can raise that with the Minister. While the day-to-day operational responsibility is delegated to the chief executives, Ministers can override their decisions.

We have the necessary arrangements in place for Members of Parliament to pursue individual cases. But the challenge of the present arrangements is to the professionalism of Members of Parliament. As well as looking after individual constituents' cases—which must, of course, be a top priority—the challenge is to be able also to hold the Executive to account at the strategic level. The right hon. Gentleman knows from his time in government that those are the matters which occupy Ministers. The question is, is he ready, as a Back Bencher, to enter the debate at that level?

For all agencies, framework documents are published, setting out aims and objectives, delegations and the specific areas of responsibility of Ministers and chief executives. Nothing like that has been available in the past. Each year Ministers publish the key targets that agencies have to meet—a clear statement of what we want those organisations to achieve. Nothing like that has been published in the past.

Where agencies serve the public, they have published, or will publish, charter standards, giving each individual customer a clear statement of the standard of service that they can expect. Again, nothing like that was published in the past.

In many cases, except where, for understandable reasons, commercial confidentiality or security prevent it, corporate and business plans are published. Again, nothing like that has been published in the past.

We have had the annual review of next steps. We have not had that before. The agencies also publish annual reports and accounts on the same basis as commercial organisations, providing Parliament and the public with the ability to scrutinise performance and the use of public funds.

We have increased the professionalism of management within Government and I hope that I will not be misunderstood if I urge the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Gentleman to redirect the campaign of which the right hon. Gentleman spoke to ensuring that the Mother of Parliaments makes use of all the new information about the operation——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-eight minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 29 January 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Parking (Speaker's Court)

9.34 am

Madam Speaker: I have an announcement to make on a matter of internal administration. The parking of cars in Speaker's Court is by permission of the Speaker. All the available spaces there are allocated. Despite repeated requests not to do so, which have continued now for a matter of months, the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) continues to leave her car in the court, thereby taking someone else's parking space and, by her conduct, causing embarrassment to the servants of the House whose duty it is to enforce the regulations. This situation cannot be allowed to continue and I have given directions that if, after today, the hon. Member leaves her car in Speaker's Court, she will not be allowed to move the vehicle until she has given an undertaking that in future she will make use of the parking facilities available to her elsewhere.

Orders of the Day

Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.35 am

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is with pleasure that I seek to move the Second Reading of the Bill. I hope that the House will not make the mistake of rushing into hasty legislation as a result of the high-profile cases of recent months. Those cases are important, but the genesis of my Bill is events before those cases came to light. The case for my Bill lies in the rights of ordinary citizens to a decent, fair and accurate press. The House has to get right the standards, combined with the freedom, of the press. I hope that today's debate will be the beginning of that process.

The debate about press freedom has a long history. Frank Allaun, a former Member of Parliament, introduced a Bill many years ago. That was followed by Bills introduced by my hon. Friends the Members for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) and for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). Mr. John Browne, who did not retain his seat at the last election, introduced a privacy Bill. All those Bills had an impact.

There have also been two royal commissions—in 1949 and 1977. We have had the first and second Calcutt reports. We had the Press Commission from 1953 to 1991 and the Press Complaints Commission since 1991. Much more recently, I set up my own committee as part of my legislative process, if I can describe it in that way. I thank the many people who were involved in supporting the taking part in the proceedings of the committee and to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who chaired it throughout in his usual able way.

The committee undertook an important process. The results of its deliberations have been fully transcribed and are now available. They make useful and informative reading on the background to the Bill. I suggest that it is helpful to hold such hearings before a Bill begins its Committee stage, or in Committee. I have always been a great supporter of the welcome reform of the special Bill procedure introduced by Norman St. John-Stevas when he was a Member of Parliament.

When a private Member holds hearings before introducing his Bill he takes three weeks out of his own time. Unless we reformed other procedures of the House, it would be a high-risk business to do it through the normal system offered by the House. That is why I did it in the way that I chose. However, it puts an enormous burden on the resources and work load of the Member involved. It is difficult enough to think of the right questions to ask witnesses who appear before a Committee. But when one is worrying whether the next witness will appear, it puts a different meaning on the words "stress of the work load". One starts to wonder where one's priorities are—delivering the people or asking the questions. It is a good system and I commend it, but we ought to make it possible within the structure of the House, without risking the loss of time that it implies, especially for a private Member.

[Mr. Clive Soley]

A number of people have asked me why I have introduced the Bill, and what was my interest in the press, as I have not been involved with it or been a journalist. I have a long history of interest in the subject—going back 10 or 15 years—which came about simply because I was concerned about the erosion of press freedom during the past 10 to 20 years. The House has placed many Acts on the statute book—sometimes unthinkingly—that have had a profound and detrimental effect on press freedom. Yet, at the same time, journalistic standards have collapsed in some parts of the press, although not all, and we now have a serious problem.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): The hon. Gentleman and I were present yesterday at a meeting of the Chartered Institute of Journalists. Does he agree that it is at least commendable that that is one body which not only has a charter of conduct for its members but enforces it?

Mr. Soley: The National Union of Journalists also has a charter, and its ethics council gave evidence to my committee and made the important point that any member of the public can take up a complaint, which can be enforced by disciplinary procedures, against a member of the NUJ. The problem is that those codes of practice are not well known, and hardly anyone either inside or outside the House is aware of them.

May I refer Members to the debate that I initiated when I was fortunate enough to win the ballot on private Members' motions on 27 November 1987 and introduced a similar Bill? Many of the issues of which I gave examples then still trouble me today.

I must make it clear—as I have done several times in the media—that this is not a privacy Bill; nor does it involve any pre-publication censorship. Underlying our debates on the subject is the idea that we should steer clear of legislation that involves such censorship. There is a strong case for putting something right after one gets it wrong, but if one wants to prevent the publication of something, one needs to be clear that, in so doing, one is not preventing good investigative journalism. Frequently we have not dealt with that issue, and although other aspects of the laws that we have passed have been well-intentioned, they have had that side effect.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that, while many hon. Members and people outside say that it is so difficult to draft legislation to decide what is in the public interest and what is invasion of privacy, nations such as Holland, Germany and the United States, among others, all have privacy legislation? If they can draft it, why cannot we?

Mr. Soley: I shall come to that in more detail later, but, briefly, the critical difference between Britain and the countries that the hon. Gentleman has named is that they all have a press freedom law. That is an important issue, and I shall deal with it.

It is often not mentioned that the underlying agenda and thrust of my Bill is designed to raise standards of journalism. The problem is not that there are insufficient laws affecting journalists—in many respects there are too many—but that the standards and ethical codes of some editors and journalists are too low and we must tackle that. People should view my Bill through the eyes of someone who is trying to raise standards. One cannot legislate automatically to raise standards and tell people that, by law, they must behave better. However, one can construct a framework of law that encourages and protects good behaviour. That is an important part of my Bill and it is the agenda for the House on any law. We are always looking for a structure and framework that seeks to achieve the aims of society.

As I have made clear, this is not a privacy Bill, because such legislation has certain problems. First, such a measure would largely, although not entirely, protect the rich and powerful. I have had some involvement in the debate that has been raging for the past few months, and hon. Members must be aware that it has centred on public figures with some power, wealth and influence. Although I would strongly argue that such people have a right to privacy, the question is whether we should pass a law simply to deal with the problems of the rich and powerful. If anything, the balance needs to be weighted slightly the other way.

As public figures, Members of Parliament expect and should get more scrutiny than ordinary people, such as non-Members of Parliament and people in less powerful and influential positions. Although we have rights to privacy, we must expect some intrusions. If we passed a Bill to protect people's privacy at this time, no matter what the intention, it would be seen as a measure to protect the rich and powerful

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): While I am sure that my hon. Friends on the Conservative side would perhaps sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's stated intention of raising standards for the press, rather than with the formal title of the Bill, the concept that you raised——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Member that he is addressing me.

Mr. Hargreaves: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. The concept that a privacy Bill would only protect the rich and famous does not wash. It would also protect other people—for example, modest and unknown people who have been involved in some calamity and then suffer the intrusion of having cameras stuffed under their noses.

Mr. Soley: I well understand that, but the underlying aim of my Bill is to raise standards. In the present climate, a privacy Bill, without counterbalancing freedoms, would be seen as a measure to protect the rich and the powerful. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that such a Bill would protect other people, but that has not been the most frequent complaint from ordinary people who complain to the Press Complaints Commission or to me.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): My hon. Friend has been busy in recent weeks, and we have obviously not been able to see him at the National Heritage Select Committee's sittings into intrusions on privacy. Perhaps the press has given massive publicity to the problems of the royal family, and Mr. Kelvin MacKenzie got enormous publicity last week with his list of Members of Parliament. However, there are members of the Select Committee in the Chamber today who can tell my hon. Friend that we have given the maximum emphasis to the problems of rape victims and people who have been harassed after a bereavement, such as widows of members of the IRA—

people who have been thrust into the limelight through no fault of their own and have suffered great distress. That is the reason why we need a privacy Bill—not to protect the rich and famous who attract the attention of the newspapers.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

The other problem is that if we introduced privacy legislation in Britain, there would be no counterbalancing press freedom or freedom of information Act. That is profoundly important.

Some people would say that we can write protections for the press into the small print of a privacy Bill, but there are a number of problems with that. First, one would be creating a Bill designed with let-out clauses for the press, which would create problems in its own right. Secondly, we need a measure that the courts can adjudicate on, that could act as a balance between the rights and needs for freedom of the press and the rights of individuals.

Let us take the matter one stage further. The problem with many of the privacy legislation proposals is that they would not have prevented the publication of material in recent high-profile cases. For example, the proposal on physical intrusion in the summary of recommendations in Sir David Calcutt's report, which was defined, among other things, as

"placing a surveillance device . . . taking a photograph",

was subject to a let-out clause that would have allowed publication of the tapes of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) and the photographs of the Duchess of York. Paragraph 2 of Sir David's summary includes subsections (b) and (c), which provide two let-out clauses in the public interest—they are exclusion clauses.

We are in danger of talking ourselves into a privacy law that would not prevent the problems posed by the recent high-profile cases, which may or may not address the needs of "small" people, about whom my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) is concerned and which would not guarantee press freedom. I should be happy to consider a privacy Bill if it were counterbalanced by a press freedom or freedom of information Act.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Statffordshire, South): Surely the nub of the matter is deciding what is in the public interest and what is of interest to the public. The two things are not the same.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right; I have made that point on a number of occasions.

Most complaints about the press relate to accuracy. The most recent report of the Press Complaints Commission that I have studied reveals that 66 per cent. of complaints were about that. The interesting thing about the cases that have been forwarded to me is that harassment follows an inaccurate story and is aggravated by that inaccuracy.

A classic example of that is the case of Linda Townley, who gave profoundly effective evidence to my committee, and who received a lot of national coverage. She was the maid at the centre of the story about Princess Anne's letters. The story suggested that she was the thief of those letters. If she had stolen them, one did not need to be too bright a journalist to work out that she knew what was in them and, better still, where they were. The story therefore became doubly attractive because people wanted to get hold of those letters.

The harassment that Linda Townley suffered was largely caused by that inaccurate story. She believes that the problem is that, if one cannot go for libel, which is a heavy weapon to use, one has to put up with the inaccuracies. Mona Shourjabi also put that argument very effectively recently. That is why such people—and there are many—who have suffered from intrusion and harassment have said no to a privacy law and no to Sir David Calcutt's recommendations, but yes to my Bill.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I am exceedingly bothered by my hon. Friend's Bill. How does he define accuracy? One person's perception of fact may be very different from that of another. Some of us consider his Bill a lucrative field for lawyers and a nightmare for editors.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend has asked a question which was, until recently, put to me many times, until people realised that the answer is abundantly clear. I shall come to that issue later.

Another alternative to my Bill is anti-bugging legislation. I should certainly vote for such legislation, but it would not stop the publication of the Camillagate tapes because the transcript was published overseas—by chance, of course, in a Murdoch newspaper—and somehow or other it found its way into similar papers here.

If we had an anti-bugging law, one might be able to stop the publication of a transcript in this country, but once that transcript was published overseas—whether the bugging was done here or somewhere else would be irrelevant—we would then have to have a law to say that we could not publish it here. I do not need to remind the Government of the problems created by "Spycatcher". The Government fell into that exact trap when they chased the publishers all around the world trying to stop the publication of that book in Britain when it had been published in every other country. One cannot sensibly go down that road.

I accept that we should endeavour to make bugging difficult or impossible, but the new offence on bugging recommended in the Calcutt report would not have stopped the bugging of the telephone in the case of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney when that telephone was in someone else's flat. It would not stop papers being able to use the transcript of those telephone conversations, because they could claim the public interest defence. Although I am fully in favour of stopping bugging, legislation is not the answer, because overseas publication of transcripts presents a problem.

I was strongly against the use of the photographs of the Duchess of York. It was not necessary to use them to make the point that dishonest statements were being made about relationships in the royal family. Obviously, the nature of those statements and consequences for our constitution, which is somewhat unusual, but has nevertheless been very successful. I do not doubt that those photographs were used to increase circulation.

It may be fine to bring in a law to restrict the use of photographs taken on people's private property, but how does one stop the publication of photographs when a television crew goes to the door of any hon. Member, asks for a comment and that person closes the door with the words, "No comment"? The television company must get the permission of that hon. Member before using those

[Mr. Soley]

photographs, but are we suggesting that they should be unable to use photographs of that hon. Member coming out of his front door? There are all sorts of traps.

I was as offended as anyone else by the use of some recent photographs, but the most effective legislation would be an effective code that is respected and honoured by journalists and editors. If we had that, we would not need to trouble the House with specific legislation. What to do about the failure of self-regulation is the problem.

Mr. Ashton: Surely it is possible to have a law to prohibit the buying, selling and publishing of such material. No one can stop pictures being taken or a telephone being bugged, but it is the buying, selling and publishing of such material without permission that is the problem. Child pornography is published abroad, but it is not published here because we are allowed to have separate laws.

Mr. Soley: I understand that, and I am not saying that it would be impossible to draft the necessary legislation, but we would be faced with the difficulty of trying to restrict the publication of photographs, tapes or whatever that were published in other countries. Such material is fundamentally different from child pornography because of its political slant—it may relate to the royal family and therefore have constitutional implications. It is not impossible to get round the problem, but it would be profoundly difficult to do it in a way that does not impinge on genuine investigative journalism.

I believe that there is a better case for a tort of harassment, but, again, I emphasise that that must be balanced by legislation guaranteeing press freedom. That is the difficulty we face.

I shall now outline briefly the scope of my Bill. I will take further interventions, but I should be grateful if hon. Members were brief, because I know that many wish to speak. Clause 1 sets up the Independent Press Authority which has two duties: to enforce accuracy and to promote press freedom. The duties and powers of that authority are spelt out in clause 2. It aims to promote high standards, the lack of which is the underlying problem and is top of my agenda. We cannot legislate simply for bad newspapers; we must legislate for all, so that the balance is right.

It is important to stress that many of my proposals would protect good journalists. A photographer came to see me recently and told me that he did not like climbing over people's fences to get photographs, but he admitted, "Frankly, if I don't, I don't get the job." That is the problem. Good journalists and photographers need to be protected against the practices of some editors and others, who are anxious for material at any price.

Clause 2 promotes press freedom. I have already spoken about a possible amendment to it, and, in this regard, I have sought the help of the Government.

My Bill provides a good structure for the way forward. A key element that should be considered for inclusion is a legal defence of press freedom. That would make it easier for the House to enact an anti-bugging law, a law forbidding the photography of private property, and a privacy law. Were such a provision included, the cases in France, Germany and the United States would become more meaningful.

It would be easier for people such as myself to vote for such measures if the law contained a provision on press freedom that could be cited in court. If the Government could come up with something like that, they would profoundly help the cause of press freedom. That would allow the House to legislate on matters such as those suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) on privacy, bugging and photography.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman has said. However, will he explain in a little more detail what the law on press freedom will actually say? What freedoms will be enshrined in it that do not presently exist?

Mr. Soley: The simple route would be to use something similar to article 10 of the European convention on human rights, which was drafted by the British—as were so many other parts of the law around the world—in 1945. I looked to see whether we could include article 10 in the Bill: I do not think that we can merely lift it and place it in the Bill.

There is another argument, about whether we should incorporate all European human rights legislation into British law. There would be problems in doing so, but it would not be beyond the wit of lawyers to include in the Bill a clause similar to article 10. If that could be done, it would provide a good way forward.

As a halfway measure, I have suggested tightening up my clause so that it reads:

"and to promote the fundamental freedom of the press to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas."

That section would replace the words "press freedom" in clause 2(b). That would place a much stronger duty on the organisation to promote press freedom, not just argue for it, which is important. However, that would not be as good as having a legal defence of press freedom.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I understand the hon. Gentleman's arguments about introducing into the Bill, if possible, something on the lines of article 10 of the European convention. However, if he is prepared to do that, would he be prepared to introduce into the Bill article 8, which states that everyone has the right to respect in his private and family life, his home and his correspondence?

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman has missed much of my argument—that was precisely what I was saying. If there were a press freedom law, people such as me would not have a problem with privacy law. My problem—and that of many hon. Members—concerns introducing privacy laws without the counterbalance of legislation on press freedom and freedom of information. It is fine by me if the hon. Gentleman wants to introduce such laws through articles 8 and 10 of the European convention on human rights, but we cannot have one set of laws without the other, particularly if we introduce privacy laws first with no provision for press freedom. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is right, but he must remember that that is precisely what I have just said at some length.

Clause 2 also relates to monopoly. I do not want to spend too much time on that subject, but the monopolistic structure of the press—not just its ownership, but its distribution—poses a problem. Circulation wars rage between competing groups. When the *Daily Mirror* published the photographs of the Duchess of York, *The Sun* suddenly decided that, having sat on the tape of Diana and not used it for about two years for "a principled

reason", that reason no longer applied, mainly because the sales of the *Daily Mirror* had risen by 100,000. The problem with such battles—they also pose problems for the Press Complaints Commission—is that circulation wars take precedence over the ethics of journalism.

The Bill contains a code of conduct, which is profoundly important. A code of conduct in a high-status, lay-dominated organisation of the sort that the Bill sets up would have more effect than the present one, which is unbelievable. The status of that organisation is important. Examples showing how well it can work can be found in the electronic media.

Clause 2(1)(g) and (h) refer to Parliament's influence. We should debate the subject more frequently in the House. Press freedom is too important to be debated only occasionally.

Clause 3 relates to the power to enforce accuracy, and marks the basis of my assumptions. If people understood my assumptions, many of their arguments would fade away. One of my great disappointments is that editors will not say what I am about to say: citizens have a right—I mean a right—to expect their news to be reported accurately.

There is no such thing as inaccurate news; there is only disinformation. If that were disseminated by Pravda, we should rightly be furious—and we were. If such action is taken by our papers, we should be equally furious. Inaccuracy is a contradiction of press freedom; it is the other side of the coin of press freedom. If one makes that assumption, many of the other arguments fade into irrelevance.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that some of the disputes within the press—both regional and national—over the past few years have undermined the drive towards accuracy by forcing experienced journalists out of jobs in favour of cheap, inefficient and untrained journalists, in order to bring down costs and, with them, standards?

Mr. Soley: Much of what the hon. Gentleman says is contained within the duties of the new Independent Press Authority. That organisation has a duty to look at the training and ethics of journalism. Another problem is that there are relatively few schools of journalism in Britain, and within them the standards and teaching of ethics is minimal. I am not saying that a wonderful ethics code exists that can always be applied, but any journalist should always ask himself questions about the ethics of what he is doing.

Journalism is one of the trades where one does not need to be trained in a specific way of behaviour, but must keep asking oneself, "Am I invading someone's privacy, am I doing my job properly and for a good reason, or merely to sell papers?"

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I think that the House will want to pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for the work that he has done in preparation for his speech. Surely, freedom is the right to be wrong. If something that I say turns out to be wrong, I should correct it, but I should not be required to prove everything that I say before I make a contribution. In that context, the press have a far harder job than Members of Parliament.

Mr. Soley: One reason that I have drafted the Bill as tightly as I have—many legal experts agree that it is tightly drafted—is that I deliberately wanted to stress that we should not comment on opinion. I have proposed dropping the section on impartiality, as I see that it would cause difficulties, such as those currently faced by the BBC and ITV. That subject is not contained in the Bill, only in the long title which is set down earlier.

One can still hold an opinion and express it, but if one makes a factual inaccuracy, one must set it right. The Bill does not involve pre-publication censorship. One can publish whatever one likes, but if one gets it wrong, one has to put it right. People get things wrong for many reasons, often well-intentioned reasons.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): My hon. Friend has been saying that journalists should have standards, should not intrude and should adopt a decent moral code. The problem is that perfectly decent journalists who want to do good work have to take jobs with rotten employers. If a journalist is told that he has to get the news story and find dirt on the Labour party—as is frequently the case—the journalist either has to maintain his high standards and not be employed or do the dirty work. How will my hon. Friend's Bill provide a safeguard so that journalists can maintain the decent standards that they were taught during their training?

Mr. Soley: The organisation in my Bill has a duty to report on, research and recommend on journalistic standards, including training, ethics and the practices of the employers, including the editor. There is no reason why that should not be done. However, the organisation should not enforce, which is why I have not given it the power to do so. The Bill contains only one statutory power: to correct inaccuracy. That is important as standards can be raised in other ways.

My hon. Friend's intervention was helpful in another respect. I recently saw a press release from News International stating that *The Sun* and others were now going to enforce the Press Complaints Commission code. Any employee who breached the code would be fired. I am looking forward to Kelvin MacKenzie giving himself notice.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I ask my hon. Friend to extend his arguments with regard to the intervention from the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). The hon. Member said that there should be a freedom to be wrong, and then my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) went on about accuracy, with which I agree completely. The other consequence of this—it is an argument much used by the hon. Member for Eltham—is the harm it creates. Surely it cannot be right for journalists to be free to create harm.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend puts the point very powerfully. That point has been in my mind recently, but I had not yet made it, so I am grateful to him.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) argued that there is a straightforward difference between factual information on the one hand and information on the other. Surely, there is a third category—interpretation. In the case of the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales, journalists were interpreting the information they had, and then the heavens opened and they were damned for doing so. It then turned out that they were accurate.

Mr. Soley: I do not think that that is the problem which the hon. Member for Eltham fears. I have made it clear that if one is printing something which one believes to be accurate at the time but which turns out to be inaccurate because someone else has been lying, covering up, or whatever, one corrects it at the time it comes out. If it is the other way round—if one publishes something which one believes to be accurate—that is all one needs to do.

In other words, if a paper wants to print a story in which I say something that they think is daft, wrong or dishonest but is newsworthy, it does so. It is for me to take the flak if I am wrong. It is the same thing to give me that flak if I got it wrong. I shall come back to the royal family in due course because it is an important point.

Let me put it this way. I use the example of a criminal who is managing to fool a journalist who believes, rightly, that the person is indulging in criminal behaviour. Let us say that the journalist must correct an inaccuracy which later turns out to be right—perhaps when the criminal goes to court, the case is found to be proved. Are we really saying that that criminals should be convicted on inaccuracies? On the other hand, if a newspaper turns out to be accurate at the end of the road, is not that part of the evidence?

The job of the newspaper is to report accurately what it judges to be news. If the news turns out to be inaccurate for reasons other than the newspaper's reporting, that is when the newspaper corrects it. That is when newspaper says, in great big headlines: "We told you so. We told you that Clive Soley was doing a cover-up". That is how it should work, and it is how it works in other democracies. There is no problem with it.

If I may make a bit more progress on this, I was about to move on to clause 4—the power of enforcement. Under clause 4, a press complaints adviser is appointed. A press complaints adviser is important because of some of the failures of the present Press Complaints Commission. Complaints are taken only in writing; there are no oral hearings. Some of the complaints that I have heard are that the way in which the Press Complaints Commission reformulates complaints does not cover the points which the complainants were making. There are no oral hearings in which the complainants can put their views. In other words, there is no one to help the complainants, although that help is clearly important.

The Bill contains a more flexible time span than exists under the present code of the Press Complaints Commission. The time limit is one month, although that can be extended in certain circumstances. In the Bill, I also rule out trivial and vexatious complaints. One of the arguments used earlier in the debate is that it will be inundated with letters from the green ink brigade. Frankly, Members of Parliament are inundated from time to time by those letters. Most of us are capable of dealing with them without too much trouble. If we can deal with them, I do not see why another body cannot deal with it. The Bill provides the body with the ability to exclude vexatious and trivial complaints. Once again, it is not a problem. I have said that the code of conduct is important.

Clause 5 deals with adjudication. The press complaints adviser will hear both sides of the argument. Clause 6 sets out the powers of the adviser, which may also be a conciliatory role. The House should remember that most complaints will be resolved between the editor and the complainant, as happens now. Most complaints continue in that way. A minority of complaints in which there is a major problem go on. In such cases, there should be, and often will be, a rate agreed by conciliation. Cases will only need to go to the much further extent, which I shall come to in a moment, in other circumstances.

There is only one schedule in the Bill. Paragraph 1 appoints the Independent Press Authority. Many people have told me that article 1 troubles them. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is worried about it. Editors are worried about it; they panicked like mad. My Bill provides that the Home Secretary will make the appointments. I know that there is some anxiety about that.

Such a system of appointment has worked well for the regulated electronic media, television and radio, for 40, 50 or 60 years. No one goes around the world saying that ITV, the BBC and so on are not free, are grossly inaccurate, do not have a decent code of behaviour and do not do good investigative journalism. The electronic media are regulated, and they perform well. The system in the Bill is the same.

Having said that, I have proposed two amendments which might be worth while. I should like hon. Members to address the issue if they feel strongly about it. In Calcutt's first report, he suggested—Louis Blom-Cooper and others have suggested it as well—that an appointments commission be set up by the Secretary of State, which would then appoint the members. One could say that it is at arm's length. I have suggested a slightly more radical approach, which could incorporate that proposal. I commend it to the House, and I should welcome views on it.

There is a strong case for saying that the relevant Select Committee—probably the Select Committee on National Heritage—should have the power to veto appointments. That is not only an additional safeguard, but a traditional British method of the legislature checking the Executive. It also gives more power to the Select Committee and Back Benchers. I have always argued—indeed, many hon. Members on both sides of the House have also argued—that that is something which we need to do in the House, because in some respects Back Benchers have lost the powers they had in the 19th century. It is an interesting way forward. I should welcome comments on that proposed amendment.

I want to turn to some of the arguments that have been used against the Bill. Let me deal first with the argument raised in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow. His argument is the one that was used constantly during the first few weeks of my campaign on the matter by the editors all round the country. The editors then dropped the argument. They said that one cannot define accuracy: one man's accuracy is another man's opinion. One cannot adjudicate on the matter.

I picked up the Press Complaints Commission's code, which was drawn up by the editors. Clause 1 relates to accuracy. One should notice the importance and the status of it: "You will report accurately. You will put it right if you get it wrong." Who adjudicates on that? The Press Complaints Commission adjudicates on it. The argument is not and never has been that one cannot have accuracy or adjudicate on it.

The argument—this is why the editors dropped their opposition—is who should adjudicate. The editors want to be the judge and jury in their own cases. I am saying, as one who is strongly in favour of regulated bodies, that it

is a profound mistake to sit in judgment on oneself, because even if one gets it right, one will not be believed. That is the problem, and that is why it is so powerful.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I have great sympathy for what the hon. Gentleman is saying. In approaching the whole issue, he seems to see the whole question of news reporting in black and white terms. The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) was right to say that there is a grey area, especially with regard to interpretation. I spent 19 years in the parliamentary Press Gallery and in the Lobby of the House. As we all know, that is an area in political journalism where one deals with facts. In the Lobby, one is sometimes dealing with something else which cannot be proved, whether it relates to facts or not. That matter will provide great difficulties, especially on the point of correction.

Mr. Soley: Someone muttered that it was a rumour. I shall answer in a different way. The BBC and ITV do not have that problem, but their investigative journalism is better than that of the press. Secondly, newspaper editors say that it can be done under the PCC code, but the hon. Gentleman says that it can not. He is really saying, as are the editors, "We want to judge it, please. Let us judge ourselves." It is as if the House said, "We shall have elections but MPs will elect themselves"—*[Interruption.]* I should not give the House ideas; it could be dangerous.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): As my hon. Friend has rightly said, newspaper editors and most journalists strongly oppose self-regulation for everyone else. When self-regulation is mentioned in respect of any other area of our national life, journalists, and newspaper editors in particular, are rightly derisory about it. They are in favour of independent regulation for others and opposed to it for themselves.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is right. The point was powerfully made in my committee. I read a powerful editorial in *The Guardian*—it often has good editorials—which said that self-regulation in the City had not worked and needed to be independent. Two weeks later, it came out against my form of regulation for the press. That suggests that people have not fully thought through the arguments.

The next argument, which I am pleased to say is not much used now, is that people do not have a right to accuracy. One or two editors told me that, and they were really saying that it did not matter if they got it wrong. The citizen has a right to expect his news to be accurate. The argument against that, more than any other, ignores the damage caused to people's lives. I have many cases of people who were deeply hurt and are fearful of the press. That is sad news for journalism, and I do not get any joy from saying it.

The next argument is that the Press Complaints Commission is all right, is doing a good job, and should be left alone. However, it has a credibility problem. Just about everyone—including the Government, to judge from the statement by the Secretary of State, and Sir David Calcutt—agrees with me on that. It has only reluctantly accepted a lay majority, but I am sorry to say that that majority will not be of the people who are necessary to adjudicate. I am also worried about so many editors being on that board. I am in favour of working journalists being on such a body, and for my committee I suggest working journalists. I have no objections to one or two editors serving on it, but there are far too many editors and senior executives from the newspaper industry on the PCC.

The PCC has been far too reluctant to take third-party complaints, although it has told me that it is now willing to take them more openly, and that is a move in the right direction. The concept of the third-party complaint is interesting, because it contradicts my belief in the rights of the citizen.

I shall give the example of Mr. and Mrs. McKeever from Northern Ireland. I shall endeavour to make the Bill cover Northern Ireland, because two Northern Ireland cases were used in committee. Mr. and Mrs. McKeever are a classic example of the citizen's rights. They read in a tabloid newspaper that there was to be a cure within one year for the form of muscular dystrophy that their son had. Their son would be in a wheelchair by the age of 10 or 11 and probably dead in his early 20s.

I have not gone into the background of how the story was written, but I guarantee that it was not malicious. I am sure that it was well intentioned, but it was wrong. The professor concerned strongly objected to the use of the story, saying that it was right in other newspapers. The McKeevers read the story and believed it, and for three days their hopes were dramatically raised. That is an example of what I have said about people being hurt by the right to be wrong. Those people believed that their son would be saved, but three days later their hopes were dashed.

Hon. Members who served on my committee will remember the depth of feeling of those two people. All they wanted was for the newspapers to get it right, and that is what many other people want. I am sure that the story was a genuine mistake, and the problem may have arisen because of sloppy journalism or sloppy sub-editing. The story had good intentions, but it was wrong, and that had a profound and dramatic effect on those people. That is why I say that the citizen has a right to expect news to be accurately reported.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): The House has some difficulty with the concept of the word "accuracy", and there is plainly some disagreement about how much it can be applied. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the words "truth" and "untruth" should be used a little more in the debate?

Mr. Soley: I have no objection to that, but for a number of reasons the word "accuracy" is better. The press accepts that it can be achieved, and another example of accuracy is to be found with the Advertising Standards Authority. Hon. Members with long memories will recall that, when that authority was given power to go to court to enforce accuracy, the arguments that are now used by the press were used then. It was said, "You can't get accuracy in an advert. What about the jokey ones? It is opinion." However, there have been no problems, and only three cases have gone to court for final adjudication. That would have applied under the Bill, and such a provision also protects editors. The important issue is that such cases are in a minority, and the back-up of natural justice is there if it is needed. It has been done before, it is proven and it works. Let us do it for the sake of the people that I have described.

[Mr. Soley]

I have described other problems with the PCC. It rephrases complaints, interviews are not oral and it is dominated by the impact of the circulation war, which means that, when they are adjudicating, editors and others have one eye on circulation and the other on the ethnics of journalism, and the latter tends to lose out over the former. A powerful point emerged in a recent example. The press reported that there were problems in the marriage of Prince Charles and Princess Diana. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) spoke about that. People were asking, how did the press know that the stories were true? The press had no problem in reporting the story and, as I have said from the beginning, there was a legitimate case for reporting it, because it does have an impact on the constitution.

There were many arguments about the way in which that story was reported, but there is no doubt that there was a case for reporting it. It emerged that a couple of editors and journalists were in the know because they were being taken into the confidence of the two members of the royal family who were involved. The interesting point about the case is that the editors, or one of them, told Lord McGregor of Durris, the chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, who made a great burst of it, holding forth rather along the lines of my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool and saying, "Ah well, the press is vindicated."

What happened, of course, is that not only did the truth come out in the way that I have described in response to an intervention, but Lord McGregor joined the cover-up. That troubles me deeply, and it should trouble everyone. I can understand an editor or a journalist protecting his sources, but it is incorrect for the chairman of the PCC, the body in which we are supposed to have confidence and which is there to protect the public, to join in the cover-up and say, "We will not tell you, either."

There has been much nonsense from *The Sun* and other newspapers which say, "We are here to tell you the truth." They are covering up, and they are joined by the Press Complaints Commission. That is unacceptable. There was a so-called attack on the Establishment by *The Sun*, but that newspaper is involved in nonsense, and to pretend that it is attacking the Establishment is, I am afraid, a dream in the mind of Kelvin MacKenzie.

The PCC adjudicates on a tiny percentage, about 3 per cent., of all cases that come before it. I do not want to attach too much weight to that, although it is important. I do not think that many complaints go to the PCC anyway, because until recently no one knew that it existed.

Mr. Ashton: It is a waste of time.

Mr. Soley: That is one of the sad features.

Others say that the recommendations of the Calcutt report and privacy would be better. I have dealt with privacy, and I shall deal now with the problems that I find with the Calcutt report. There are profound dangers. If there is a code of conduct that provides that heavy fines can be imposed for any breach, it will act on good journalists as the law of libel acts on them now. The good journalist is looking over his shoulder at the law of libel. If there is a code of conduct with 40 or 60 clauses, that journalist will be worried about the imposition of heavy fines as a result of each and every provision. That would be a profoundly dangerous mistake. That makes the case for focusing on one statutory power that bears on accuracy and to raise standards by that method.

Paragraph 7.6 of the Calcutt report deals with the new concept of physical intrusion. The paragraph deals with why only journalists should be caught by the provision, not editors. The second sentence of the paragraph reads:

> "The Privacy Committee considered this point . . . but concluded that the case had yet to be made for an additional offence of publication."

The following words should trouble hon. Members:

> "Further, any editor or proprietor could, if circumstances warranted it, be charged as an accessory or with conspiracy."

If we put editors in the dock on conspiracy and other such charges when there may be a real debate about press freedom, we shall set out on a dangerous road. It is far better to have a code that is respected. If we have a code with sufficient body behind it to ensure that it is respected and has status—it has worked with the electronic media without inhibiting their freedoms—we shall embark on a much safer road. That is the proven way forward.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): The hon. Gentleman will be aware of my strong agreement with much of what he has said. I recognise the work that he has done on this important issue. If we are talking about a code that will be respected and his proposals being respected, does he accept that they will be respected by the best journalists, of whom we have many? There will always be some journalists, however, and some newspapers, that will say, "We are only in business to sell newspapers. We are not bothered about standards or the law. We shall drive a coach and horses through anything."

Mr. Soley: I understand that argument. The same argument applies, however, to many minor radio stations, most of which achieve high standards. They do so because there is an independent regulatory body. Those stations are involved also in a circulation battle, but they stay within their code most of the time. Against that background, I am reasonably optimistic. If the Bill were amended on the basis of press freedom, and if the hon. Gentleman and others then discovered that my system did not work, we could introduce legislation of the sort that other hon. Members wish to see on the statute book. That is the way forward. I suggest that that approach meets the anxieties that have been expressed.

Some say that statutory regulation is dangerous. I have dealt with the argument that accuracy is the other side, as it were, of press freedom. I have dealt also with the argument that that applies already to the BBC and ITV.

It is important to understand that the press is already heavily regulated. Those who argue against press regulation are ignoring the fact that it is the subject of regulations. My argument—this may seem strange to some—is that the press is over-regulated. But it is over-regulated in the wrong way. The present regulations prevent good investigative journalism, but do nothing to stop the abuses that we have all been worried about. Surely that is evidence enough that we have got it wrong and that we need to get it right. That is the purpose of the Bill.

The press has been the subject of regulation—some of them favoured it—since the 1880s. For example, it was given exemptions in certain libel proceedings. It was able to report Select Committees in the 19th century. It was free from the risk of libel in certain circumstances. It has protections in copyright legislation and in the law that

applies to the rehabilitation of offenders. It has protection in the covering of elections. These are positive freedoms for the press. They are positive regulations.

On the other hand, there are negative regulations, as the press sees it. There are problems with contempt of court legislation, libel laws, official secrets legislation and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The press is concerned about the power that the law provides to confiscate journalists' photographs and some of the terms of prevention of terrorism legislation.

In other words, we are regulating the press right across the board. We have been doing that day in and day out in this place, especially for the past 10 or 15 years. In doing so, we have eroded press freedom. We have undermined good investigative journalism and we have allowed bad journalism to flourish. We have got things wrong and we need to turn them round. The argument is not to regulate because we do so massively already. Instead, we must consider how to regulate and for what purpose. I seek to regulate for accuracy, higher standards and press freedom. Surely there cannot be a better approach than that.

Mr. Fabricant: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if there were freedon of information laws, the scandal involving Robert Maxwell, which was known to many journalists for four or five years before he died, would have been exposed? Gagging writs prevented the scandal from being exposed.

Mr. Soley: It would be a much easier approach to reform libel laws. Some say that we should make legal aid available in libel cases. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the law of libel and other legal devices prevented Maxwell from being investigated. That being so, to extend the law of libel would be the worst possible way to discipline the press. We need instead dramatically to reform our libel laws. In doing so, we must include within them correction of inaccuracy provisions.

There were many punitive settlements against newspapers a year or two ago. I cheered along with everyone else because they got their just deserts. Deep inside me, however, a little voice said, "This is a bad way to regulate the press, because it will be used against it in due course." Editors seem, sadly, to be blind to these arguments, while journalists are often not so blind. If we had correction of inaccuracy legislation, libel actions would not be the first step for many people, and financial settlements would come in lower figures. If a correction is published, there is less need or desire for a jury to say, "Half a million pounds in settlement." That is extremely important. In that way we could head off libel actions.

Many people have said to me, "I don't want a money settlement. I want a correction. Please can I have a correction quickly? I do not want to wait one or two years before it is printed in the newspaper. I want the matter to be dealt with quickly." In my view, that is their right.

Some say that what I propose is the thin end of the wedge. That is a strange argument to advance when there is all the regulatory law that I have described. Instead, we have the thick end of the wedge. The problem is how to turn things round. The regulatory body that I am describing would do just that. It would be necessary to introduce other legislation. We would not be able to pin things on to the system that I have described as though it were a Christmas tree.

There is something of a vacuum when it comes to the Government's policy on regulation. I do not intend to be offensive, and the Minister knows of my concern about these matters. The Government have said that self-regulation has failed, so what do we put in its place? The Minister has acknowledged that there is a problem. I suggest that the special form of regulation that I am suggesting—it would be similar to that which we use in the electronic media, which is so successful—is the way forward. We might, of course, want to change some parts of it. It has worked well, however, in giving us broadcasting media that are among the best in the world. Why are we so worried?

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): The media were the best in the world until the Broadcasting Act 1990.

Mr. Soley: I know that my hon. Friend is worried about that Act, and I share some of his concerns. If we take a long-term view, however, things have gone well.

It is right that the royal family and others need protection. It is——

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): The hon. Gentleman has several times used the analogy of the broadcasting media, which are regulated. As he has rightly said, they have established high standards. Surely the fundamental difference between the press and the broadcasting media is that the media have to be licensed or franchised because the airwaves have to be rationed. Therefore, there is a considerable sanction on the broadcasting media. If they establish a reputation for consistent inaccuracy or irresponsible behaviour, they risk the non-renewal of their franchise. If they lose that, they will be out of business.

The hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that the commission that would be established if his Bill were enacted would have the ability to withdraw the franchise of a newspaper and so put it out of business. It is—*[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members might think that that is a desirable prospect, but that is not seriously on offer. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be impossible to reproduce the sanctions that exist against the broadcasting media within the context of the Bill?

Mr. Soley: I understand the argument. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that regulation is about the withdrawal of a licence at the end of the day, but that is not what happens. He will remember the interview of the investigative journalists. They were asked by my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) why the BBC and the ITV were better than the press. One of them had worked as a freelance press investigative journalist, and before that he had worked for television. He gave an answer to the effect that there was a culture of accuracy in the broadcasting world. That is the difference. Although it is right that the regulatory body could not withdraw a licence—I would not want to go down that road—it could go to court on the question of accuracy.

That power improved the general performance of advertising and made British advertising much better. Indeed, it is now among the best in the world. It is more accurate because of the power to go to court. Advertisers say, "We cannot afford to make mistakes, so let's check it again." Unfortunately, that does not happen in the press.

We must remember the rights of people in public life. A number of countries make it clear that Members of

[Mr. Soley]

Parliament and royal families, for example, have less right to privacy. I accept that, but the people concerned have the right to expect the reporting to be accurate. I have a letter from a Mrs. Kibel, who took on the *Sunday Express*. She sent me a rather nice quote about the Queen's feelings about Diana and the royal family. It referred to a discussion in the palace on that matter and said:

"The discussion cleared the air and Diana left feeling that the Queen, who has always made her feel nervous, was understanding and comforting."

The article then directly quoted the Queen as saying to Diana:

"The whole family holds you in the highest esteem, so don't worry."

What happened is obvious—the journalist picked up the telephone and said, "Can I have the Queen please?" He then said to the Queen, "Is it right that you said, 'Don't worry Diana, we all like you.'?" The Queen then said, "Yes, that's it, you've got it." Alternatively, the journalist might have rung the press office at the palace, which said, "I've got a quote here from the Queen, who says . . ."

The number of times that people are directly quoted when there has been no such quotation is horrendous. We heard a great deal about that at the Select Committee.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Did the hon. Gentleman ever think that the simple explanation might be that the journalist was bugging the Queen's conversations?

Mr. Soley: I had not thought of that. Inventive quotes such as that are really too much.

A MORI poll in 1992 showed that lack of confidence in the press and dislike of its practices were widespread. It is sad that people have such a poor regard for journalists. It is a great profession, of which we should be able to be proud. It is a pity that journalism is being besmirched by some practices.

I have many letters about the issue, but I shall quote from just two more. One woman wrote:

"I must add that because of the distress caused to my family and myself I am not prepared to have this case made public . . . writing this has once again opened up a festering wound. You know after four years I still can't come to terms with the fact that although I was guilty of nothing I have had to fight to clear my name and in the meantime lost nearly everything I cared about."

She had lost her job and her home.

Another letter was from a father writing on behalf of his daughter. He said:

"It would not take much for the ratpack to turn and rend her . . . so she feels that she is not justified in running the risk of drawing fire on herself and even more so on her family . . . So there we have it. The tabloids seem bound to win because in the end they can make life unacceptably unpleasant for those who displease them and—more to the point—those people's families."

I could quote and requote those sentiments from many, many letters. The House must act and bring about a balance between freedom and responsibility.

I am pleased to say that I have been told by a variety of people that matters will improve, and that everything is looking up now.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I was told that as well.

Mr. Soley: That is very likely.

I do not like the bully-boy image of some of the press. Most of the press is good, some of it is appalling—and it is that small part that causes the bully-boy image. I was pleased to see a report in a newspaper recently that Kelvin MacKenzie editor of *The Sun*, had said, "We are now going to report the news accurately . He used the word "now". It is the first recorded case of a man who has been asked, "When did you stop beating your wife?" replying, "A few moments ago." But I have this horrible feeling that he is going to start beating her again.

What annoys me is the talk about disciplining journalists who breach the code, yet those editors have been breaching the code for years. Who is going to sack them? Will Mr. Murdoch come over here and sack them? There is a curious relationship between people like Mr. Murdoch and Mr. MacKenzie, who have a curious attitude that is a combination of being both prude and crude. That is very dangerous and damaging, and it makes us wonder what on earth is the underlying morality and code of such people if it is not just to make money out of circulation. It is a matter for them, in which I do not want to become involved, but if everyone else is fair game for journalism, perhaps they should be fair game, too.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Gentleman is introducing his Bill with good humour and good sense. May I take him back to the difficult question of the failure of the media to expose Maxwell? Could he explain how he thinks his Bill would help to overcome such a failure?

Mr. Soley: I shall do so; it is precisely the point that I have been putting for many years in the House.

We must change the libel and other laws that restrict investigative journalism. That must be done in the context of freedom of the press or freedom of information legislation that will allow investigative journalism, while also raising the standards. It is not a quick fix. We cannot rush an Act through the House to solve the problem. The law should have allowed the investigative journalists who knew about Maxwell to expose him. My proposed body could recommend how that should be done. Under the way that I have structured the Bill, it could take its time working out the sort of legislation that we need, and advise the House accordingly.

I want to make one further comment on the nature of the press during recent months. I am deeply disturbed, as the House should be, by the hidden threat. Some 250 Members of Parliament have been under the threat of Miss Whiplash. Everyone has something to hide; no one is pure and clean. I am not worried about sexual morality provided that it does not affect those who do not consent. However, when that is used as a weapon of warning, whether against Members of Parliament or anyone else, the press is taking on not just the Government, but Parliament.

When the issue began to grow in importance just before Christmas, senior members of the press said to me, "We are going to go nuclear on the Government if they support Calcutt or your Bill." I said, "Go nuclear if you like, but at the end of the day citizens have rights. We need a free press and we are going to have it."

When I presented the Mona Shourjabi case, the following day the *Daily Mail*, in a ridiculous piece of journalism, attacked her in a vitriolic article based on the assumption that she was supporting privacy. The reason that I introduced her was that she was so good at warning against privacy. I decided to check whether the BBC had

used the word "privacy" on its "Today" programme when it interviewed her. It had not used that word, but I was immediately told, "Oh, you're ringing about that story. *The Sun* has already been on to us to ask us why we gave her such a soft time."

The Sun did not think that the story was important enough to print, but certainly thought it important enough to ring the BBC and try to strongarm it into being tougher the next time.

It is troubling to see the press working like that. It is worried less about reporting the news than influencing it. A number of people around the country have published editorials about me and my Bill. The Guild of British Newspaper Editors has written to hon. Members saying that my arguments do not stand up. I shall leave hon. Members to judge that for themselves as best they can.

In some cases, both the guild and newspaper editors said that I would not release details of the cases that came to me as a result of a letter that I had published in most local papers. Some refused to publish it, but the majority did. The purpose of that letter, which I sent out last August, was not to measure the level of content or discontent. I have made that plain a number of times, although the guild and some editors appear to believe that that was its purpose. If that were so, I would not have submitted that letter in August, when most people were on holiday and not reading newspapers.

That letter was designed to produce new cases, which I needed to inform the process of my Bill. There is no dispute that, at a meeting, I said that I would try to find a way of letting a guild representative examine those letters, subject to confidentiality. That was a genuine offer, because I like the open government bit and wanted the guild to see those letters. However, when we returned to my office and read through them, I found statements of confidentiality of the kind that I have already read to the House.

We then drew up a table for the editors and sent them that instead. Still they objected, saying that they wanted to see the letters. Rather more worrying was that they wanted the name of the newspaper, the date and the type of case—which information would of course serve as an identifier. I felt that the best that I could do was to write to everyone who had written to me asking whether he or she would be prepared to put their case to the newspaper—but stating that if they were worried about the consequences, they need not bother. That was all that I could do in the circumstances. I may add that newspapers are much tougher about protecting their sources than I ever was in that example, which I give because a number of hon. Members wrote to me on that subject.

Bad newspapers have no culture of accuracy and no respect for customers. When I complained recently to the *Daily Mail* about its treatment of Mona Shourjabi, I was horrified to find myself speaking to someone who exploded with anger when I asked if she had read the article. She seemed to think that I should automatically know that in her position as deputy editor, she had read it and was familiar with it. I thought to myself, "If she treats me—a Member of Parliament—like that, how on earth does she treat an ordinary citizen?" There is no recognition of the importance of the customer.

Bad newspapers do not run correction columns or make a friendly response to the public—although, to be fair to the *Daily Mail*, it came back to me in a very friendly manner after about an hour saying that yes, it had got it wrong and was very apologetic. From that moment on, I was dealt with most fairly and a correction was published. That correction was for me, but I do not know whether a correction for Mona Shourjabi was published—and I know that she wrote.

Bad newspapers do not publish a statement of aims or publicise the existence of the Press Complaints Commission, although that has been done more often recently. Some local newspapers, to their credit, do all those things. Local newspapers are often better in that respect because they are closer to their communities. Everyone should observe those practices.

My Bill allows for some negotiation on where a correction appears in a newspaper. I should be happy for such items to appear in a corrections column, and my Bill would allow that. Why do not newspapers publish correction columns? A simple correction is what people want to read. That is a simple way forward. I suggest that my Bill is the way forward for the Government, the House and the country.

Some editors have said that I am more interested in regulating the press than in press freedom. I remember issuing press statements during the progress of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the prevention of terrorism Act, for which I sat on the Labour Front Bench, and a number of other Bills, stating that, if the legislation went through in its present form, it would lead to journalists appearing in court. Sure enough, under the prevention of terrorism Act, Channel 4's Box Productions appeared in court only last year. I warned of that six years ago, but to the best of my knowledge, not one newspaper responded to or pursued my press release.

In the case of PACE, I warned of the danger of the police having confiscatory powers in respect of photographs, because that would put photographers at risk when they covered inner-city riots and so on. Again, little attention was paid to that warning, with one or two honourable exceptions—particularly a newspaper in Bristol that was affected.

My record of defending press freedom in the House is much better than that of the editors who did not even bother to publish my press release. More importantly, they attack those who express dissent. I have not yet dealt with the reason for my initial involvement in this subject, although I have mentioned it often enough outside the House. I am an ex-probation officer, and I knew in the 1970s and early 1980s that policing in his country was going off the rails. I knew that bad practices were creeping into policing, and I said so, as did others.

I knew that the Birmingham Six convictions were wrong. I was one of those who took groups of people to see the then Home Secretary about that case. I am the ex-probation officer for one of the defendants in the Guildford Four. Initially, I believed that she was guilty, because she said, "I suppose that I must have done it." I still remember her saying that to me. We now know the way that she was dealt with in the early stages—of the treatment that she received after her arrest. We know also —this became increasingly apparent to me the more that I looked at her case—that she could not possibly be guilty. We made the same discovery in respect of the Broadwater Farm case.

In those instances, I did not witness good investigative journalism that opened up the problem of this country's criminal justice system going off the rails, but the wrong people being sent to prison while the guilty went free, and

[Mr. Soley]

I saw that our criminal justice system had failed and failed badly. What an opportunity those cases presented for good investigative journalism.

I make no complaint about the press not pursuing such cases, for whatever reason, but I make every complaint about the press turning on the families and friends of the individuals concerned for protesting their innocence. They were presented in the press as either anti-police or pro-IRA. That is what was so wrong and so damaging. When people tell me that the press has the freedom to get it wrong, I reply that it has no freedom to present dissenting minority groups, who are vulnerable enough already, in a way that is inaccurate and leads to their being pilloried. The press has no right to do that, for that is profoundly dangerous to our democratic structure.

Today, we have an opportunity to put in place the structure of a Bill that would give our citizens the right that they deserve—the right to accurate news reporting which could improve the standard of journalism in this country and could protect something that we all need and which does not belong to editors or to Members of Parliament but to every British citizen, everywhere—the freedom of the press.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the next speaker, may I say that it is clear that there is great interest in the Bill. Many hon. Members have signified their wish to speak, and I hope that those who catch my eye early will remember that.

10.56 am

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I start by declaring an interest as a member of the National Union of Journalists, which supports the campaign for press and broadcasting freedom and is a supporter of the Bill.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on his success in the ballot and on the way in which he prepared the ground for the debate and his meticulousness in collating evidence. I am only sorry that I was unable—for reasons of which the hon. Gentleman is aware—to take part in that exercise. Above all, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on generating a debate on a subject of considerable interest, not only to right hon. and hon. Members but to those outside the House. The debate is really about a Bill which is about and for ordinary people.

If there is a Division, I shall support the Bill in the Lobby, though I shall describe certain reservations that I have about its drafting. However, it is most important that the Bill receives a Second Reading and is considered in Committee and has further chances of a wider and deeper debate.

We are dealing with two needs. First and foremost, there is need for a free press in a free society—for the freedom of a free press to question the Establishment and people in any position of power. I refer to the sort of freedom without which Goverments become extremely dangerous, as has happened in other parts of the world.

The freedom of the United Kingdom press is of immense value to ordinary people and to our democratic process. However, that freedom must be exercised responsibly, and that has gone wrong in recent years and must now be addressed. We must get that train firmly back on the rails, for the alternative is that those who want to gag the press, for a variety of reasons—many of them malevolent—will win the day.

The second need that we must consider—a need with which the Bill deals—is for the individual to be free to enjoy privacy without harassment, especially the privacy of his own home. There seem to be two responses to that, at two different levels. First, there is the response to what Sir David Calcutt has described as physical intrusion, in the form of electronic eavesdropping, telephone tapping, trespass of people's property and homes and "photo intrusion" by means of the telephoto lens.

The public have made their views known. The press will tell us that it does not really believe in opinion polls, except when they suit it. A Kent newspaper recently decided to place itself and its readership firmly in the same stable as that notable organ *The Daily Sport* by publishing in full what became known as the Camillagate transcript. That publication was the subject of an interview on Meridian television. At lunch time, the editor defended his publication; the television company subsequently conducted a phone-in opinion poll. By the evening, it was able to announce that 60 per cent. of the public were in favour of publication.

It then conducted a further interview with the editor in which the general public were asked how they would feel if their private telephone conversations had been tapped and then printed on the front page of the Kent newspaper —which I shall not bother to publicise by naming it. Surprisingly—or, perhaps, not so surprisingly—by the end of that television programme, when another phone-in poll was conducted, the pendulum had swung in the opposite direction. The overwhelming majority of the ordinary people of whom we hear so much had decided that publication was not such a good idea after all. In other words, the vicarious pleasure to be gained from the publicising of the affairs of people in high places had given way to the stark realisation that this was the thin end of the wedge—that anyone in the United Kingdom could be affected. The Bill seeks to protect the ordinary individual's right to a fair and factual presentation in the press.

I am on record as supporting Calcutt's recommendations for changes to criminal justice legislation. As a journalist, I have reached the conclusion that the way in which to control the more unsavoury aspects of public life and journalism in general—electronic eavesdropping, phone tapping, intrusion by long-tom lens and trespass —is to introduce a clause in the next criminal justice Bill to outlaw such practices. That should apply not only to journalists, but to everyone in the United Kingdom—and I mean everyone. That clearly raises issues concerning the security services, and we must face those issues.

That is half the argument. The other half involves the right of redress for those covered by that wonderful phrase "ordinary people". Let me gently suggest that, in this context, we are all ordinary people. We are not talking about pre-publication censorship; the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) made that very clear. We are not seeking to censor the press; that is not compatible with the existence of a free press in a free society. We seek to protect the right of ordinary people to a fair hearing, not the right of access to the libel law which is available to those who can afford it.

I have said that, in this context, we are all ordinary people. Those outside the House may have a different

view, but I doubt whether many hon. Members' bank balances would allow them to take on a major libel case against a national newspaper. Some hon. Members have taken such action, and have put their lives, homes, families and jobs on the line to protect themselves. It takes a very courageous person—or, perhaps, a very foolhardy person—to do that.

We are talking, then, of the rights of most people—people without big bank balances, people who want a fair hearing. Those are the rights which the Bill seeks to protect, and I believe that they are a vital aspect of the debate about press freedom and the freedom of the individual.

In the opening pages of his excellent report, Sir David Calcutt expresses very clearly his belief that the Press Complaints Commission has failed. I believe that too. I find it extraordinary that Lord McGregor is still in his job. The hon. Member for Hammersmith referred to the commission's publication of criticism of press treatment of the royal family, and to the suppression of information given to the commission's chairman by a member of the commission who was a senior editor. That information would have redressed the balance; but the commission did not publish it, in order to defend the press. It did not have the guts to stand up and say, "We were wrong." That strikes me as just as wrong as certain other things that the Press Complaints Commission has chosen not to investigate, or has treated with scant attention. It is not surprising that there is no public confidence, and very little press confidence, in the commission as it is currently constituted.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Unfortunately, Lord McGregor is not here to defend himself. He would say, would he not, that his Press Complaints Commission cannot do anything if the parties affected by offensive press reporting do not complain? What is my hon. Friend's response to that?

Mr. Gale: My response is very straightforward. It should be understood that I am saying nothing today, under privilege, that I have not said very publicly outside the House. Lord McGregor is aware of my views.

This week, the press suddenly decided that it might be in order to investigate complaints that are not instigated by a first or second party. It strikes me that, if the press can make such a decision now, it could have done so earlier. But my prime complaint is that, faced with detailed inside knowledge, the chairman of the Press Complaints Commission—the person to whom we are all supposed to look confidently for redress, either as members of the press or as members of the public—failed to make that inside knowledge public. I consider that inexcusable, and I said so at the time.

Mr. Garnier: I agree that the Press Complaints Commission has failed signally to achieve what it set out to achieve. In the past few days, the commission has announced to the public that it wishes to invite complaints about the Prince of Wales tape recording, and then announced that the affected parties did not wish to complain. Does that not destroy the whole purpose of the commission? First, it announces that the possibility of a complaint; then it announces that the potential complainants do not wish to complain, thereby destroying whatever privacy and right to be left alone those potential complainants may have had.

Mr. Gale: I would have agreed with my hon. Friend had not the press then decided that, given a reasonably free rein, it could investigate matters instigated by people other than those directly involved. The press does not seem even to know its own mind.

As for Calcutt's suggestion that there should be a press tribunal, I shall quote from a letter that I have received from Tony Bennon, the chairman of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. In that letter to Members of Parliament, under the heading "Calcutt and Privacy", he says:

"The proposals to introduce measures to protect privacy are, in our opinion, a threat to Press Freedom. The measures—the creation of new torts and the use of pre-publication injunctions and post-publication fines—would only benefit those people who are wealthy enough to access these processes. Secondly they would, as current libel laws are, be used as a device to gag investigations. We believe the issue is to give citizens rights, and not—as the Calcutt proposals do—to take them away from serious journalism. The Calcutt proposal to establish a three person tribunal with powers to enforce a statutory code and impose fines is a negative one. Firstly the composition—three people, one of whom is a judge—would be narrow and unrepresentative. Secondly imposing fines on papers would effectively act as a form of censorship—discouraging investigative journalism—and would, in our view, have a disproportionate effect on small publications whose existence is vital to media freedom."

I agree entirely with those sentiments. I have great respect for much of the content of the Calcutt report. However, Sir David's proposals for a press tribunal are draconian and restrictive and would damage the freedom of the press. I believe that, almost certainly, they would be unworkable.

I come, therefore, to the proposal by the hon. Member for Hammersmith for an independent press authority. Its purpose would be to assist the ordinary person—that is, most of us—to obtain redress. I intend to refer to one current example—and if I begin to move out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that you will correct me immediately.

The issue that has been raised in the press in the past 24 hours involves the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. It may or may not come before the courts. I do not intend to comment on attitudes towards that issue, apart from saying that a quarter of the front page of *The Times* today is taken up with the photograph of a lady, clearly under some stress, whom I at least regard as a very ordinary person—not the high, not the mighty, not the rich, not the famous. Apparently, she is a reasonably successful business woman, working on her own behalf and providing a service to other people. Because of the publication of a story in one, two or three newspapers, she has become embroiled in an issue which is now common knowledge throughout the press. The lady has parents who must, presumably, be suffering the same distress as must be experienced by any parent when their child is objected to gutter journalism.

The photograph was not to be found in a publication that was seeking relaunch publicity for itself. It, and others like it, are in every national newspaper. It is of an ordinary person—not people who have to be exposed and whose every thought and murmur has to be interpreted by the Press Gallery because they are making the policy that runs the United Kingdom. That is the kind of ordinary person who needs protection but who does not have the money to fight an expensive libel case.

I am afraid that we hear too much from the press to the effect, "It's in the public interest." What the press means is that it is interesting to the public and that it sells

[Mr. Gale]

newspapers. I fear that that is precisely why one of my local newspapers decided to take a chance and publish the Camillagate transcript. I was assured by that newspaper, and accepted its undertaking, that it was trying not to increase sales but to inform the public. You will appreciate, Madam Deputy Speaker, that, as a journalist, I suffer from no cynicism whatsoever.

After receiving that assurance, I had an anonymous telephone call. I do not like anonymous telephone calls, but it was from somebody who works in that press print. My informant told me, "You ought to know that the print run was dramatically increased first thing this morning because we knew that this was gong to be good for selling the paper." That is the public interest—it is interesting to the public and is selling newspapers.

I do not believe that the pre-publication of the Queen's speech by *The Sun* before Christmas was in the public interest. The material was going to be in the public domain in two days' time, in any event. I have to say, with due respect to Her Majesty, that the Queen's speech is not normally the most dramatically controversial event of the year.

Mr. Dalyell: Who decides what is the public interest? Some of us may have very different views about the public interest.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman made that point earlier. We are, of course, talking about degree and opinion, but I suggest that that breach of an understood embargo, if not a literal embargo, can hardly be claimed to have been in the public interest. One editor of one newspaper stuck two fingers up and said, "I don't give a xxxx for the Establishment of the United Kingdom."

One case has been referred to three times this morning, the Robert Maxwell case. I suggest to the House, on behalf of my constituents, that the fact that Maxwell pensioners lost money was in the public interest and that that fraud ought to have been exposed. Where were the dogs of Fleet street? They were not barking. The editor of one national Sunday newspaper told me, "I've got a cupboardful of gagging writs that prevented me from publishing that story." Forgive me, but how does one take out a gagging writ on a story that is so carefully and delicately handled that it is published before a writ can be obtained? One can take out a libel writ afterwards, but one must have prior information to gag. That is one singular occasion upon which Fleet Street failed the country.

I have some concerns about the Bill. The provision for the quick correction of errors, particularly in the case of small local newspapers which have a tendency for inaccuracy, usually through haste or inexperience but not through malice, may lead to their front pages being filled with corrections. I know that that is not what the hon. Gentleman intends. In clause 4(5) he provides that his authority would be able to dismiss applications that it considered to be trivial. The hon. Gentleman will have to look at that matter carefully in Committee so that the right balance is struck.

Mr. Dalyell: How much space would "Tiny" Rowland be given in correcting the Al Fayed brothers?

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman will be making a speech. He has intervened about five times this morning.

Mr. Mandelson: Answer the point.

Mr. Gale: I am endeavouring to——

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): My hon. Friend does not have to answer.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We must be careful about reasonable standards of courtesy. We cannot have a sub-conversation going on.

Mr. Gale: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You invited hon. Members to be brief. Many hon. Members want to speak in the debate. I could spend half an hour talking about that issue, but I choose not to do so. It will be much better if hon. Members make their own speeches.

My personal inclination is that we should amend the criminal justice legislation to regulate electronic eavesdropping, the taking of photographs by long-tom lenses and intrusion into people's homes. That is a matter entirely for the Home Office and criminal justice legislation. I look to the hon. Gentleman and to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage to provide redress for the ordinary person.

Last week, members of the press ordered the last drinks in the last chance saloon by trying to find a way round the Press Complaints Commission. After everything that I have said, and after having heard what the press has said this week, I believe that if it is prepared to implement each and every one of the alterations that have been suggested, a revamped Press Complaints Commission, under a new chairman and with many more lay members, might prove eventually to be the way forward for the ordinary person. However, the hon. Gentleman's Bill makes a serious attempt to address a serious problem. I commend him for having introduced it. I hope that it receives a Second Reading. I wish it well.

11.19 am

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I am grateful to be called, and I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on introducing the Bill. As he said, I was involved in the issue some years ago.

The best article that has been written on the subject recently appeared in *The Herald,* in which Mr. Ian Bell said:

> "The issue is not privacy; the issue is not bias. The issue is not good taste, ethics, or the relationships between information technology and the state. The issue is not smut, deference, royalty or David Mellor's big toe. The issue is accuracy, where journalism begins and ends."

The first question should be, "Is it true?" If we concentrated on that, many of our problems would be at an end. That is where I started from, and that is where Kelvin MacKenzie starts from. He said that tabloid journalism cannot be condemned simply because it is brash or noisy or declamatory; it must be called to account only if it is false, irresponsible or reports untruthfully. I agree entirely. But what does someone do if a newspaper is inaccurate or, worse, if it prints lies? As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith said, when I introduced the Right of Reply Bill, I was assured that matters had improved considerably and that the press had cleaned up its act.

Mr. MacKenzie says that his newspaper no longer lies. What does someone do who disagrees with him, when the courts are not available and, frankly, when the courts can never be available? Even if legal aid were available for defamation, court procedures are not appropriate to such action. Surely the onus should be on the press to show some evidence for their stories, given the huge damage that can be done, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith showed.

This week I tried to find some untrue stories. The difficulty is that one gets only one side of the story. On Wednesday, the Nimmo Smith and Friel inquiry reported on the allegation that there is a gay network in Scotland. A headline from *The Sun* appeared in *The Herald*, saying:

"Gay Judges Linked to Palace. Homosexuals in Scotland's top jobs are part of a deep-rooted gay network with members stretching all over Britain and even to Buckingham Palace, *The Sun* can reveal".

There is no hesitation about that statement. The article was about a list that had come from a man called Colin Tucker. The Nimmo Smith/Friel report states:

"Colin Tucker's so-called 'list' is a Statement which we have in our possession and which does not name or otherwise identify any prominent member of the Scottish legal establishment, apart from Lord Dervaird"—

who resigned several years ago—

"as a person who has allegedly engaged in homosexual behaviour."

There is a fair amount of evidence that that story is untrue, that it is a fabrication and that it was probably known to be such when it was written.

Another headline appeared in *The Sun* on Monday, not on page 23 but on page 1. It says:

"Kick out Colonel Charles."

—I am not a great monarchist; I am simply quoting from this week's stories—

"Army anger at Camilla affair. Senior Army officers last night called on Prince Charles to quit as colonel-in-chief of six regiments—over his affair with Camilla Parker Bowles."

I read on with great interest to discover which six regiments were calling for the Prince's resignation, but *The Sun* could not find one Army officer or even a batty old retired general to make the story stand up. One knows what probably occurred: it was a slack Sunday in the office at *The Sun*.

On Tuesday, *The Sun* reported:

"Prince Charles yesterday turned down an investigation into the Camillagate tape"—

that is true—

"and declared: 'I have got to get on with my job'."

The thought that Prince Charles telephoned the deputy editor of *The Sun*, Stewart Higgins, and said, "I have got to get on with my job", beggars belief. I have no problem saying that that is inaccurate; it is not true. We must start by asking, "Is it true"? The journalist will be able to say, "Yes, it is true; here is the evidence."

I am sad that such journalism masks the superb journalism, of which we have seen some good examples this year. It was not our Government or the Foreign Office but the world's journalists who alterted us to the problems of Somalia. There is some incredibly brave journalism coming out of the Balkans. I watched a moving programme on television last week about the work that is being done by journalists in the Balkans. In neither place will one find the newspapers that are causing us so much concern. When I went to Somalia, I asked myself, "Will I find *The Sun* there? Will I be able to escape press harassment?" Somalia is a good place to go if one wants to avoid *The Sun*. Its brave lads are at the bedroom window. Its editors have decided that the world's greatest humanitarian disaster—Somalia—is not a story. I find that rather difficult to accept.

It is nonsense to say that such newspapers are on the side of the little people. One of the extraordinary achievements of such papers is that they have made freedom of the press unpopular in a democracy. An extraordinary story appeared in *The Independent* this week. It said that a survey conducted by Glasgow university found that the public put tabloids at the bottom of the list of agencies for protecting human rights.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): With *The Sun* at the bottom.

Mr. Worthington: Yes, *The Sun* was at the bottom. The public found lies and distortions more offensive than anything else.

It is not freedom of the press if the press can say in print anything it likes about someone without offering redress. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith said, the freedom of the press is a concept which belongs to the people, not a few editors. A right of reply, as embodied in the Bill, enhances the freedom of the press because the ordinary citizen can have his or her say. The knowledge that someone can bite back and say, "It is not true" is a formidable deterrent to a lying or sloppy newspaper.

When I introduced my Bill, I was aware that one of its weaknesses was the way in which it proposed to establish a press commission. It looked as if the Government were setting up a body. I am aware that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith said, we have a long tradition of setting up bodies which achieve some distance from the Government. However, the idea suggested by Sir Louis Blom-Cooper is worth examining. He said that we should give the duty of appointing an authority to people in responsible posts who did not obtain those posts through any Government appointment. That would be a valuable way of creating some distance.

I commend the Bill. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith would like to tackle the whole sorry mess of our press laws. I should like a Bill of Rights, freedom of information, a new official secrets Act with a public interest defence and a reform law on defamation with perhaps a small claims court attached to it. There would be differences among us about a privacy law. I remain to be convinced that it could be framed adequately. However, the Bill is a valuable start, and I commend it to the House.

11.30 am

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), who has also introduced legislation intended to address these immensely important issues. So we are indebted to him, as to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

I have some worries about the proposals in the Bill which I should like to elaborate. I am a member of the National Heritage Select Committee. The review that the Committee is currently undertaking of privacy and the media takes us into some of the same territory as the Bill occupies. The Committee has reached no conclusions. My remarks this morning will be in an entirely personal capacity.

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

What is the nature of the problem to which we should address ourselves? What is the evidence of a collapse of journalistic standards? Jaded and dyspeptic individuals at their breakfast tables have always complained of what my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) described as the gutter press. In the home counties a generation ago, it was widely assumed that the country was going to the dogs because *The Times* intended to print news on the front page. The decline of the press is always with us.

If we contemplate legislation, we need to consider the facts and the practicalities calmly. There is a good deal too much righteous indignation sloshing around our political system. We hear tirades from editors and from some politicians. It will be as well if we look to see what objective evidence there is on the problem. We do not find very much.

The statistics of complaints to the Press Complaints Commission in the 18 months to July 1992 show, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith said, that complaints about accuracy were by far the largest category. But they numbered in total 1,052. There were another 40 complaints about the opportunity to reply. There were 143 complaints about privacy. In the same period, the press ran hundreds of thousands of stories. Are we to conclude, as the Press Complaints Commission and the editors do, that there is no great problem? Or are the complaints received from aggrieved individuals the tip of the iceberg? Possibly they are.

Regrettably, the Press Complaints Commission does not monitor the press. Nor has it considered third-party complaints. I commend the hon. Member for Hammersmith on his attempt in clause 3(2) to address that need. We all have our hunches and prejudices, but there is no body of evidence upon which to base the contention that there is a problem of abuse of power by the press such that we should legislate to control further than we already do what the papers are to print. After all, that is a decision not to be taken lightly in a free society.

Of course, journalists write inaccuracies from time to time. They produce quantities of material to tight deadlines. But I suggest that one important reason why inaccuracies occur is that few, if any, of us operating in the political world systematically seek to lodge in the minds of the press a complete and objective version of things which does justice to all sides of the argument. All Governments, at any rate in Britain, are great culprits here. Knowledge is power. Therefore, they deny information to the public. Huge quantities of information are systematically but unnecessarily kept secret. Governments make highly selective information available and steer interpretation on the part of the press, often by unattributable guidance.

Politicians do their best to manipulate the press and lead it by the nose. Is it fitting, then, that we should legislate to establish a statutorily based authority, the job of which would be to require the press to print the truth under compulsion of powerful sanctions? I worry about the proposal in the Bill that the Secretary of State—even so liberal and honest a Secretary of State as my right hon. Friend—should appoint the members of such an authority. The editor of *The Observer*, Donald Trelford hit the nail squarely on the head when he said:

"I think it would be undesirable for people appointed by the Government to decide what is truth."

The hon. Member for Hammersmith acknowledges that difficulty, and contemplates the establishment of an intermediary appointments commission. Even then, I would be worried about the indirect element of political patronage. I should have similar reservations about his suggestion that the National Heritage Select Committee should play a part in determining who is appropriate to serve on such a body.

Of course it is desirable that the press should adhere to high standards of accuracy. Indeed, it is proper that a citizen who suffers from some inaccurate report should be able to exercise the same freedom of expression as a journalist and have a correction stated in the same media. However, the establishment of what is correct will often not be easy. I feel that the hon. Member for Hammersmith underestimates that difficulty.

The Bill postulates a notion of "due accuracy". What is due accuracy? What is truth? The answer has baffled philosophers and perplexed the courts time out of mind. With the best will in the world, truth will often be hard to ascertain.

How would the Independent Press Authority deal with propaganda—when politician A says something which politician B insists is wrong? If a newspaper correctly reports what the hon. Member for Loamshire, South says, may it not perpetuate the untruth about which the hon. Member for Coketown, North has so vigorously complained? What would be the proper role of the IPA there? What should the IPA do where there is a complaint of selective reporting which is misleading on account of what is not said?

The 21 good persons and true who are to be members of the authority would need a godlike wisdom to discern what is accurate, true and in the public interest in myriad such cases. However, the issues will be immensely important. Truth matters, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith eloquently impressed on us.

For that very reason, the press will insist on a full right to defend themselves against charges of purveying untruth. The press argued against the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, which would have established a right of reply. The press argued that the Bill would deprive it of proper legal safeguards, including the rights to demand evidence on oath, to cross-examination, to legal representation and to discovery of documents.

When arraigned for falsifying the truth, the press will surely, at least in important cases, claim the right to trial by jury. The press won that right at the end of the 18th century in Fox's libel law. It has been part of our law ever since. Are we to deny those long entrenched rights?

The hon. Member for Hammersmith envisages that the IPA should make up its own procedures. I think that he hopes that they would be informal and rapid. I fear that his hopes would be thwarted and that the procedures of the IPA would be driven to approximate more and more to those of a court. The IPA would be like no other court. It would be a special court to try the press. It would try the press without the full rigour and processes of a true court of law.

For a long time at least, the IPA would be unpredictable in the exercise of its authority. It would wield its powers on the basis of loosely defined duties rather than a detailed body of case law and jurisprudence. The IPA would be confused in its purposes, as its role would be in certain instances to conciliate as well as adjudicate when conciliation fails. I do not believe that it

is possible satisfactorily to combine both functions. The defendant will not co-operate fully and candidly with a conciliation body, if he knows that what he says will be noted as evidence when that same body later adjudicates on a complaint.

The IPA would be overwhelmed in its work load. The Bill proposes to go much further than that of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, which provided a statutory right of reply to factual inaccuracies which were damaging to

"the character, reputation and good standing of an individual or body of persons."

I apologise if I am mispronouncing the hon. Gentleman's constituency, perhaps he will correct me.

Mr. Worthington: It is "Millgye".

Mr. Howarth: I am very willing to grant him that right of reply. His Bill limited the types of inaccuracy to which there would be a right of reply.

The Bill provides in clause 3(1) a right for

"a published correction of a factual inaccuracy"—

any factual inaccuracy, regardless of whether it is damaging. That would open the IPA to a vast body of potential complaints. Hon. Members of this House alone —651 of us—could keep the IPA busy around the clock. The hon. Member for Hammersmith would have complaints considered not only from those people about whom the inaccurate statements were made but from anyone else who wanted to complain.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith seeks to make the work load of the authority manageable by his provision in clause 4(5):

"The Authority may dismiss any application which it reasonably considers to be vexatious or trivial."

But it would be no easy matter to do that sifting. Each case would need to be considered with proper care.

Some of the best justified third party complaints to the Press Council were pooh-poohed by editors as vexatious and trivial. An example is the case of Mr. Robert Borzello —a private individual who has campaigned persistently and courageously for years against racist language in the media. He has repeatedly been characterised as a crank and a vexatious troublemaker by arrogant and apprehensive editors.

It is extremely important that third-party complaints, raised in the public interest by whomsoever, should be reviewed by the regulatory authorities with care and respect, but all that would take time. I worry that the IPA —on the model proposed—would become an enormous organisation and would flounder. It would prove unable to carry out the duties laid upon it, even with regard to dealing with inaccuracies.

The correction of inaccuracies looms large in the Bill. My feeling is that the measure lacks balance on account of that. The hon. Member for Hammersmith wants to strike a proper balance between the freedom and the restraint of the press, but I question whether he has done so, although that needs to be done.

The sections of the Bill that refer to the upholding of freedom are brief and highly generalised. As far as detailed provisions are concerned, the parts that deal with the restraint of press freedom and the clauses that create a power to require the press to print new material are the meat of the Bill. Its emphasis is on restraint.

It also seems unbalanced and inconsistent, in that, whereas it would be the duty of the IPA to promulgate codes of professional and ethical standards for the press, as in clause 2(1)(d), it will be its duty to police the conduct of the press in one respect only—the correction of inaccuracies.

Of all the items that one would expect to be in the code —privacy, harassment, cheque-book journalism, intrusion into grief or shock, discrimination and so forth—I do not understand why the IPA should police only inaccuracies. A number of different values have to be kept in balance. If accuracy is of paramount concern, we could hardly complain about bugging. Bugging is a great aid to accurate reporting, but privacy matters at least as much, yet the balance of the Bill does not reflect that.

We need to be prepared to allow certain risks to be taken with investigative journalism. We need newspapers that are prepared to run risks and to penetrate the opacities presented to them in the interests of exposing bad practice. If we are not prepared to risk inaccuracy, we may prevent public good being done through investigative journalism.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Hammersmith thinks that the IPA will have enough to keep it busy in dealing with inaccuracies. By the time it has got through the catalogue of duties set out in clause 2(1)(c)—

"to investigate and monitor ethical standards of the press, distribution of newspapers, ownership and control of the media, access to information and restrictions on reporting and any related matter it may consider appropriate"—

its members will be dizzy with confusion and fatigue. Under clause 2(1)(b), apart from anything else, the IPA will be monitoring itself—a somewhat circular and giddy process.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Hammersmith leaves most of what will be covered by a code of standards for the press to self-regulation. I am not entirely clear about that from my reading of the Bill, but I assume it to be the case. Self-regulation is greatly preferable to statutory supervision by an external body. I cannot understand or accept the notion of a code of professional standards imposed from outside. The essence of professionalism is ethical autonomy and self-regulation.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my hon. Friend not agree that newspapers are businesses? Journalists are not professionals who discipline themselves from within but people who are trying to make a profit out of peddling stuff, some of which causes great distress to the public. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has pointed out the difficulty of achieving perfection in any piece of legislation drafted in this House, but, while we may not achieve perfection, do not the public expect us to try to provide a society in which they can go about their everyday lives without being unduly harassed or traduced so that someone can make money out of them?

Mr. Howarth: Many eminent and respected journalists would agree with my hon. Friend that journalism is not a profession but a craft or trade. If that is so, perhaps we should not be talking about professional standards, but we certainly must talk about ethical standards and ground rules. As far as possible, it is much better for those to be generated by the newpaper industry staff, through self-regulation. If journalists own their own code of practice there is a better chance that they will feel committed to it. If the regulatory body contains a good proportion of practising journalists, their colleagues are

[Mr. Howarth]

more likely to respect their judgments, but the most important part of the case for self-regulation is that a free press is a crucial safeguard of a free society.

The press have, however, confronted us with a great difficulty. For years they have dragged their feet over self-regulation. Instead of embracing it positively, they have done the minimum that they could get away with at the latest possible stage. Self-regulation has therefore been unimpressive and that has certainly applied during the two year existence of the Press Complaints Commission.

Self-regulation, however, could be made more effective. The gaps in the code could be filled, the code could be made more detailed and specific, and its application could be made tougher, reinforced by penalties agreed by the industry. Fines would be an effective self-imposed sanction. There is already a requirement under the code —imposed by the press on itself—that corrections should be printed. They could be printed in prescribed ways. When an editor could not agree with a complainant that an inaccuracy had been printed, the code could stipulate that a reasonably argued letter of refutation should be published. That would be greatly preferable to the quasi-judicial apparatus of the IPA.

I am afraid that events have convinced me that self-regulation, while necessary, will not be sufficient. The breakdown of ethical consensus in our society and the pressures of the circulation wars mean that some newspapers will occasionally brush aside the code of practice to which they claim to subscribe.

That being the case, I believe we must reinforce the legal remedies available to the citizen. We can strengthen the law of confidence, as recommended by the Law Commission and accepted in principle by the Government some years ago. We could create a new tort of infringement of privacy, although, like the hon. Member for Hammersmith, I have some doubts about that. The creation of a new tort of harassment seems attractive. We must make legal remedy against defamation, which bears on the issue of accuracy that is so emphasised in the Bill, available in practice to people other than the rich. I presume that the simplification of procedures that the Lord Chancellor is contemplating would bring down the costs of libel actions, and I hope that he will reconsider his position on legal aid and make it available for plaintiffs in libel actions and at levels well above income support.

The third element of reform needed, to balance the proper protection of the individual with enhanced freedom of the press, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith wants, is freedom of information legislation. Happily, the House will have an opportunity to debate that next month.

There are other possibilities of strengthening press freedom in beneficial ways. The Law Commission's proposed Bill would provide a clear-cut public interest defence in proceedings for breach of confidence. That would reduce the scope for prior restraint of publication, which also needs underpinning in libel cases, as the Robert Maxwell saga has shown.

Although I applaud the hon. Member for Hammersmith for giving new focus and urgency to the national debate on the freedom and the responsibility of the press—in the hearings in his committee before Christmas, as well as in today's debate—I must say, with respect, that I do not believe that his independent IPA is what is needed. I have explained my reservations. If the Bill goes into Committee, I hope that some of these difficulties can be looked at in more detail.

I hope that the House will prefer to consider a threefold thrust of reform—improved self-regulation by the press, strengthened civil remedies for the citizen and enhanced freedoms for the press, by far the greater part of which is responsibly committed to the public interest.

11.50 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The two speeches that we have had from Conservative Members have rather neatly encapsulated the divide on the argument. The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) wanted a level of control and regulation of the press that I should like to think that most of the House would wish to resist. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) expressed his reservations about the Bill. He accepted that they could be absorbed by the Bill, although he chose to take a different view.

In some ways, I regard this debate as a sad day. I should make clear my own interest as a member of the NUJ, although I am not in any way speaking on its behalf. I was in the House on the day when the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) had the debate on the motion to which he referred. I said then that I was resistant to any measures that might infringe the freedom of the press or require legal measures to control it in any way. That remains my view, but I also said then that it was becoming increasingly difficult for those of us who took that view to defend the excesses of at least some sections of the press.

It is right for hon. Members to acknowledge that the press is, to some extent, our bread and butter and vice versa. On occasions we can sound a little self-righteous, if not priggish, when we complain about the excesses of the press, when we are more than happy to see that and to witness the effect it can produce on unwitting voters when it is done on our behalf.

Mr. Mullin: I cannot remember the last time that the press was excessive on my behalf.

Mr. Bruce: As a Liberal Democrat, I echo the hon. Gentlman's sentiments. I do not believe that the press is excessively committed to putting forward the arguments that I should like to see presented.

The sad fact is that self-regulation has failed. Editors make themselves look a little foolish when they write highly charged critical editorials about the need for independent regulation of the City and an independent investigation of the police, and then say, "But, please, not an independent body to look into the affairs of the British press."

The hon. Member for Hammersmith has put his finger on it—the issue is not whether there should be some measure of assessing the accuracy of reporting in the British press and the rights of citizens to redress, but what that mechanism should be. How can we be sure that that mechanism will be independent? How do we ensure that the citizen feels that he has a reasonable chance of fair redress?

I commend the hon. Member for Hammersmith on the innovative way in which he has brought his Bill to the House. Although I was unable to take part in his investigative committee, it demonstrated his long-standing commitment to this issue. He is aware of the need to get the

balance right, and he has sought to canvass a wide range of opinion to shape his bill. The hon. Gentleman should not only be commended for that: hon. Members should take on board the fact that his Bill has been brought here after a great deal of thought, consideration and canvassing of widespread views. That cannot always be said for the Bills that we debate on Fridays, or indeed on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who is not present in the Chamber now, but who hopes to speak, has strong reservations about where the Bill could lead. I have been drawn, reluctantly, to the conclusion that support for a Bill of this kind is necessary, but I am firmly opposed to the many draconian proposals of Sir David Calcutt. I am absolutely opposed to any pre-publication censorship. If we ever begin to travel down that road, the freedom of our press will be in grave jeopardy. I was astonished that Sir David, as a member of the judiciary, did not appreciate the dangerous nature of that proposal. I am pleased to note that the general reaction to it seems to suggest that it does not command widespread support —I am not too sure about the hon. Member for Thanet, North.

It is important to put on record one's appreciation of the great deal of good that is done by the British press. Exchange of information, a change in public attitudes and change in Government attitude could not take place but for the work of the press, and the popular press.

Mention has been made of investigative journalism, but let us consider the simple issues that popular newspapers take up in the right vein. I have an example of one such issue, which demonstrates just how effective the popular press can be on an issue of concern to certain sections of the community. Some time ago, without warning, the children's television programme "Blue Peter" withdrew the subtitles, even though they had been introduced as a result of a poll conducted among children about which programme they wanted subtitled. They had been financed by the National Deaf Children's Society. On the basis of a campaign that consisted of an early-day motion signed by myself and the then right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, Jack Ashley and others, which was then taken up by the *Daily Star*, the BBC's decision was reversed within a week.

I do not believe that the House would have been able to achieve that without the benefit of a popular newspaper identifying that issue as one which the BBC had got wrong. That newspaper launched an effective campaign and encouraged its readers to complain in writing and by telephone. That campaign forced a public corporation to recognise that its decision was indefensible and that it needed to reverse it.

Every hon. Member could quote an issue on which they have enlisted the support of the press. We all depend on our local press, week in, week out, to achieve changes in our communities. It is important to put on record the positive nature of a campaigning popular press. That balances the regret that we feel when certain sections of the press overreach themselves in their determination simply to achieve higher sales.

It is also difficult to pick out recent examples of press excess. The press have ultimately been able to say that, in many cases, the stories that they ran were true. They may have been sensationalised and those stories may have been handled tastelessly, but their basis was true. We must be extremely careful that we do not introduce measures that prevent those stories from ultimately reaching the public domain, given that there is a legitimate public interest in the information that they contain, if not necessarily in the way in which that information is disseminated.

I believe that the hon. Member for Hammersmith has addressed the problems. I have been persuaded by the way in which he conducted his committee and by his long speech—justifiably so—to present his Bill. I was also impressed by the way in which he handled interventions. He demonstrated conclusively that he has thought about the problems deeply and that he is well aware of the dangers of going too far.

This is a sad day. I should prefer to vote against the Bill, because I should like to believe that it has not become necessary. I regret to say, however, that some sections of the press have not heeded their own self-regulatory bodies and the pleas of the ordinary members of the public who have suffered at their hands. They show no signs of mending their ways or adapting their codes of practice. They treat those codes with contempt.

By simply requiring newspapers to be accurate and, when proved inaccurate, to make amends by publishing true statements of equal value to the original misstatement, we are not fundamentally censoring the press, but giving ordinary citizens the right to have their views expressed properly and in a balanced fashion, and to seek redress where necessary.

It will not surprise the House to know that I, as a Liberal Democrat, believe that many freedoms in this country are under attack, but the freedom of the press is not the one which is most threatened. We need positive measures to establish the rights of citizens against the concentrations of power within the estates and the country. We must recognise that there has to be a standard of integrity in high places, which is now being questioned.

In the past two or three weeks, a major British airline has been exposed in the courts as having pursued illegal, fraudulent, corrupt practices to destroy several British companies. In spite of that court case, two chief executives of the company have said that they intend to study the organisation to find out who is responsible and sack them. There is no suggestion of the integrity of responsibility of top management. Even if they did not know what was going on—I do not believe for a minute that they did not —they should resign and accept that they and their company have been found out, and they are not fit to hold public office. Unfortunately, standards in this country are such that we cannot now expect that sort of honour, which used to be the practice, both in public office and in public service in the private sector.

We must accept that the time has come for a modest measure to give individual citizens the right to a fair, accurate and responsible press. The overwhelming majority of the press has those attributes. The problems relating to the local press will not detain the Independent Press Authority. However, we cannot allow to continue the practice of editors who believe that freedom to make money and sell newspapers should be upheld at the expense of trampling on the lives of individuals without the resources to defend themselves.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman: Is it not a fact that most of the investigation in the British Airways and Branson case was done by Richard Branson and Virgin against the background of newspapers publishing scurrilous, inaccurate material allegedly issued by British Airways?

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

Therefore, all that the newspapers achieved was to help British Airways in its attempt to undermine Virgin. The newspapers then printed reports of the brave case that Mr. Branson brought in the courts, but they had been party to the British Airways campaign.

Mr. Bruce: That may be true and had the Bill been in place, redress might have been available. However, that is no comfort to British Caledonian, Laker, Air Europe and Dan Air, which were all destroyed by such practices and had no right of reply.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith has introduced a Bill which is, regrettably, necessary. It is extremely well balanced and guarded in what it seeks to do. It commends itself to the majority of the House and should be allowed to make progress so that, in Committee, some of the issues raised may be further considered.

I apologise to the House for having to leave as soon as I sit down, as I have to attend a press conference in the Grand Committee Room on the launch of the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on the pit closures. I am sure that the House will understand why I wish to attend it.

As I said, the Bill is, regrettably, necessary; I hope that the House will allow its passage so that it may be given proper consideration in Committee.

12.6 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I understand what the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has to do—perhaps he will bring a few spare copies of the report back for us.

The House must consider what structures and methods are used in countries where the press is constrained. One of the few good functions of the National Union of Journalists is to support Amnesty International to ensure that the barbed wire comes off the pens in other countries. Some hon. Members will have been present when Hong Kong journalists spoke earlier this week about what was happening among some authorities in China which were restricting not merely journalists' opportunities for reporting what was going on in China, but their freedom to be effective journalists in Hong Kong.

Although many criticisms can be levelled at the NUJ, we should use its expertise and worldwide contacts, and consider *Index*, produced each year on press restriction round the world, to understand what leads to restraints that go far beyond those being considered by hon. Members today.

There are few wrongs in society that have not been put right without both journalists and editors taking a risk. I shall return to what has now become a more fashionable issue.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) was regarded as pernicious and his reports as inaccurate. It was felt that he was undermining the foundations of society as we knew it. It was only when a Conservative Member of Parliament started paying more attention to what he was saying that an alliance began to develop that led to the righting of a wrong.

Although some people who believe in free enterprise may occasionally see a joke that others do not, it is often the unfashionable and the unlikely that deserves to be given an airing.

In many of the instances where people have been challenged to prove that something is accurate, they have not been able to do so immediately. They depend on evidence being brought forward later once the issue has come into the public arena. We should learn from such lessons.

It turned out that haemophiliac sufferers were being poisoned by the blood products that were supposed to extend and enhance the quality of their lives. One person's private guess resulted in research, which was not initially accepted as soundly based. I suspect that some of the researchers, who were not necessarily doctors but people associated with haemophiliac sufferers, wanted to give the issue more prominence.

We must be careful about introducing a requirement for proof. We should allow people to raise issues which, in turn, allow us to overcome disadvantages, distress and other handicaps that must be brought into the public arena. That has to be done before the change can be fully accepted.

Mr. Mullin: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's generous reference to me. However, I do not want it to be used in an argument for voting against the Bill. The issues in which I was involved were not based on one person's private guess—I know that the hon. Gentleman was referring to haemophiliacs—but careful research of a sort that, unhappily, is not common among newspaper journalists in a large section of the press. As a result of my research, I found that the entire free press, with certain honourable exceptions, had been unleashed on me. My constituents were repeatedly, and over a long period, told that I was a supporter of the IRA. That is the sort of malicious falsehood which I hope the Bill is designed to correct.

Mr. Bottomley: That may be so. I recommend that those listening and those who read the debate read the hon. Gentleman's book. It is a good example of what a journalist or a non-journalist can achieve by studying published sources and talking to people.

One of the earliest cases that I took up as a Member of Parliament was that of a young man who had been wrongly convicted of attempting to steal on an underground train. I visited him in prison. He did not appeal against his sentence of three months—which I thought was far too severe—as he thought it best to get the sentence behind him and get on with his life.

Five years later a journalist reported a case of a detective sergeant who was suspected of framing someone. It was only then that we linked the two cases and discovered that the detective sergeant had been a detective constable and had been involved in framing my constituent and one of his friends. I am not saying that all the good things justify any particular example of the worst behaviour of the press. It is important that people speak up for what the role of the press can be, and we must ensure that we preserve that role.

I am speaking against the Bill, and I shall vote against it if there is a vote. I welcome the debate. It is a good idea to have more debates on the freedom and practices of the press. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) should be congratulated not only on his speech but strongly on the work that he and his colleagues put in to the Soley report and the hearings. I pay tribute to my hon.

Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who chaired the proceedings in an admirably effective way.

I shall make various references to the inquiry. First, I acknowledge that the form that the inquiry took is one which the House should by vote insist takes place in various other areas where the Government are minded to propose legislation or to intervene when the Government have proposed legislation to ensure that it happens as well. In three hearings, we have seen that it is possible to cover a lot of ground and get a lot of information into the open.

I shall make a declaration of respect for the media, affection, occasional frustration, normally because they do not take up my causes early enough, and frequent anger when I see them doing things which are avoidably painful to others. On rare occasions I have low levels of writing income from them, rare payments of legal fees and sometimes damages for things which they have said or done. I hope that that list covers enough declarations of interest to keep everybody else happy.

I ask a question: how do people in the United Kingdom deal with Members of Parliament who damage others? How do people deal with a Member of Parliament who goes too far, is inaccurate or is reckless, malicious or simply mistaken?

As Peter Preston said on page 80 of the Soley report,

"A functioning democracy is rough trade, as the House itself sometimes shows. So is the press."

When people question how we should get what we might call control over press mistakes, we should ask how it happens when we do the same in the House. A free Parliament and a free press are both essential parts of democracy.

How do people deal with lawyers in court who try to get witnesses to say something is true when the witness knows that it is not true? Most of us who have had any experience of courts know that lawyers, paid professionals, can, almost without limit, exert immense pressure, sometimes over several days, to get people to agree to something to which they should not agree, knowing that it is not true. What redress is there for ordinary people in such cases?

Mr. Garnier: Let me declare an interest as a member of the Bar. Barristers in court do not seek to do anything other than put their client's case. It would be a professional offence for barristers to advance a case which they knew to be false. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) is not suggesting that barristers spend their time persuading people to change their minds when the lawyer knows that what he is proposing is based on a falsity.

Mr. Bottomley: May I put it to my hon. Friend in roughly the sort of words that lawyers use? It is not simply in civil and criminal courts; it is also in tribunals. The best example I have is when I assisted a constituent in a case in which the Inland Revenue was appealing against a rate reduction. A clever lawyer who I do not think is in the House at present said to Mrs. So-and-so, "I put it to you that this, that that and the other is the case." She said, "It is not true." For half an hour, the lawyer banged away. He was a professional and she was a small, frail pensioner who had had unbelievable aggravation from the people next door, which is why her rates evaluation had been halved.

The lawyer went on and on. Eventually, I slipped her a note as I could not speak. She said to the chairman, "Excuse me. Can I ask this gentleman if he has been instructed to say this by the Inland Revenue and by the council, or is he making it up?" That was the collapse of the lawyer.

I have been in magistrates courts, civil hearings and criminal courts in which lawyers have continued in the way that I have described. I accept that no lawyer would do anything unprofessional. It is more than I can say for politicians. If that is what my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) is putting to me, I give way to his pressure.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Surely the basis of the hon. Gentleman's argument is in the examples that he has given to the House. There is a comparative equality of the ability to refute whatever point is put forward. The Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) defends the individual who is traduced by the press. The argument against that individual goes into millions of homes and there is no possibility of the individual countering that argument on a one-to-one basis.

Mr. Bottomley: If someone such as George Carman QC takes a day or two to interview someone in court, and if it is reported widely, there is the same impact and the same inability to come back. I would argue that Members of Parliament may be able to speak of an individual from outside in a way which is reported with the same impact, so I do not think that there is an absence of equivalence.

About a week ago, I asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister whether the same rules should apply to political parties in advertisements, for lawyers in court and jounalists on newspapers. I would have added Members of Parliament, but for some reason the Bill of Rights stopped me from doing so. Would he propose legislation to require those three groups always to be accurate, and provide equal time for balancing arguments when people disagree with what has been said, establish a statutory body which would adjudicate and let such statutory bodies have the power to impose fines if, at the time of adjudication, it turned out that the person who had made the remark was not convincing when there was a hearing? The Prime Minister's answer was no. That was sensible.

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): My interpretation of the Bill is that there is no chance of fines unless the newspaper responsible refuses to print a correction. As most editors say that they are in favour of prompt corrections, I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is exaggerating what the effect of the Bill will be. I have been listening to him refer to the problems with the Bill. Everyone recognises that there have been problems with the press. Does the hon. Gentleman have any views as to how the press should be dealt with? He does not seem to have put his views forward so far.

Mr. Bottomley: I am against the Bill. If the hon. Lady reads in *Hansard* what I have said, she will find the answer to her intervention.

William Cobbett, who helped to break the secrecy with which this House conducted its affairs hundreds of years ago, said:

"no general rule can be given beyond this; that, the right and the duty being clear to our minds, the means that are surest and swiftest are the best."

That is the argument for legislation because we all are supposed to know that the law stops people doing what the law says they should not do. There is no evidence of that.

[Mr. Bottomley]

In the United Kingdom, one third of men have already been convicted of a criminal offence for which they could have been sent to gaol for six months or more by the age of 30, but that is a side issue. William Cobbett went on to say:

"In every such case, however, the great and predominant desire ought to be not to employ any means beyond those of reason and persuasion, as long as the employment of these afford a ground for rational expectation of success."

I argue that, by bringing such issues into the public gaze, and by getting the proprietors, the editors and the journalists as well as the people and the politicians to discuss it, we will continue to see improvements of the sort that we have seen in the press recently.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Bottomley: I will give way to my hon. Friend and then I shall not give way again.

Mr. Gorst: When my hon. Friend refers to problems with speeches made in the House and the treatment of people in the courts, is he arguing that, because there is a problem, we should not try to find a solution for the press treatment of people? Is that part of his argument? I got rather lost.

Mr. Bottomley: It is difficult by law to establish the truth. It is difficult to rely on a statutory body having any more beneficial results than the Press Complaints Commission has at present. Some of the criticisms of the PPC are fair and may go beyond good debating points, but most of them are wrong.

During my time in the House, many people have come to me with problems of many kinds, but few have been about their treatment in the press. Generally, there are fewer complaints now than there could justifiably have been a few years ago. There are some scandals, but even the hon. Member for Hammersmith would not argue that his Bill would get rid of all of them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) asked what would happen when people defied the law. Do we create some kind of licensing system for journalists which prevents them from working until they kowtow to the courts? Would we end up with the sort of controls that now exist for broadcasters? *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends will have an opportunity to speak later in the debate.

The problems of accuracy go beyond the tabloids, about which much could be said. The best recent example was in the Church of England newspaper in which an eight-line report about a meeting on the ordination of women was followed two weeks later by a 13-line apology for about five errors in the original eight lines.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) gave a good example in the way that *The Times* treated a person in a current case. The same problem occurs with *The Daily Telegraph*, which continues to use unreliable correspondents, especially on religious affairs.

The Times refused to correct a report by Clifford Longley when Archbishop Runcie announced his retirement. Longley said that Runcie could not make up his mind about the rights and wrongs of the Falklands war. He was factually and demonstrably wrong for the year of the war and for every year since.

There are also problems about the sensitivities of journalists. In the Soley hearings there was a rather curious session with Pat Healy of the NUJ ethics committee which seemed to hold proceedings on one case in secret. There were other odd happenings which reminded one of the 1920s when the NUJ complained about Members of Parliament, especially Labour ones, writing and said that journalism should be preserved for journalists. That is the sort of closed society for which people seem to argue all too often, and it is also a restraint on the press.

We would do well to place on record what the Cross-Media group said in its evidence to the committee:

"Stripped of its verbosity, the Bill boils down to simply this: there should be a legal obligation on newspapers, enforceable by the Courts, to publish corrections of 'factual inaccuracy' as adjudicated by an Independent Press Authority. It has nothing to do with sleaze, bias, sensationalism, unfairness or any of the other sins that journalists can commit.

Mr. Soley's Bill is perhaps well-motivated, but it is wrong-headed and potentially dangerous to the freedom of the press in this country."

I do not say that I agree with the way that that was put. As I said in the House, I think earlier this week, Members of Parliament should be even more keen to protect the freedom of the press than members of the press.

We cannot do our job under a system that would lead to greater and greater constraints on the press. I do not say that all the constraints should be removed because there are ways in which the laws of libel can be adapted.

There is an important step to be taken by saying that no law should apply to the press that does not apply to others as well. In such ways we can move forward.

I do not think that Dugal Nesbitt Smith of the Newspaper Society was wrong when he said that the price of a free press was worth the price of a few bad newspapers. I do not think that there are bad newspapers, only bad parts within them, and there is some sloppiness and habits which grow but which can be squashed. For example, *The Sun* is not sued for libel nowadays. Some years ago it was casual about libelling people, but now it is not.

There are problems even with newspapers such as *The Guardian*, because this week Peter Preston, whom I have quoted with approval, published an article by the Archbishop of York saying that *The Guardian* leader the day before had been wrong and that he had not mentioned the present royal family at all. In the same issue, there was a letter from Dame Barbara Cartland built on the false assumption that the paper had made. That is sloppy work within the newspaper and should be stopped, but a statutory authority is not needed to do that.

Malcolm Rutherford of *The Financial Times*, a well-respected journalist, said:

"The existence of the Bill is worrying. A blanket law to stop tabloids going as you think perhaps too far would have a very serious effect on *The Financial Times*."

The House should take such evidence seriously.

Mr. Fabricant: Some serious newspapers gave evidence to the effect that the Bill is unnecessary for them because it will require them only to print a correction if they get something wrong. We are aiming at irresponsible newspapers which print something that is incorrect and refuse to print a correction.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend must establish why statutory regulation would go much further than

voluntary regulation. The House and the country must decide what to do if people decide to defy such regulation. The courts will also have to establish what they will do in such instances.

As the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) often says, the history of this country is built as much on defiance as on compliance. My hon. Friend would probably discover that people would ask, "What is the next stage?"

I fear that, one way or another, we shall end up with a small bit of barbed wire around the pen. I do not want that, and the time to stop it is now.

12.26 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Like so many hon. Members who have spoken, I begin by warmly congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), not only on his care and trouble in introducing the Bill, but on the tremendous amount of work on the pre-hearings. I found them thoroughly enjoyable and most helpful and informative.

I shall make a couple of simple declarations of interest because they will affect part of my speech. I am a member of the National Union of Journalists, although I do not agree with the NUJ view on this issue. Secondly, I spent some time working in broadcasting and that experience greatly affects my attitude to legislation of this sort.

I should like to establish a couple of propositions that provide strong arguments for my hon. Friend's proposed legislation. The first key proposition is that there are basically two types of media—print and broadcasting. Print is subject to self-regulation, and broadcasting has a long history of democratic regulation and control. Despite that contrast, the almost universal acknowledgement is that, especially on news and current affairs, the broadcast media are freer, more accurate and the more independent. This may sound paradoxical to hon. Members who hold the Conservative philosophy, but that area of the media commands most public respect.

There is endless evidence for that. One piece of evidence that I like especially was produced by the BBC. From time to time it conducts a test of the believability of different sources of news and current affairs. The rating scale is from nought to five. At the top of the believability rating —I do not know what conclusion is to be drawn from this —is "Crimewatch" with a rating of 4·4. It appears that everyone believes it. I am not sure whether that is a good or a bad thing. I shall not detain the House with that finding because we are concerned basically with newspapers and current affairs programmes.

Near the top of the believability scale is ITN's "News at Ten", with a rating of 4·1, along with the BBC's nine o'clock news. "World in Action" and "Panorama" are also high on the list.

The newspapers are far lower down the scale. At the bottom, beneath the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* —this will not greatly surprise the House—are the party-political broadcasts. I am happy to report that the Labour party-political broadcasts had a higher believability rating than those of the Conservative party. Beneath even the party-political broadcasts was *The Sun*, with a rating of 1·4. As the evidence is overwhelming that the public place trust in the broadcasting media and not in the press, I shall not labour the point.

The source that I am about to quote might destroy our bipartisan spirit on some issues. In an important NOP poll before the last general election, potential voters were asked whom they trusted to give them the truth about the facts surrounding the election. They were asked, "How much do you trust each of the following to tell the truth in the coming general election campaign?" It appeared that 67 per cent. of those polled trusted ITN. That result showed that they trusted it either a "great deal" or a "fair amount". Clearly they trusted ITN to tell them the truth about the campaign. There was a similar figure for the BBC's news.

The respondents were then asked how much they trusted the daily newspapers to tell them the truth about the campaign. Two of the categories were "a little" or "not at all". It appears that 64 per cent. trusted them "a little" or "not at all". That should concern hon. Members. It should be our right to receive good and accurate information, especially in the context of the democratic decision that the electorate has to make at the end of a general election campaign. There was not much sympathy from those who are now sitting on the Government Benches in response to the clear distortions and lies with which we were confronted in the run-in to the last general election and to previous elections.

The resignation of the former Secretary of State for National Heritage has been mentioned. The key quote that I heard from both the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), the former Secretary of State, and, I think, from the Prime Minister—this was the opinion of Conservative Members generally—was to the effect that it is outrageous that members of the Cabinet should be selected by the press, especially the tabloid press. I say, "Amen to that", but I wish that it had been found similarly outrageous when Governments were being selected by the press——

Mr. Fabricant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grocott: I would rather not. I want to be brief. The hon. Gentleman has intervened on two or three occasions already.

No one can dispute that the press has enormous power. Similarly, it cannot be disputed that its standards of accuracy in its news and current affairs coverage are not a fraction as good as those of the broadcast media.

Despite the evidence that the press, when compared with the broadcasting media, leaves a great deal to be desired, all the trends in recent years are towards making the broadcasting media more like the press rather than the other way round. I cannot think of any other area of national life or consumerism where it is said, "We have two machines for news and current affairs, one of which works pretty well while the other is flawed in many respects. Let us copy the flawed machine and move further in that direction." Unfortunately, that is precisely what is happening.

The Government carry a fair degree of responsibility for the way in which things are drifting. The former Home Secretary, now the Foreign Secretary, said during the passage of what was the Broadcasting Bill that one of his aims was to make broadcasting a bit like browsing through a good bookshop.In other words, he envisaged numerous channels. He seemed to be saying, "Let us use the model of the press for broadcasting where you pick and choose

[Mr. Grocott]

what newspaper you want, and have a proliferation of broadcasting channels to mirror it." We have seen what has happened since the Bill was enacted.

As deregulation has begun in broadcasting, new questions have arisen about the accuracy, fairness and quality of the broadcasting media. There is a direct correlation between the current regulatory system and the quality of news and current affairs programmes. What has happened since the Broadcasting Act 1990? There has been a loss of production facilities and a cut in programme budgets. Good news and current affairs programmes cannot be produced on peanuts. Standards are falling, there is less training of journalists, less money is being spent and there is greater competition for audiences in a narrow field where advertising influences the way in which programmes are made.

Mr. Fabricant: I thought that we were here today to discuss the Bill. The hon. Gentleman has drifted off the point, first to become party political and now with a discussion about the Broadcasting Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The Chair will decide what is in order.

Mr. Grocott: The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) has made a couple of interventions and a bogus point of order. I hope that he will listen as I come precisely and exactly to the conclusion of my remarks.

Mr. Fabricant: The hon. Gentleman is going round in circles.

Mr. Grocott: I am not. The hon. Gentleman can read my speech tomorrow if he does not like the oratory.

There is a simple proposition in the Bill, which encompasses the lessons to be learnt from the clear contrast between the broadcast and the print media, and which is moving precisely, gently and moderately towards the establishment of some sort of standard. The only power within the Bill is to correct inaccuracies. It is a simple measure which recognises that quality news and current affairs reporting cannot happen by accident. I know that many Conservative Members think that a free market delivers everything, but it palpably does not deliver everything needed for quality news and current affairs. I am staggered that the Bill has any opposition when it is simply about correcting factual inaccuracies.

The PCC's code of practice states:

"Whenever it is recognised that a significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distorted report has been published, it should be corrected promptly".

All the Bill does is to provide for the statutory framework in which that can happen.

Some of my many, many friends who are journalists and fellow members of the National Union of Journalists are concerned about the Bill. Item 4 of the NUJ's code of conduct states:

"A journalist shall rectify promptly any harmful inaccuracies, ensure that correction and apologies receive due prominence and afford the right of reply to persons criticised when the issue is of sufficient importance."

Of course, it is not always within the power of a working journalist to guarantee that redress. This modest Bill will help good journalists because it enshrines the codes of practice of the PCC and the NUJ. The assumption in those codes is that we know what is accurate or inaccurate. No one denies that the matter can be complex, but there is an assumption that we can find out through some machinery what is accurate or inaccurate. The only argument is what body should provide that machinery.

There is a philosophical difference between Conservative and Labour Members. The evidence is overwhelmingly on the side of people who, like myself, believe that good news and current affairs reporting does not happen by accident and by just hoping that the training and the money will be provided. Good news and current affairs reporting occurs when a proper democracy understands and accepts that there are times when there is need for democratic regulation and control. That is not a revolutionary statement. Such a system exists in the broadcasting media and has served this country well in the outstanding field of investigative journalism in which so many broadcasters have received notable awards over the years.

My hon. Friend's Bill redresses a little the balance of free market forces and democratic regulation, and tries to bring the press closer to the standards of broadcasters. It should be enthusiastically supported by those who cherish our democratic values.

12.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): I am conscious of the fact that this is a precious Back Benchers' day, but it may be convenient to the House if I spend a few minutes explaining the Government's stance on the Bill. I thank the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) for the opportunity to have such a wide-ranging debate both in the House and beyond. I have not noticed any particular differences between the two sides of the Chamber, but impressive arguments have been deployed in all parts of the House. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith said, it is, above all, a parliamentary matter.

The Government's attitude will come as no surprise to the hon. Gentleman. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage gave due warning of it in his statement to the House on 14 January, on the occasion of the publication of the "Review of Press Self-Regulation" by Sir David Calcutt.

The House will be aware that in the report of his review, Sir David makes six recommendations. Five concern privacy, while the remaining—and central—recommendation concerns the future basis for regulation of the press. So far as the recommendations on privacy are concerned, my right hon. Friend accepted the case for new criminal offences to deal with specified types of physical intrusion and surveillance. Subject to further examination of the details of the proposed offences and to consultations with practitioners, the Government will therefore bring forward legislation in due course to give effect to those proposals in England and Wales.

My right hon. Friend accepted also Sir David's recommendation that further consideration should be given to the introduction of a new tort of infringement of privacy. He accepted that we would, in addition, look at the possible relevance of the Data Protection Act 1984 in situations where there is misrepresentation or intrusion into personal privacy by the press; give further thought to the legislation on the non-identification of minors and others in court proceedings; and look at the legislation covering interception of telecommunications.

Giving effect to all those recommendations will represent a substantial programme of work, not just for my own Department, but for the several other Government Departments—particularly the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department—concerned with different aspects of them. Suitable machinery will be established for overseeing and carrying forward that programme of work in the fastest possible time scale.

It is, however, Sir David's central recommendation, concerning the future basis of regulation of the press, that is most relevant for the purposes of today's debate. As the House will know, Sir David's overall conclusion is that the Press Complaints Commission is not an effective regulator of the press. He considers that the press would not now be willing to make the changes needed to make the commission the truly independent body, commanding the confidence of the public as well as the press, that it should be.

He therefore recommends that the Government should introduce a statutory complaints tribunal on the model of that described in the 1990 report of the committee on privacy and related matters, which Sir David chaired. The tribunal would have wide-ranging powers, including the power to restrain publication of material in breach of its code of practice; the ability to require the printing of apologies, corrections and replies; and the ability to award compensation, impose fines and award costs.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set out clearly the Government's initial response to that recommendation. I remind the House of what he said. He made it clear that the Government agree with Sir David that the Press Complaints Commission, as at present constituted, is not an effective regulator of the press. We also recognise the strength of the case that Sir David makes in his report for a statutory tribunal with wide-ranging powers. We have not ruled that out. At the same time, we are conscious that action to make such a body statutory would be a step of some constitutional significance, departing from the traditional approach to press regulation in this country. In the light of those considerations, the Government would be extremely reluctant to pursue that route. A most persuasive case for statutory regulation would need to be made out.

Mr. Ashton: Is there not a precedent? The police used to investigate complaints against the police force—for instance, allegations that they had beaten people up to obtain confessions—and we were forced to establish a statutory Police Complaints Authority. The local government ombudsman and the body appointed to investigate the national health service are also statutory. Why should the Government resist the establishment of a similar authority to investigate the press?

Mr. Key: I shall address that point shortly. Part of the reason is that we want to listen to the voices of those who have a great deal to say, but who may not have had time to marshal the evidence—and, indeed, their own thoughts—on this crucial issue, which is possibly more important than all the other issues put together. I refer to the constitutional relationship between the state and the press.

My right hon. Friend said that, in reaching a final view, we would want to take account of the debate surrounding the Bill. He explained that the Government would advise the House that, although we had not announced our final conclusions regarding a statutory regime, we could not support the Bill.

As I have said, the main reason why we do not support the Bill is that we are not persuaded at this stage that statutory regulation of the press is necessary or would be appropriate. That does not mean that we are satisfied with the present approach to self-regulation. Sir David pointed to the shortcomings of the present arrangements and we consider his detailed analysis compelling. We hope that, in the light of his report, the press will now give further consideration to improving self-regulation; we want it to address in particular the 12 points listed as deficiencies in Sir David's report, which cover mainly the independence and procedures of the Press Complaints Commission.

The most important step that the press could take would be to introduce reforms designed to ensure the independence of the Press Complaints Commission. Sir David charted the way forward; we hope that it will be followed. Sir David also identified the need for a further look at the Commission's code of practice, which would need to be amended to reflect more closely what was proposed in the privacy committee's report. In particular, the code would need to spell out more specifically what "public interest" considerations had to be satisfied for publication to be considered justifiable. The Government look to the press to take all those points to heart; it remains to be seen whether, and how far, the press will respond to the crtiticisms in Sir David's report.

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): I hope that I am not premature in expressing a desire for my hon. Friend to conclude by wishing the Bill a fair wind, which would allow the very developments for which he asks to take place here. I refer to his personal view, rather than to his description of the Government's response.

As my hon. Friend has said, this is a parliamentary matter. I have an awful fear that the Government are intimidated by the press and are afraid to act; alternatively, they may think that they owe a debt to the press, because it helped them to win the general election. We are told that no one believes reports in newspapers such as *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*—although everyone seems to have voted Tory as a result of reading *The Sun*.

Can my hon. Friend reassure those of us who have our doubts about the Bill on certain grounds but who believe that such issues should be examined in the way suggested by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and that that could best be done by giving his Bill a Committee stage? That would enable hon. Members to examine, freely and openly, the very issues about which the Government are concerned, but in which they do not wish to become involved at this stage.

Mr. Key: I am going to ask my hon. Friend to do something very difficult and unusual. I am going to ask him to make up his mind without the assistance of a Government pressing him in a certain direction. I shall not seek to cajole him, or any of my right hon. and hon. Friends, at 2.30 this afternoon.

My right hon. Friend and I have of course studied carefully the many editorials which have appeared on the subject, and not only in national newspapers. As my right hon. Friend also made clear, the Government will want, before reaching final conclusions on a statutory regime, to take account of not only today's very useful and timely

[Mr. Key]

debate but the outcome of the inquiry into privacy and media intrusion that the Select Committee on National Heritage has set in train. We look forward to receiving the Select Committee's report as a further significant contribution to the public debate on these issues. We have had a number of excellent speeches today from both sides of the House and members of the Select Committee.

Mr. Mandelson: The hon. Gentleman seems to be joining the herdlike, headlong rush of opposition to the Press Complaints Commission. As it happens, I am not in that herd. However, both I—and, I believe, the House—should like to know precisely why the Government think that the Press Complaints Commission has been so ineffective. Is it because the code of practice is flawed? If so, in what respect? Or is it because the commission has not invoked the code sufficiently? Or is it because the code has been flouted once a judgment has been reached? Which of these three is it?

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated the next paragraph of my speech. I shall, of course, come to his absolutely crucial and reasonable request.

I must make it clear to the hon. Member for Hammersmith that we regard his Bill as premature and misconceived. I have already explained why we regard it as premature. We think that there are other voices to be heard and other judgments to be made. We think that it is misconceived because, in effect, it invites the House to tackle the complex issues raised by Sir David's review on a piecemeal basis, rather than in the round.

The Bill has two main purposes. It creates an Independent Press Authority, with duties to promote high standards of journalism, and it establishes a right to a published correction of factual inaccuracy in the press.

We believe that the Bill has a number of defects. The new press authority, for example, would have wide-ranging duties to promote ethical standards among the press and to issue advice and guidance, but it is given no powers to enforce its codes of practice or any other guidance material. It has potentially far-reaching powers to order the publication of corrections of factual inaccuracy, but the Bill makes no attempt to define what is meant by "factual inaccuracy".

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Minister suggests that the Bill is premature. I am aware of hundreds of people throughout the country who have suffered personal tragedies—someone having been assassinated or murdered, or a member of a family having been arrested—and have then been subjected to horrendous doorstepping by the newspapers. Is it not time that we did something to stop that now, instead of going on talking about it, month after month, leaving more people to be subjected to that sort of treatment on their doorsteps, which is absolutely disgusting, given the horrors that they are already suffering?

Mr. Key: I do not deny for one moment that many of our constituents and many hon. Members fall into that category. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) highlighted that problem by seeking to substitute his judgment regarding what should be the editorial policy of newspapers for that of a particular newspaper whose editorial policy he does not like. That is the danger of following the route suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hargreaves: The point made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) was that enough time had gone by and enough people had been subjected to horrendous doorstepping after not just criminal offences but tragedies in their own families. Their house may burn down, and the press immediately turn up on the doorstep. Surely the flaw in this Bill, if it is flawed, is not its suggestion that the press should improve its conduct—a suggestion which both I and the whole House probably believe to be admirable—but the fact that it does not balance sufficiently the freedom of the press, encompassed in its title, and privacy from doorstepping.

Mr. Key: The hon. Member for Hammersmith referred to freedom of information, which is an important issue. I do not seek to sidestep it, but it stretches far beyond the press and my Department's responsibility. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister feels passionately about open government, one manifestation of which is his determination to extend the principle of the citizens charter—an idea which, initially, was derided but which is having a substantial and welcome impact on public service. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is urgently undertaking much work on the issue of open government and the management of information right across government.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister referred to my intervention. I would be critical of the editorial judgment of some newspapers—that is my right, but it is their right as well. I disagree with some of the points that have been made by my hon. Friends. I buy newspapers because they are biased and because I know what I read in them will be what I like. I expect that that is true of every hon. Member. If a newspaper gives an opinion, it is an opinion, but if it says, in direct quotes, "Someone said that", and they did not, that is a lie. It should be seen as a lie and nailed as such.

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman is right about that point, but I was referring to his comments on Somalia.

I am being pressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, which, perhaps unusually, I find helpful, because it shows the urgency to take on board the need for some reform. We are now arguing, I hope in an informed and balanced way, about the need for such reform.

It might have been possible to correct some of the matters to which I have referred during the Bill's passage through Parliament if we had been able to endorse its underlying policy, but at present we are not in a position to do so. We need to listen further.

What is clear—on this point the Government can express full agreement with Sir David Calcutt—is that, if a statutory complaints tribunal or authority were to be introduced, its remit would have to encompass not only those areas that the Bill seeks to cover but other matters. Sir David makes that point in paragraph 6.4 of his report, where he says that the Bill, which suggests that the press authority should have responsibility for promoting high standards of journalism, does not accept, except in relation to matters of accuracy, how such standards are to be attained.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister said that he would listen to comment. In the light of what he said about Calcutt, how does he answer the charge by the Guild of Newspaper Editors that we are going down the road of state-appointed press policemen?

Mr. Key: That is one of the problems, which is why we want to listen to the Select Committee. It undoubtedly will have much to say about how the commission should operate. I do not deny the gravity of the hon. Gentleman's charge. That is why I do not wish to be hurried, but I see the need to make haste.

Mr. Mandelson: The Minister said that the Government have not made up their mind about the crucial issue of moving from self-regulation to state regulation, but, within 72 hours of the Calcutt report being published, the Prime Minister let it be known through his press secretary to the parliamentary lobby, that he—he is not an unimportant member of the Government—had now decided against statutory regulation of the press. Was that because he sensed Kelvin MacKenzie's tanks rolling down Whitehall and approaching No. 10 Downing street?

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman is being slightly fanciful and is using words that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not use. Quite specifically, my right hon. Friend did not say that he had decided anything. It is alleged that he expressed an opinion, which anyone is entitled to express. I am glad that he has opinions, with which I can always agree.

Sir David's view is that a somewhat different statutory body with wider functions and powers would be needed. He went on to say what he thought those functions and powers should be. As I have said, Sir David's recommendation is still on the table. The Government have not yet picked it up. We want to hear what others think of his ideas. We want to see what response the press is prepared to make to his call for reform.

For all those reasons, we are not able to support the Bill today. It may secure a Second Reading today. If so, we recommend that it should not be passed unless it is suitably amended.

1 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): It has been one of those odd weeks in this place. It started with Ministers and Conservative Members of Parliament on Monday putting the boot into the football pools because they were private firms making private profits and Labour describing the Government's proposals for a national lottery as the unacceptable face of nationalisation. Today Conservative Members want new legal constraints on the press and Labour defends and wants to extend press freedom. The Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) seeks to do just that. However, we shall need to consider in Committee the route by which he proposes to achieve the ends of better accuracy and faster correction for the citizen.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on his Bill and especially on the enormous amount of work that he has put into it. He follows in the steps of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who is absent today, and my hon. Friends the Members for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). The central issue of the Bill and of both Calcutt reports seems to be how we balance the freedom of the press, which we too often take for granted, with the responsibility of the press, which it too often ignores in the chase for sales and advertising revenue.

The issue essentially involves the national daily and Sunday press. Regional daily and local weekly newspapers are nearer to their readers, more in touch with them, feature far less often in complaints and are much speedier in putting complaints right. I worked on papers in each category when I had a real job, so I feel able to make that claim.

Various attempt have been made to achieve the balance between freedom and responsibility after bouts of public and parliamentary anxiety about press behaviour and standards. They included the former Press Council, the present Press Complaints Commission and now the repeated Calcutt proposals for a statutory body. The Press Council went because it was recognised that it had failed. It failed because, as with the Press Complaints Commission, owners refused to make clear to their editors the standards that they expected them and their staff to meet.

The new breed of owners have their eyes more firmly on cash than on quality and they enable and encourage an atmosphere in which the object is sales rather than standards. Each should go hand in hand. I do not put the editors in the dock alone. The owners are in the driving seat. They pile on the pressure for sales, especially in the never-ending tabloid war on weekdays and Sundays, but that does not leave the editors blameless.

In earlier days, editors had an independence from owners which has now all but gone. There is no way in which the editor of *The Sun*, even if he wanted to, could urge readers to vote Liberal Democrat or Labour before a general election because his paper's foreign owner would not allow it. To that extent, he is not free, so he should not feel free to invent stories and put words into people's mouths, whether for fun or for malign reasons, if the paper's owner accepted equivalent responsibility. It is in that sense that I say that responsibility rests with owners. They cannot stand aside and pretend that the editors are in charge. The owners—those owners especially—decide. If an editor is in any doubt about that, he soon becomes a former editor. The central aim of the Bill is simple. It seeks to make it

> "the duty of newspapers not to publish deliberately or carelessly, inaccuracies or statements designed to mislead, and to correct promptly and with due significance inaccuracies which they have published or misleading statements for which they are responsible, apologising for these where appropriate."

The words are not mine. They come from appendix Q on page 119 of the first Calcutt report into privacy and related matters, which was published in June 1990.

The Press Complaints Commission significantly altered that and most other provisions of the proposed code and, in many respects, went back to the inadequate code of the former Press Council. Even then, some editors and owners have chosen to ignore it. It is because the PCC tampered with the Calcutt code that we have Calcutt mark 2 and, in part, my hon. Friend's Bill.

Press and Parliament have been playing a cat and mouse game for years. The press and its owners do not believe that the House will seek to rein in the wilder excesses of publications at the sleazier end of the business because, in so doing, it would be seen to be acting against

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

what little proper investigative journalism is carried out on behalf of the public, mainly by the broadsheets—or the "quality" press, as it titles itself.

In turn, that has encouraged those with little respect for accuracy and a lot of respect for commercial success to take risks because they know that their posher and more responsible brothers, like the American cavalry, will ride in and come to their aid in the name of them all. Because the press and its owners have failed to exercise properly the responsibility that goes along with its freedoms, we need to encourage them on behalf of the public.

The Bill stands on its own, although Calcutt is close alongside. In a sense, the row between press, public and Parliament was bound to happen from the moment the press was shown into the last chance saloon with seven editors and eight of the great and the good to set up the Press Complaints Commission and began by watering down the code of conduct proposed by Calcutt.

As they are relevant to the Bill, I shall give two examples that deal with inaccuracies and the chance to reply. As I said earlier, Calcutt stated that it is

"the duty of newspapers not to publish, deliberately or carelessly, inaccuracies or statements designed to mislead".

The Press Complaints Commission code said that

"Newspapers should take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted material."

There is an enormous difference between a "duty" and "taking care".

Following the former rule of every journalist when I was at it—if in doubt, leave it out—Calcutt said that it was a "duty" not to publish. The PCC coyly changed that to "take care". The gap is wide and significant. In paragraph 2 of the proposed code, Calcutt said:

"It is the duty of newspapers to allow a fair opportunity for reply when reasonably called for."

The PCC's version is:

"A fair opportunity for reply to inaccuracies should be given to individuals or organisations when reasonably called for."

Again, the House will note the "duty" that Calcutt wanted newspapers to accept became simply "a fair opportunity".

We know, and I think that we understand, that many newspapers do not like to publish corrections, even when they acknowledge that a genuine error has been made. Often, errors are made because of the speed of production. Newspapers often seek to put things right by offering to run another version of the same story, but that is not good enough. It allows the first story to stand so that, as the late Manny Shinwell described it,

"Reporters check the cuttings in the fond belief that they are checking the facts"

and inaccuracies and distortions run the risk of being repeated.

I shall give a third example in which a change between what Calcutt wanted and what the PCC delivered sowed the seeds of failure. On intrusion into grief, Calcutt said in paragraph 7:

"Newspapers and journalists serving them should in general avoid intruding into personal grief. Inquiries should be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion."

The PCC massaged this in the following permissive way:

"In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries should be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion."

Where Calcutt wanted inquiries avoided, the PCC assumed that they were okay if they were done with "sympathy and discretion". I just do not understand why either editors or owners have any objection to a bid to raise and maintain standards of professional competence and, where inaccuracies happen, to have them corrected. Certainly no working newspaper journalist can properly object to this. As my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) has rightly said, journalists working in broadcasting have to meet far higher standards than anything envisaged in the Bill proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith.

The Independent seems to manage this all right. On page 2, its first home news page, of its edition on Wednesday it carried an apology for a statement—on the face of it a damaging one—made in its edition on Monday. It apologised for that report and then added the most unusual words in my experience

"We are happy to correct this error."

Surely that is the way in which it should be done. I cannot for the life of me see why there is any argument against. I assume that, in this case, there was a civilised conversation between the complainant and the newspaper and that things were sorted out. Such an approach is one of the main thrusts of the Bill and my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith lays great stress on the role of the adviser who, he believes, will try to achieve that.

The problem starts where the complaintant and the newspaper cannot agree that an inaccuracy or a misstatement has occurred. That brings us to the real choice of the Bill. Should there be some form of statutory body or should tenders now be invited for an extension to the last chance saloon and yet another go at self-regulation?

We have made it clear that we are opposed to the route that Calcutt has suggested. As the House has heard today, there are bodies set up under statute, but which are independent of government. That may be one of the keys to solving this puzzle. There is the Independent Television Commission, the BBC board of governors, the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, the Advertising Standards Authority, the Office of Fair Trading, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and so on. All those organisations have been given life through laws passed here, so perhaps the choice between self-regulation and statutory form needs putting in another way.

We probably all agree that, at least to date, self-regulation has not worked as we intended, and we are entitled to be dubious whether it ever will. We and many others also do not want any form of body that is Government run and seen to be a licensing system. We shall try to find an answer somewhere between the two as we consult and consider our response to Calcutt. In the context of the Bill, we shall see whether there are other ways of getting adequate powers of enforcement if persuasion and reason fail.

The press response to my hon. Friend's Bill might have carried more weight if some of them at least had come out strongly in support of a freedom of information act, a Bill of Rights or an inquiry into the growing threat to true freedom of the press through monopoly ownership and cross-ownership of the media.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The hon. Member mentioned a Bill of Rights. I noted with great interest the speech reported today from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). The Labour party should think carefully before endorsing a Bill of Rights and the

large shift from democratic to judicial power which that would entail. Does the hon. Gentleman recall how the Reagan Administration set out successfully to shift the ideological balance of the Supreme Court in the United States? Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the observations of the former chief justice of the Canadian Supreme Court, Brian Dickson? He and his colleagues were the final arbiters on many of the important social issues confronting society. Is that how the Labour party want parliamentary democracy to develop?

Mr. Corbett: I am sure that if I begin discussions with the hon. Gentleman on a Bill of Rights, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will pull me up. I am glad to have anticipated the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the leader of the Labour party. The Bill of Rights would not stand alone, but would be one of a number of other measures that I have mentioned—not least a freedom of information Act. It has long been the Labour party's position that the general provisions of a Bill of Rights should be underpinned by specific measures. However, I shall not develop that issue.

The Labour party and I are not alone in believing that a growing threat to freedom of the press lies in the monopoly ownership and cross-ownership of the media. It cannot be healthy for press freedom that a man who owns 50 per cent. of BSkyB also controls more than 35 out of every 100 newspapers sold each day in the United Kingdom. He also has an effective monopoly of the technology needed to operate satellite pay television services in the United Kingdom, which makes his the only organisation allowed to issue the smart cards needed by satellite viewers.

I have deliberately not mentioned the other issues in the Calcutt report such as intrusion, trespass and illegal electronic bugging as they form no part of my hon. Friend's Bill. However, I have no doubt that the House will discuss them later.

The press should welcome and embrace the Bill's aims and help us to find a sensible way of achieving them. If it will not, we shall have to encourage it to exercise its responsibilities more effectively and to attain higher professional and ethical standards by giving the Bill and Second Reading today.

1.17 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who made a thoughtful and constructive speech, as did my hon. Friend the Minister. I very much agree with what the hon. Member for Erdington said about the facile way in which a falsehood, once formulated in the press, takes on a life of its own and is endlessly repeated as an established fact.

I was the subject of an amusing example of that a little while ago. The *Evening Standard* printed an article stating that I was a millionaire. I cannot imagine that any research was undertaken to verify that claim, which was fundamentally false and must have greatly surprised my bank manager. Having been published in the *Evening Standard*, it has since been repeated nearly every time that my name is mentioned in the press—which does not happen frequently—as an established fact. The claim, which was not defamatory, has established a life of its own. No doubt it greatly increases my credit among shopkeepers and tradesmen. Such examples must be reproduced thousands of times over the year.

Unlike the majority of my Conservative colleagues, I am not intrinsically opposed to a freedom of information Act. I hope that the Government will look more positively at the possibility of learning from the satisfactory experience in the United States.

I am pleased that most hon. Members who have spoken this morning began by congratulating the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), because he deserves the warmest possible congratulations. In my relatively brief time in the House, I cannot recall any other private Member's Bill which has been the subject of such thorough and thoughtful preparation. That was reflected in the speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith when he introduced the Bill this morning. His initiative in setting up a committee to take evidence before he introduced his Bill was most valuable. I hope that the same practice will be followed on future occasions. It was a privilege for me to serve on the committee. We took some most interesting evidence, some of which was horrifying in the abuses of press behaviour which it revealed.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith knows that I have one or two fundamental reservations about the principle of his Bill—I have never hidden that from him. Nevertheless, there is no question but that the Bill raises important and timely issues. It would be wrong for the House to bury those issues today by voting against the Bill at this stage. It would be right for those issues to be given full parliamentary scrutiny in a Committee. Therefore, I shall vote without any hesitation for the Bill if I have an opportunity to do so later today.

My reservations can be rapidly summed up because they are essentially matters of principle. It is right for the House always to be extremely reluctant to introduce any sort of regulation, especially a statutory governmental regulation, in any field. It is far too easy for hon. Members to dream up new things that should be regulated and new restrictions that should be imposed on human freedom. Sometimes it is much too difficult to deregulate—and it is rarely done—to get rid of the enormous incubus of restrictions and regulations from which we suffer in our society. It is right to treat with the greatest suspicion any suggestion that we should regulate something that is not regulated at present. It is especially right to treat with suspicion the suggestion that the Government should become involved directly or indirectly in such regulation. When we forget that basic principle, we shall be on our way to a society that becomes so regulated that it suffocates, and possibly loses the right to call itself a genuinely free and open society.

My second reservation, which connects to my first one, is that I am inherently suspicious of any concept of a press law. A press law exists in many totalitarian or semi-totalitarian countries. One should not be worried by the fact that the phrase "press law" is often used in such countries. One should look at the merits of the proposal before us, although a certain amount of suspicion and hesitation are in order.

Mr. Fabricant: Surely my hon. Friend would not refer to Holland as being anything other one of the most liberal nations, although it has privacy legislation. We are not even discussing a privacy Bill today.

Mr. Davies: I agree with my hon. Friend. I shall move on to the question of a privacy Bill in a moment, but I am strictly addressing the Bill before the House today, which is a press law.

We must look at the matter open-mindedly. However, it is right to look at the matter with some hesitation, for the fundamental reason that the press should, in a free society, have exactly the same rights and obligations as all other citizens, no more and no less. When one introduces a law that governs the behaviour of a specific class of citizen —in this case the press—an amount of doubt and scepticism are in order. I put it no more strongly than that.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: On the basis of the hon. Gentleman's argument about equal rights and privileges, would he say that the credit rating of a billionaire should be passed and be equal, or that the credit rating of someone who was not a billionaire should be absolutely equal, too?

Mr. Davies: I have now been elevated to being a billionaire, if I heard the hon. Lady correctly. My credit will be going up by leaps and bounds. I was unable totally to follow the mathematics or the logic of the hon. Lady's intervention, but when I read it in *Hansard* I promise to think carefully about it.

On the other side of the balance sheet, the Bill has some clear attractions. First and foremost is the appalling state of the press in this country. There is no doubt that in some respects we have a good press. I greatly regret the demise of so many of our good provincial broadsheets over the past 10 years or so. But we have five quality national dailies which are a great national asset. I know of no other western country which has more than two or three national quality dailies. That applies to the continent and to the United States, although the United States has time zone reasons for quality papers on the west coast not circulating on the east coast.

The five national quality newspapers that we all know set extremely high standards of journalism and deserve to be considered among the best newspapers in the world. That is high praise, because there are some extremely good ones, especially in Switzerland and Germany. At the other end of the spectrum, our tabloids are quite appalling. Only *Bild Zeitung* in Europe competes with the tabloids in this country either for trivialisation and sensationalism, or for low standards in the verification and presentation of stories. Such a national issue concerns us all.

Tabloids are published throughout the world and there are the rather lurid ones at the check-out points in American supermarkets; the *National Enquirer* is the most famous. There are many others elsewhere, such as *Ici Paris* or *France Dimanche,* in France. They serve a certain market for titillation, but it is accepted by readers and everyone else in those countries that the great majority, if not the totality, of what is contained in them is complete rubbish or invention. No doubt they are the more titillating and exciting for that. Sometimes our tabloids seem to have an identity crisis because they do not know whether they belong in that category of publication or are still trying to be newspapers presenting news. The result is the problems with which we are all familiar.

Mr. Garnier: Does my hon. Friend accept that the more disreputably journalists behave, the more obscure the benefits of their freedom tend to be? Thus the defenders of the freest possible press are never more needed than when press freedoms are most abused.

Mr. Davies: That is an unexceptionable and worthy statement of aims.

The second important reason for making use of the opportunity that the Bill presents to discuss these matters is that it is quite clear that the Press Complaints Commission is a paper tiger It no longer has any credibility in any section of society, except of course in the section that dominates the PCC—the proprietors and the editors. The fact that the PCC is dominated by the industry is a weakness which even Lord McGregor, under considerable pressure, has had to recognise.

The Press Complaints Commission suffers from other defects. It is a toothless as well as a paper tiger. No sanctions are available to it and, in their absence, its judgments are likely to be treated with some contempt by those who do not respect the commission's aims, which are in themselves highly laudable.

I have read the commission's last two reports and I was struck by the extraordinary tone of complacency that they reflected. They seemed to suggest that the commission was saying, "Everything is perfect in the best of all possible worlds. We have seen off the enemies of press freedom. Everyone is happy with what we are doing. If we do not pass judgment against newspapers, generally it is because there are no complaints or because the complaints made have no merit." It seems that the continued existence of the commission is not in the public interest. It acts as a screen behind which the worst abuses will continue. If the initiative of the hon. Member for Hammersmith does nothing else—the same can be said of the Calcutt report—I hope that it will bring about sorely needed reform.

I am prepared to be convinced that we should support the Bill. I look forward to its consideration in Committee. The House and the country will greatly appreciate the opportunity to examine in great detail and with much care the important issues that the Bill raises.

I greatly welcome what my hon. Friend the Minister said about privacy. It is the Government's intention to look favourably at the possibility of introducing a tort for breach of privacy. They have a commitment to look favourably at making illegal several of the mechanisms that have been used recently by the media to invade privacy. It seems to be an even more important issue than the regulation of the press. It is based on a fundamental principle to which I believe we all subscribe, which is that in a free society everyone must have the maximum freedom that is compatible with the freedom of others. That principle leads us inexorably to the view that there is an area of everybody's personal life that should be secure from invasion.

My personal belief is that if someone is in public life there is a quid pro quo for entering it, its being a voluntary act. That person must accept that any aspect of his activity that could have any bearing on his public activities or publicly stated opinions should be open to public scrutiny. Therefore, any privacy Bill must have a public interest protection clause.

I am aware of some sad cases of invasion of the privacy of some of my constituents. One, for instance, is by no stretch of the imagination a public figure. He found that two pages in the *News of the World* were devoted to his

private life. That is inconsistent with the basic principle that in a free society people's privacy should be immune from attack in that way.

Various methods have been used by the media recently to invade the privacy of citizens. They include the bugging of telephone conversations, purchasing purloined photographs or private correspondence, corrupting so-called friends or acquaintances of the media's targets and the use of surreptitious electronic or photographic surveillance devices of various sorts. It is not an exaggeration to say that we have the use by the media here in the 1990s of methods that are more usually associated with the operations of secret police forces in totalitarian societies. That is a serious matter and a practice that should be brought to an end rapidly, and I hope that it will be by the implementation of the proposals to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend share my concern that if privacy as a concept is introduced into civil law —it has been said already that it is those who are perhaps weak and financially less able to defend themselves who are most at risk—the tort will be available only to those who are rich and powerful unless we provide legal aid or another mechanism to enable those most at risk to use the civil courts?

Mr. Davies: I do not want to be drawn too much into the important matter raised by my hon. Friend, but I can give him three short answers. First, surveillance methods such as bugging should be brought within the criminal law and, therefore, subject to criminal prosecution in verified instances of such behaviour. Secondly, there should be a civil tort of privacy, enabling individuals to gain some protection from those who attack their privacy. Thirdly —this is not a matter on which you would allow me to go into any great detail, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it is rather wide of the debate—there is a major problem because sadly civil legal redress is, in practice, restricted to those on income support—who thereby qualify for legal aid—and those who, unlike myself, are genuine billionaires and can afford to pay lawyers.

If I may be allowed to make a personal plug, I attempted to deal with the problem through a ten-minute Bill during the last Parliament, which would have overridden the rules of the Law Society and the Bar Council that currently prevent lawyers from taking on briefs on a contingency-fee basis. If we had contingency fees, the problem would be solved without a great burden on the Treasury. There would be no danger of a great many frivolous law suits because lawyers taking on such briefs would have to be sure that the cases had merit and a reasonable chance of success or they would not be paid. That would be a useful discipline.

The methods to which I have referred and the whole squalid morass of corruption and intrusion that has grown up in Fleet Street has brought about a new industry which has replaced the traditional industry of blackmail. Throughout the history of society—ours and others—there have been blackmailers. They are unpleasant criminals and we have always treated them as such, with high penalties for those convicted.

The blackmailer has been put out of business because anyone who purloins some document or photograph or bugs some conversation that might be used against an individual no longer has to go to that individual and say, "Unless you pay me money I will reveal all", get £1,000 or £2,000 from his poor victim and risk 10 years in gaol; he has only to go to Fleet Street or Wapping to get tens of thousands of pounds for the information and be hailed a hero, without risk of any penalty.

We have not so much given a new lease of life to blackmail as replaced it with something much more attractive and with much greater economic inducements. We have produced a new and squalid industry that has been the cause of a number of scandals, to which I do not need to refer as they are fresh in our minds.

The House cannot for much longer continue to sweep the matter under the carpet. The hon. Member for Hammersmith has provided us with a splendid opportunity. The Government's initative in setting up the Calcutt inquiry did the same. We have now reached the stage where, as a House of Parliament, we must take some important decisions in the next few months. I hope that, whatever we hear during our debates, we do not hear any more of the argument that we are being premature and that we can continue to avoid making difficult decisions.

1.39 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I know that we are not allowed to see beyond the Chamber, but it is a pity that our debate has not yet succeeded in attracting more than half a dozen members of our free press to the Press Gallery.

I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on the dignified, restrained and careful way in which he presented his case. Like many hon. Members who have spoken, in a previous incarnation I was a journalist. For a time, I was the editor of a small but distinguished publication entitled *Tribune*. All the issues that we discussed today presented themselves to me in that capacity but never caused me any difficulty. It was always taken for granted that if we made a mistake, as we sometimes did, we would correct it and that we would apologise when we were wrong.

I always took it for granted, not merely on questions of fact. If someone of a different opinion felt that it had not been properly represented in our publication, I gave them an opportunity to put their point of view. Previous and subsequent editors did the same.

Mr. Stewart Steven, editor of the *Evening Standard* was quoted the other day as saying, "You have to be in a profession to understand it well enough to make proper judgments upon it." Many hon. Members who have spoken are in that profession and have made proper judgments on it—and I am glad to add my name to theirs. I have been in that profession 20 years and understand it all too well.

I understand that while we have journalists and newspapers of integrity, they are a minority. I understand that most national and many regional newspapers are controlled by multinational corporations motivated by a ruthless desire for profits regardless of facts twisted or lives ruined. Our worst newspapers are no more than a branch of the entertainment industry run by unscrupulous men and women willing to do whatever is necessary to make money for their proprietors, their shareholders and themselves. They have to some extent debased our way of life and the profession of journalism.

I understand also that some newspapers are owned by proprietors whose interest is not only making profits but

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seeking an outlet for their political prejudices. That was more the case in the past, but it is still true today. At least some of the old press barons were frank about that. Lord Beaverbrook told the 1947 royal commission on the press, "I own the *Daily Express* for the sole purpose of making political propaganda and for no other reason." Nowadays, the Maxwells and Beaverbrooks are a dying breed; money is the main motivation now.

I understand that it is one of the functions of much of our tabloid press to assume the role once performed in the Soviet Union by the KGB—the hounding of dissidents on behalf of the state. All the talk about independence from the state is nonsense. The tabloid press often acts as an agent of the state. When the Government have been offended by the actions of a particular individual, a tidal wave of hatred is unleashed on that person. We can all think of examples. One of the most vicious attacks in recent times was perhaps on Peter Tatchell, who had the good fortune to be selected as Labour candidate in Bermondsey. I believe that today politicians of all persuasions are ashamed of what occurred in that by-election. That man's life was ruined: his house had to be boarded up, he came under siege, he received enormous amount of hate mail and he was attacked in the street—on one occasion, by people chanting from a headline in *The Sun*—and all because of false reporting.

There was the case also of Carmen Proetta who, while washing up in her kitchen in Gibraltar, happened to see from her window the killing by the Special Air Service of three IRA people. It was not as though she planted herself there—it was her own home. Her version of events differed somewhat from the official version. I will not get bogged down in those two versions, but a tidal wave of hate was unleashed also on Carmen Proetta—with some encouragement from the state. Here is one of the better-known examples:

"The Tart . . . The Sun discovers shock truth about IRA death witness Carmen . . . she is an ex-prostitute, runs an escort agency, and is married to a seedy drug peddler".

All that was false, and ultimately had to be paid for in libel damages, but if a correction ever appeared in *The Sun*—I certainly did not see one—I bet that it was a bit smaller than the article that committed the original offence.

Towards the end of his speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith said that those who dared to suggest that there was anything wrong with our system of justice had had to endure a certain amount of hatred in the early days, generated by those who took a different view. I regret to say that that was sometimes encouraged by members of the Cabinet. I am proud to have on my wall, framed, my own front-page headline from *The Sun* in letters several inches high: "Loony MP backs bomb gang". I also possess various editorials, "Mr. Odious . . . Is there a more odious man in Britain than . . .".

I do not mind any of that. As several hon. Members have already pointed out, politicians are not really entitled to complain. People who depend on votes for a living, however, find it somewhat regrettable that those who peddled such nonsense chose not to deal with the arguments, but, as I said earlier to the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), preferred to tell my constituents that I was motivated by a love for "the men in balaclavas". I am afraid that a lot of the mud stuck. As I have said, it does not bother me much; those who run public campaigns find that a good denunciation is something to be grateful for, because it shows that they have managed to catch the attention of people whose attention needs to be caught. In such circumstances, the worst that the press can do is to ignore one. That, however, was not the position of Carmen Proetta, an ordinary citizen who, when washing up in her kitchen, just happened to witness events with which she was unconnected. She was given the full treatment.

I treat with contempt any suggestion that the likes of Kelvin MacKenzie are protecting our liberties from the excesses of the establishment. Mr. MacKenzie's loyalty to the establishment is exceeded only by his loyalty to his proprietor, Rupert Murdoch. We must all be amused by the spectacle of editors demanding independence from the establishment while simultaneously queueing to accept knighthoods from the very establishment from which they claim to protect us. What more loyal lickspittles of the establishment can there be than Sir Larry Lamb, Sir Nicholas Lloyd, Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, Sir David English and Sir Alastair Burnet—oh yes, Sir Alastair Burnet too? Anyone in doubt about why those knighthoods were handed over by the state should read the coverage of recent general elections or of the miners' strike. If we have to depend on such people for our liberties, we are all doomed.

I believe that a free press is the lifeblood of democracy. My only regret is that we have no such free press. I feel rather like Mr. Gandhi who, when he came to this country in the 1930s, was asked what he thought of British civilisation. He replied that he thought that it would be a very good idea. If I were asked what I thought of a free press I, too, would say that I thought it a very good idea. The Bill takes a small step in that direction—although, with great respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith, it is only a small step.

Having spent most of my life in inquiring journalism, I would not support any measure designed to shackle press freedom, but the Bill does not threaten press freedom in any way; it merely legislates for a minimum standard of integrity, in an area in which all attempts at self-regulation have failed.

Many hon. Members have referred to the appalling state of the tabloid press, and I agree with all that they have said. Indeed, I can add to it, but it is a little too easy to justify what we are seeking to do on the sole ground of the worst example—*The Sun*. In fact, the problem is not confined to the gutter press. When I went to Vietnam for the first time, in 1973, I was amazed to discover that *The Daily Telegraph's* Saigon correspondent—who appeared in the paper every day under the name "John Draw"—was actually Nguyen Ngoc Phac, a captain on the general staff of the Saigon army, responsible for press relations. So confident was he that his cover would never be blown that he even used to appear in the Reuter office to tap out his dispatches among all the other journalists, wearing his uniform.

When I went home I dropped a letter to *The Daily Telegraph* which at that time was, I believe, edited by Lord Deedes. It refused to publish my letter, despite having agreed in advance to publish one. It then wrote back with a lie, saying that while I was correct in assuming that the correspondent was Nguyen Ngoc Phac, and not John Draw, it had no idea that he was an officer on the general staff of the Saigon army.

To test how far freedom of the press went, I then offered this snippet to the diary columns of *The Times* and *The Guardian*. From *The Times* there was only silence. From *The Guardian*, the reply was that it thought that this news was a bit "so what-ish." I then took the matter to the Press Council, as it then was. I still have the fascinating correspondence that I had with the Press Council over a period of nine months or a year. It went up hill and down dale with reasons why it could not touch this thorny issue with a bargepole.

Lest anyone think that 1973 was a long time ago and that *The Daily Telegraph* has cleaned up its act since then, I will offer a more recent example, In August of last year *The Daily Telegraph* increased the price of its Saturday edition from 50p to 60p, without passing on the increase to the newsagents. That followed a reduction in the retailers' percentage 18 months previously. The National Federation of Retail Newsagents attempted to take out an advertisement in *The Daily Telegraph* to explain the position of its members. The advertisement was refused without explanation.

When I raised the matter with the editor, I received a reply from the circulation director, Mr. C. J. Haslum, which we should bear in mind when told that we have a completely free press which is open to all schools of thought. He said:

> "It is very well established that no newspaper publisher is ever obliged to include in his newspaper any advertisement to which he takes exception, whether on the ground of taste or because it is not in his commercial interest to do so."

So commercial interest, not principle, guides certainly *The Daily Telegraph* and, I suggest, most of our press.

In Sunderland we have a newspaper called the *Sunderland Echo*, whose commitment to impartiality is not so great as to prevent its board from donating money, from time to time, to the Conservative party. My relationship with the *Sunderland Echo* is not bad now, and I am not complaining about it—I hope that they can hear me up there—but it got offer to a rocky start. Now we have a good working relationship. The editor, Mr. Andrew Hughes, is a man of integrity. He is also a member of the Press Complaints Commission. He wrote in *The Times* on 27 January that my hon. Friend's Bill could turn into a malignant tumour on democracy.

I want to give an illustration from my own experience —only one of a very large number that I could give— regarding the *Sunderland Echo*, edited at the time by the same gentleman. On 20 May 1989, in a front page lead story, the *Sunderland Echo* falsely reported that I had attacked leaders of the local Labour council at a public meeting on coal imports. As that was the lead story, it presented some difficulties for me. The paper then rang the leader of the council and put that falsehood to him and got him to attack me. The paper made that the lead story on the following Monday, its next edition. I contacted the editor of the *Sunderland Echo*. After five days of negotiation and in return for these two false front-page leads, I was rewarded with a five-line correction on page three. The paper was not all that quick in coming forward with that correction; nor was it all that keen to publish it.

I shall give another example from the quality press. I am concerned about the idea that this is all to do with *The Sun* and the *Star*. It is not. It is the whole lot of them, basically, with the most obvious exception of *The Independent*, which is an honourable newspaper and the brightest thing to occur in British national newspaper history in recent years.

I recall a big battle in the Labour party in September 1981. I shall not bore you with the details, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you were around at the time. *The Times* published a profile of the three candidates for the deputy leadership. It inserted a false statement about one of the candidates, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn): "City sources speak of a Stansgate trust registered with the Bank of Bermuda", from which members of his family were supposed to be beneficiaries. I rang the Bank of Bermuda to ask whether that was true and it said that not only was there no such trust but that nobody from *The Times* had bothered to ring to check. I asked the journalist who had written the profile about it and he said that the paragraph that he had included in the article had been removed and replaced with this deliberate falsehood. In due course, but not before the damage was done, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield was awarded a one-line apology at the end of a letter.

The only views of newspapers editors to which I listen with respect are those of editors such as Mr. Andreas Whittam Smith of *The Independent*, but I must, with respect, disagree with him. He said that self-regulation has been successful. It has not. In every example—the City of London, that much-derided body—the Solicitors Complaints Bureau, the police investigating the police and the Advertising Standards Authority—self-regulation has been tried but has not worked properly. That is why, not for the first time, we are discussing a modest measure of this sort. If the media are not happy about the Bill, they have only themselves to blame.

It is my pleasure to support the Bill. I regard it as only a small step in the right direction. Honest journalists have nothing to fear from it and, as an honest journalist, I am proud to support it.

With respect, I do not think that the Bill addresses the real issue, which will await later legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) gave us a clue in his excellent speech, in which he outlined the real problem in a democracy. A democracy depends on the free flow of information, without which there is no democracy. It cannot be right that one proprietor should have five national daily and Sunday newspapers and control of all satellite television. It cannot be right that almost all our national newspapers are in hock to enormous commercial interests rather than to the principles to which they pay lip service.

I look forward to the day when a Government genuinely committed to a free press introduce a little liberal anti-monopoly legislation designed to break up the media empires, but until that day dawns I am happy to support the Bill.

1.57 pm

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) is not one of the hon. Members with whom I normally find myself even within spitting distance of remote agreement, but I endorse much of what he said. He must not assume that all of us who believe in market forces necessarily think that it is good if market forces lead to the media being owned by one or two people. That is not part of my philosophy.

[Mr. Michael Carttiss]

I share the hon. Gentleman's objection to knighthoods. He expressed his objection to the journalists who accept knighthoods, but I express it to those who recommend them for knighthoods. It is a prostitution of their profession that they accept a knighthood from a Government, and it is a wrong tactic for a Government to seek to buy them off by giving them knighthoods. I must tell the House that, if I am here long enough and Her Majesty the Queen is recommended to offer me one, I shall refuse it. I hope that Kelvin MacKenzie will, too.

Other hon. Members want to speak, so I must constrain myself. I hope that the hon. Member for Hammersmith will not mind if I do not launch into paeans of praise. However, I wish to put on record my admiration of his speech today and the way in which he has tackled the problem. He has made an enormous effort. It is an example of this place at its best when an hon. Member goes ahead in that way, strikes a chord across the party divide and involves what we call "ordinary people"—I hope that we put it in quotes because we are ordinary people, too —who would not normally be involved. I commend him greatly for that.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) is another Member with whom I would blush to agree, but today I find myself in agreement with almost everything that he said. He shares the name—we once chatted about the possibility that he might have his ancestry—of the famous Member of Parliament for Great Yarmouth, Miles Corbett, who lost his head for freedom. He was one of those who signed Charles I's death warrant. When Charles II exercised retribution, Miles Corbett lose his head.

One of my predecessors lost his hand in the interests of press freedom in the reign of the previous Queen Elizabeth. He had written a piece that suggested that Queen Elizabeth I should not marry a particularly ugly and senile French duke who was being promoted for her hand. We Yarmouth people have always been rather disinclined to view European potentates with any great favour. My predecessor lost his hand, not for daring to question the Queen joining in matrimony with the ugly French duke, but for suggesting that there was no point in her marrying because she was too old to bear children.

The hon. Member for Erdington highlighted, as did the hon. Member for Sunderland, South, the hypocrisy of the editor of *The Sun*. I also highlight the hypocrisy of the editor of the *Daily Mirror*. They suggest that they are the free press upon which the liberties of the nation depend. They are in hock to their proprietors. *The Sun* is owned by Mr. Murdoch. I am not sure who owns the *Daily Mirror* now. When Maxwell owned it, he honourably set forth his support for the Labour party. But it is no good the *Daily Mirror* or *The Sun* pretending that they are independent.

The quality newspapers are not independent either. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South concentrated our attention on the quality newspapers—this is not all about tabloids. The first time I came to this place, I was about 15 or 16. I had always believed everything that I read in *The Daily Telegraph*. That is probably why I am a Conservative—I never got over the experience. I sat in the Gallery when I was 16 or 17—I am going up in age because I must have been older than 14. I am sure that I did not read *The Daily Telegraph* when I was 14. When I read the next day *The Daily Telegraph* report of the debate that I had attended here, it bore no resemblance whatever to the debate that I had heard.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Carttiss: I shall not give way to anyone because we are running short of time. I apologise to my hon. Friend. Too many Members have given way today.

I share the anxiety that has been expressed about party allegiance. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister that I suggested that he and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State might be intimidated. No one could intimidate my hon. Friend the Minister. I said it in case I was not called. I thought that it would be a good soundbite for my local television and radio stations.

Mr. Kelvin MacKenzie addressed the National Heritage Select Committee. He said, "You guys would be nuts if you wanted the American privacy law". I go to the United States quite a bit and I admire the privacy law; indeed, I am wearing a Cape Cod tie. I should be happy for us to have similar privacy.

Because Miss Whiplash has evidently entertained Members of this House, it has been said that we would be nuts to allow the list to be published. Who are those guilty men? Let them be named.

Mr. Ashton: They are all public schoolboys.

Mr. Carttiss: Do not believe it. What about the journalists and editors? We know that the editors of two quality newspapers have had a liaison with a lady of questionable character. Let us publish the Miss Whiplash list, and not merely the names of Members of Parliament on it. Why is Kelvin MacKenzie not publishing it? The best argument that I have heard for the Bill is the fact that he said, "You must be nuts if you want to publish it". If he did not want to publish it, it shows that the United States legislation on privacy and the press is a good law. Let us copy it. The hon. Member for Hammersmith has not.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) mentioned the problem of defining the truth and my colleagues have also referred to it. My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) was concerned about the question of truth and accuracy. However, truth cannot be defined and that is not what we are talking about. There can be different views of the truth.

My. hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) has left the Chamber. He put up a number of Aunt Sallies and shot them down and he mentioned many matters that are not dealt with in the Bill. Hon. Members tried to use truth as a synonym for accuracy, but one can be accurate but untruthful. It is easy to determine whether something is accurate.

I have no real complaint about my local newspapers, even though they have never contributed to the Conservative party in all the time that they have been in existence. However, one thing has always bugged me. Three or four years ago my local authority applied for assisted area status. I thought that it had no chance of getting it, and it did not. Lord Tebbit was then Secretary of State for Trade and he was not going to give anyone anything. I told the Conservatives and socialists on Great Yarmouth borough council that there was no chance of getting that status and said, "We must stand on our own two feet." The headline on the front page of my local

newspaper that week was, "MP says 'You must stand on your own two feet'". That was inaccuracy. It was not telling an untruth as that was what I meant but, by suggesting that I was separating myself from the people that I represent—in an area where generations of my family have lived and worked—it was pretending that I was adopting a position that was inappropriate for me as a Member of Parliament.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the local newspaper made an error in that headline, by and large, reporting standards and accuracy in regional papers are higher than those of the national press, the reason being that they cannot afford the heavy cost of a libel action? Their sales depend on credibility, which means accuracy.

Mr. Carttiss: My hon. Friend has stated her case, but I do not think that it was a mistake. The headline was a deliberate inaccuracy and it was in quotation marks—the sort of inaccuracy that we have been discussing.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool was concerned about truth and accuracy in relation to the royal family. He said that the newspapers were talking about the marriage between the Prince and Princess of Wales being in a rocky state, which turned out to be the truth. The fact of the matter is that the prince and princess were pushing the story. I saw a problem with the hon. Member using that as an argument against the Bill, which is concerned with accuracy. That is not a matter of accuracy. People are entitled to express a view about a marriage.

I make no complaint about the intrusion of the press on the private lives of Members of Parliament. No hon. Member has mentioned *Sunday Sport*, but I am going to give it a plug because I have been in it several times. The famous occasion—famous for me—when I suddenly decided to vote for the Government, something I do reluctantly every day—*[Interruption.]* Wait a moment. When I see the alternative to the Government, that forces me to vote for them. There was a suggestion that the Whips had used all sorts of blackmailing tactics to persuade Conservative Members to go in the Lobby on the Maastricht Bill. It was suggested that some people had changed their vote, not for the reasons they gave or because of the issues, but because someone knew something about their private life. The next day one of the journalists in the Lobby said to me, "Are you aware that one of your colleagues was threatened that if he didn't vote with the Government the Whips Office would reveal the name of his mistress to his wife?" He asked me what I thought and I said, "I am not worried about my colleagues' mistresses—I've got too many of my own to concern myself with."

Mr. Ashton: Name them.

Mr. Carttiss: Read it in the *Sunday Sport*.

The next day the *Daily Mirror* sent two people to the village where I live, where my mother was born and before her my grandparents and great-grandparents. For two days they went around asking my neighbours about my private life. Those neighbours were free to show those journalists the door, as they did. One dear old lady of 80, who has known me since I was a baby, said, "You send the *Mirror* down to me, boy."—I will have to clean up the language. "The only thing that that paper is any good for is to wipe your backside on." I was away from my house, but those two newspaper people were outside my door. My neighbours kept asking them to go, and eventually they telephoned the police.

If I had changed my vote in the House because I was fearful of some private scandal coming out, the public have the right to know that. If a Member of Parliament puts himself forward to the electorate as a family man, which I do not, and fresh from going to the photographer to be photographed with his wife and adoring children, he then consorts with his mistress, telephone bugged or not, the public are entitled to know.

So, members of the press have a duty which we should be supporting, but they have abused it in many ways. The hon. Member for Hammersmith has done a signal service not just to the House but to the country in obliging us to focus attention on these issues in a small way. If that prods the ample form of my hon. Friend the Minister into coming forward with suitable Government legislation, the Bill will have served its purpose, even if it gets no further. However, I hope that the Bill will reach Committee where the issues will be debated; and there I promise to reveal more of my private life.

2.13 pm

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I should like to join the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) and others, not in the pages of *Sunday Sport*, but in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) not only on introducing the Bill but on the amount of work that so clearly went into it before it was presented to the House. I believe that the title of the Bill, "Freedom and Responsibility of the Press", is a model for what my hon. Friend is attempting to produce. Freedom of the press is essential to any society that wants to be free. However, as we have heard today, that freedom within this country has, in some sections of the press, devolved into licence and its concomitant responsibility has been conspicuous by its absence.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) is not in his place. I was puzzled by his misunderstanding of my hon. Friend's Bill, which contains no attempt to reduce the freedom of the press. Indeed, in his splendid opening speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith took time to say how the freedom of the press is and has been diminished. His Bill attempts to ensure that news and information is presented and disseminated accurately by prompting codes of ethical and professional standards that will produce the highest standards of journalism.

The argument that the code proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith 'would be unworkable falls when considered in the light of existing codes exercised by the BBC and the Independent Television Commission over the broadcasting of television and radio. An example of how such codes of practice can work in the best interests of the public is the world service of the BBC, which is regarded—not only by the people of this country, but by millions of people around the world who, in many instances, are attempting to create a democratic society—as a reliable exponent of accurate facts, news and information.

My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) spoke of believability tables, in which the press fell way below television and radio in the public's trust. What protection is afforded for our democratic system and

[Ms. Glenda Jackson]

our free society if the press so loses its credibility by abusing its own power? That power should, of itself, be engaged in countering the awesome power of government, and of great wealth, privilege and influence. That credibility is most quickly forfeit when power is exercised without responsibility.

The exercise of democracy in a free society is not solely and totally served by our right to place our votes in ballot boxes. We also need accurate information on which to make reasoned judgments about how we wish to be governed. If that information is tainted, so is the political process and democracy. Freedom of expression cannot be tampered with simply because the views expressed are those that we—on whichever side of the political spectrum—do not wish to hear.

Another sphere of concern of which we have heard only this week relates to the invasion of the privacy of those in power and high public office. That issue has become the focal point for the debate on press freedom and responsibility. The debate has centred on those issues and, regrettably, in some instances, seems to have become stuck. In common with other right hon. and hon. Members, I believe that all citizens should have privacy rights. I also believe, however, that those who hold positions of privilege, power and influence must accept a degree of intrusion into their private lives, particularly if their public power directly affects and can limit an individual's privacy. To give more power to the already powerful is not to strengthen a free society, but to weaken it. All too often, people with no privilege, influence and, increasingly, no recourse to lengthy and expensive legal redress, fall victim to the excesses of the press.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith referred to good behaviour on the part of the press as part of the code of conduct. The Minister referred to a possible Government Bill which may include a new law of tort on the invasion of privacy. I prefer my hon. Friend's view that the provision should relate to harassment. I can give the House a personal anecdote. A member of my family was criminally attacked, as a result of which he had to be operated on and spent a few days in hospital. On three separate occasions, the already overstretched and overworked staff of my local hospital had to throw off the ward a photographer from a tabloid newspaper. I have not raised that story in the House because of my involvement, but that was a gross intrusion not only on a member of my family but on other patients. It is desperate that those who dedicate their whole lives to the sick and the ill have had more burdens placed on their shoulders. Such behaviour is simply unacceptable.

The press cannot have it both ways. If its right to protect the public interest is to be safeguarded, the rights of the public must be safeguarded from the press. If the press wishes to protect its right to speak freely about the powerful, the public must have the right to reply to the powerful. If the press wishes to pass comment on private individuals, those individuals must be guaranteed the right to respond.

In common with hon. Members on both sides of the House, I believe that the freedom of the press is central to democracy—indeed, to a free society. It is central because the press is one of the vital links between the people and those whom they elect. In many instances, it is the press who can guard people from abuse by those who, once elected, would otherwise turn their backs on people's needs. It is that link between the interests of the public and of the press which the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith seeks to maintain, and I shall vote for the Bill today.

2.21 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 129, Noes 11.

Division No. 134] **[2.21 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Ingram, Adam
Austin-Walker, John	Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Janner, Greville
Barnes, Harry	Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Battle, John	Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Bayley, Hugh	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Khabra, Piara S.
Berry, Dr. Roger	Knox, David
Betts, Clive	Leighton, Ron
Blunkett, David	Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Livingstone, Ken
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Loyden, Eddie
Burden, Richard	Mackinlay, Andrew
Caborn, Richard	McNamara, Kevin
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*	McWilliam, John
Carttiss, Michael	Mahon, Alice
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Marek, Dr John
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Cohen, Harry	Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Meacher, Michael
Corbett, Robin	Michael, Alun
Corbyn, Jeremy	Miller, Andrew
Cormack, Patrick	Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Corston, Ms Jean	Morgan, Rhodri
Cox, Tom	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Cryer, Bob	Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*	Mullin, Chris
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*	Murphy, Paul
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	O'Hara, Edward
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*	Olner, William
Dobson, Frank	O'Neill, Martin
Dowd, Jim	Pickthall, Colin
Dunnachie, Jimmy	Pike, Peter L.
Eagle, Ms Angela	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Enright, Derek	Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret	Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Fabricant, Michael	Prescott, John
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Radice, Giles
Fisher, Mark	Randall, Stuart
Flynn, Paul	Raynsford, Nick
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*	Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Fraser, John	Rooker, Jeff
Gale, Roger	Ruddock, Joan
Gapes, Mike	Sedgemore, Brian
Gerrard, Neil	Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Godsiff, Roger	Short, Clare
Gorman, Mrs Teresa	Simpson, Alan
Gould, Bryan	Skinner, Dennis
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*	Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*	Soley, Clive
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Spearing, Nigel
Grocott, Bruce	Spellar, John
Gunnell, John	Stern, Michael
Hain, Peter	Strang, Dr. Gavin
Hall, Mike	Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Harris, David	Vaz, Keith
Heppell, John	Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*	Walley, Joan
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*	Watson, Mike
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*	Wicks, Malcolm

Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Joseph Ashton and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Dalyell, Tam
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Hargreaves, Andrew
Kilfedder, Sir James
Maitland, Lady Olga
Thurnham, Peter
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Piers Merchant and
Mr. Peter Bottomley

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 119, Noes 15.

Division No. 135] **[2.31 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Fraser, John
Gale, Roger
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godsiff, Roger
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Knox, David
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Miller, Andrew
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Joseph Ashton and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Dalyell, Tam
Garnier, Edward
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Kilfedder, Sir James
Maitland, Lady Olga
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Skinner, Dennis
Thurnham, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Piers Merchant and
Mr. Peter Bottomley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Remaining Private Members' Bills

SEXUAL OFFENCES BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

SECRET SOCIETIES (DECLARATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 February.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When an objection is made, can it be made clear whether or not the hon. Member is a freemason, because there could be some very funny things for the Chair——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. That matter is not one for the Chair.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (FREEDOM OF SPEECH) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Further to my hon. Friend's point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), for example, had any interest in the Secret Societies (Declaration) Bill——I do not suggest that he does——would he not be obliged to declare that interest to the House? Can you rule on that point?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That matter is not one for the Chair.

Several hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I will take a point of order.

Mr. Spellar: I thought that you were taking the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and not asking for the day for the National Health Service (Freedom of Speech) Bill. It is Friday next.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) have the authority of the hon. Member in charge?

Mr. Spellar: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

COMMONWEALTH OF BRITAIN BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

WELFARE OF ANIMALS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

LICENSING (AMENDMENT) (SCOTLAND) BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION (COSMETICS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 March.

BAN ON IMPORTS (CHILD LABOUR) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 March.

GAMING MACHINES (PROHIBITION ON USE BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 March.

LICENSED PREMISES (EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN PERSONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [15 January].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 5 February.

SHOPS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

HEDGEROWS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 February.

HOMICIDE (DEFENCE OF PROVOCATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

REFORM OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

COMMONWEALTH OF EUROPE BILL

Order for Second Reading read—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

UNADOPTED ROADS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

ADOPTION OF ROADS (COMPULSORY PROCEDURES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

PRIVATE SECURITY (REGISTRATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

IMMUNITY CERTIFICATES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

EMPLOYMENT (AGE LIMITS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

FUEL COST CREDITS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

HOSPITAL SECURITY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

ENERGY (FAIR COMPETITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

DAMAGES (SCOTLAND) (No. 2) BILL *[LORDS]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee) considered.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, and Prince of Wales's consent, on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall, signified.]

Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 2nd February, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business), the Speaker shall—

(1) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on Motions in the name of Sir John Cope relating to Customs and Excise not later than one and a half hours after the first such Motion has been entered upon; and

(2) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Sir John Cope relating to Value Added Tax not later than one and a half hours after the first such Motion has been entered upon;

and the said Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 3rd February, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on any Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Howard relating to Local Government Finance not later than Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Ordered.

That, at the sitting on Monday 8th February, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on any Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Hunt relating to Local Government Finance (Wales) not later than Seven o'clock.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

PRISONS

Ordered,

That the Order [12th January], That the draft Criminal Justice Act 1991 (Contracted Out Prisons) (No. 2) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., be discharged.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Mr. Mullin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I asked you a moment ago whether, by chance—I do not make the allegation—the hon. Member who objected to my Secret Societies (Declaration) Bill had an interest. You said that whether the hon. Member concerned had to declare any such interest was not a matter for the Chair. Can you advise me for whom it would be a matter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: An hon. Member need not make a declaration when objecting to a Bill.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One answer would be for my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) to write to the Chairman of the Procedure Committee. It would help considerably, however, if the occupant of the Chair drew the Committee's attention to a point about which many hon. Members feel very strongly—the ability to object to Bills without declaring an interest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The terms of reference are wide enough for Members to write themselves.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is a problem with my hon. Friend's suggestion, excellent though it is. At the moment, objections to Bills are made anonymously on Friday afternoons, so it would be impossible to require a declaration of interest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The same would apply if 100 Members objected all at once.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall indeed refer this matter to the Procedure Committee.

Royal Marsden Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

2.49 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): My own interest in the future of the Royal Marsden hospital began some 25 years ago when a dear school friend, then just 29 years old, was a patient. My interest in the hospital continues to this day. Part of the hospital lies in my constituency of Sutton and Cheam; the rest is in the Fulham road. Many of my constituents are deeply grateful for the treatment that they have received in both sections of the hospital. What happens to the Fulham road branch of the hospital has every bearing on the hospital as a working whole. Therefore, I am committed to ensuring that all concerned come to the very best possible decision about its future.

It would be very easy for me to make an emotional speech on the work of this magnificent hospital. Cancer touches the lives of almost every family in the land. It is an illness fraught with fear but also success. That is why, alongside the Earl of Stockton, I was able to hand in to No. 10 a petition with more than 500,000 signatures on it. That is why I, and many Members of Parliament throughout the land, including even the Outer Hebrides, well away from London, have received hundreds of personal letters begging us to ensure that we examine very carefully indeed just what we plan to do with this hospital.

Our responsibility is heightened, in that we are dealing not just with another London hospital with a surfeit of beds but with an institution which is famous both here and throughout the country and overseas. I appreciate that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health is well aware of this hospital's fine reputation and understands its work, following his earlier career as a radiation biologist. Therefore, he needs no lessons from me on the uniqueness of this hospital. Hence the importance of putting to one side the emotional issues and concentrating on just one crucial point: whether the future of this hospital is being decided on honest economic grounds or—and this is the danger—whether it is to be made the scapegoat for bad decision making elsewhere. Is there not a danger of throwing out the baby with the bath water so that, in the end, nobody will benefit? Furthermore, we should all lose, for the sheer cost involved in moving the hospital would mean that less money would be available for urgent treatment elsewhere.

I welcome in principle the Tomlinson report. Very few would dispute the fact that London's health services need a radical overhaul, with primary community and health services rightly deserving more support and a fairer share. However, that does not mean that the report does not contain errors—some of them rather serious errors. They need to be dealt with before any damage is done.

Professor Sir Bernard Tomlinson has recommended that the Royal Marsden hospital, together with the Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung hospital, be moved to the Charing Cross hospital site or, if that is not acceptable, that the Charing Cross site be sold. There are number of reasons why I and many others more expert than I completely disagree with that recommendation.

Let me deal with the history of this hospital so that the implications can be understood. The Royal Marsden hospital was founded in 1851 by Dr. William Marsden.

Following the painful death by cancer of his wife, he decided to create a hospital—the first in the world to be devoted exclusively to the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Today, it is a leading postgraduate teaching hospital, drawing students from all over the world for specialist training. For example, it trains 90 per cent. of Britain's cancer nurses. In collaboration with its associated Institute of Cancer Research, the hospital continues to play a world-leading role in developing new anti-cancer drugs, surgical techniques and new approaches to radiotherapy treatments.

No one has questioned the ability of the Royal Marsden to treat cancer effectively. Indeed, it is one of the largest comprehensive cancer centres in Europe and it constitutes a national centre of excellence for research, development, education, treatment and care in cancer.

The Government have recognised how vital the battle against cancer remains. The White Paper "The Health of the Nation" draws attention to that fact by placing cancer as one of its top priorities, alongside heart and coronary disease.

As a disease, cancer affects all ages, from babies upwards. A newly built children's unit in Sutton is due to be opened by the Princess of Wales next month. All sexes and all areas of the body are catered for. The successful treatment of this complex and diverse disease has led the Royal Marsden to become a multi-specialist centre with 16 distinct clinical units located on one or other of its two sites. Surely this is no time to allow anything to get in the way of such important work. Moreover, a reduction in the number of patients would mean a loss of the critical mass that is so essential for research of this nature. It makes no sense to dismantle an institution so well established and recognised by the International Union Against Cancer as a role model to ensure the best possible research and patient care.

Yet that is precisely the effect that Tomlinson's proposals would have by moving the Royal Marsden to Charing Cross. If moved, the Brompton and Marsden would lose nearly 170 beds between them and more than one third of their staff. The loss of beds would result in fewer patients being treated. Is that a price which we can afford? Do we really want to reduce the service on which we place so much importance?

Turning to the subject of cost, which is at the heart of my argument, in evidence to Professor Tomlinson, the North West Thames regional health authority suggested that to close the Brompton and Royal Marsden hospitals and move them to Charing Cross would cost only £10 million. One might ask whether even that sum could be justified in the present climate, but an independent study by Ernst and Young, the management consultants, has subsequently reported that that sum is hopelessly inaccurate. Ernst and Young suggests that, in fact, the move would cost at least £47 million and up to £62 million. It could be even more. Moving the Royal Marsden is not the same as moving a house, and it certainly is not the same as moving any other type of hospital; it is much more complex.

I should like briefly to show why costs are so high. It would cost, for instance, £4 million to move four radiotherapy machines, each of which is placed in a purpose-built concrete bunker weighing up to 4 tonnes with walls up to 3 ft thick to provide radiation protection. The machines operate to a fine degree of accuracy. Experience of machines that have been moved shows that they are very unlikely to operate sufficiently accurately again for the effective treatment of patients.

There is a unique operating theatre where radiation is carried out under open surgery. That requires 3 ft thick walls. To move the theatre and bunker and rebuild them in Charing Cross is impossible because the theatres at Charing Cross are high up on the 14th floor. The building is simply not structurally strong enough to be able to hold a bunker that high up. It would mean rebuilding elsewhere.

It would cost £650,000 to move five single wards, which again have 3 ft thick walls and are designed for low-dose radiation treatment. The task of building it into the existing Charing Cross wards in a tower block would be a nightmare, if not technically impossible. I have given just a sample of reasons why moving such a hospital site would not be so easy.

The proposals mean that £62 million would be spent juggling hospitals around and, in the process, destroying the important national services which they currently offer. What possible gain can there be for the patient, let alone the taxpayer?

The Tomlinson report and the submission by the North West Thames regional health authority base much of their economic argument on plans to use land sales to finance such a move, despite the collapse in the property market. That would appear to be a high-risk strategy at a time when property values in London are still falling. In any event, Ernst and Young showed that potential income to the Exchequer from land sales is almost identical to the cost of moving the hospitals: £27·5 million would be spent at Charing Cross and £28 million would be gained from the sale of the two hospitals in Chelsea.

Moreover, there is the risk that no sale will take place for a long time. Large sites in London simply are not selling. The need for expensive borrowing to plug the gap while the hospital move went ahead would be crippling. While I do not wish to be churlish about the opening of the Chelsea and Westminster hospital last week, it is interesting to note that the recent National Audit Office report slammed in no uncertain terms the North West Thames regional health authority's decision to go ahead with building the Chelsea and Westminster.

The report highlighted the severe financial problems that have arisen with the project as a result of difficulties in recouping the expenditure through land sales. Capita and Touche Ross have been asked by the Department of Health to provide the financial costing of Tomlinson's proposals. I understand that, far from agreeing with the original estimate submitted by the North West Thames regional health authority and accepted by Professor Tomlinson, the costings tend to endorse what Ernst and Young reported. Is my hon. Friend the Minister in a position to confirm that?

I wonder whether there is a hidden agenda and the Tomlinson report has been used for other purposes. I have already mentioned the inaccurate figures supplied by the health authority to Professor Tomlinson, who felt unable to challenge them. Indeed, why should he? He said that costings were not part of the brief. Why should he not accept the advice of the local health authority, which ought to know the facts and figures? Let us not forget that this is the same regional health authority which built the Chelsea and Westminster hospital. It decided to go ahead and build a huge new hospital even though the Charing

[Lady Olga Maitland]

Cross hospital, which is only 20 years old, is just down the road. The new hospital was redundant before it ever opened.

The health authority grossly underestimated the costs of moving the two hospitals. The original estimate of £110 million to build the new Chelsea and Westminster hospital has risen to almost £236 million. More simply, each bed will cost about £300,000, while hundreds of other health projects in the region have to be cancelled or postponed.

In view of the escalating costs, why on earth compound the error by incurring unnecessary costs in making the Royal Marsden and Royal Brompton hospitals move? As *Nurse* said, it is a case of going from bad to worse. It would also appear that the North West Thames regional health authority, faced with two hospitals—Charing Cross and the Chelsea and Westminster—is using the Marsden and Brompton as scapegoats; or, to use a medical metaphor, it appears that the hospitals have been stitched up. The health authority should have the courage to recommend that the Charing Cross hospital be closed.

I take this opportunity to ask my hon. Friend the Minister another equally important question; it is a moral issue which should not be ducked: has any consideration yet been given to the legality of ordering the demolition of facilities and buildings paid for by charitable donation? The large proportion of such donations is from grateful patients who are far from wealthy. They have given what I can only describe as the widow's mite.

Gratefully given, it should not be scorned and thrown away. Let us not forget that public affection for the Royal Marsden resulted in £25 million being raised in the midst of a recession and spent on new state-of-the-art clinical facilities. An entire new clinical block has been built, containing four new operating theatres, a unique radiotherapy unit and four new wards. The work has only just finished and the last lick of paint went on only a few weeks ago.

I implore the Minister to have the courage to reject those aspects of Tomlinson that do not add up. As I have made clear during the debate, too many costs are attached to the proposal to uproot the Royal Marsden and Royal Brompton hospitals and to force them into the Charing Cross site. As much as I attach importance to the Tomlinson report, whose ideas are important and far-reaching, it is vital that we maintain a sense of balance. It is not in our character to be doctrinaire for the sake of it. If the proposal is sound, we must go for it; if it is not, we must take courage and say no. The idea may seem attractive on paper, but in practice it does not make sense in human or economic terms.

May I make a plea that the decision making should judge the Royal Marsden on its own economic terms? The decision should not be allowed to become embroiled in any views held by other parties, especially the North West Thames health authority, which has powerfully demonstrated its interests at the expense of others.

My abiding image of the Royal Marsden is of an utterly loyal following of patients from far and wide, together with dedicated doctors. They deserve the highest consideration. Like my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), I join in their hopes that they will be able to take full advantage of the Government reforms to gain trust status next year, on their present site and in their present form. I have no doubt that the Royal Marsden will not only succeed but will go on to flourish.

3.7 pm

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I congratulate my hon. Friend on her good fortune in getting the Adjournment debate on the way in which she made her case so cogently. She has done it a service by not indulging in the sort of emotionalism that she eschewed at the beginning.

My hon. Friend is right to say that I have some personal knowledge of that aspect of the Royal Marsden that is in her constituency. As I recall, I was sitting in an office in that very building when I was told by one of the professors that I had become a doctor of philosophy, after he had given me my viva on my thesis. It was out of that building that my first post-doctoral job emerged—teaching in the university of Iowa medical college in the United States.

As my hon. Friend was kind enough to acknowledge, I have some knowledge and understanding of the issues with which she dealt. What she did not say—I will put it on the record for her so that her constituents can be even more impressed by her assiduousness as their Member of Parliament—is that she came to see me in the Department a few days ago to make the same case that she made so eloquently today. I assure my hon. Friend that what she has said, and the issues that she has mentioned, will all be taken into account before the Government make a final decision on matters that relate not only to the Royal Marsden but to the other aspects of health care and its delivery included in the Tomlinson report.

The Royal Marsden Hospital is one of the eight special health authority London postgraduate teaching hospitals and its prime role, in partnership with the Institute of Cancer Research, is research and development, ranging from basic science to clinical research and health services, dissemination of good practice to the wider health service and the postgraduate and post-basic training and teaching of doctors, nurses and others. In recognition of that special role, and unlike other provider units, the hospital is managed and funded directly by the NHS management executive.

In recent months many issues have arisen that might affect the hospital's future. My hon. Friend touched on the Tomlinson recommendations and on the Marsden's intention to apply for trust status. The third factor is the decision to look to the future funding of special health authorities in the new NHS market. I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend express her support for that market because that will have a bearing on the future of the hospitals, wherever located.

My hon. Friend rightly focuses on the recommendations of Sir Bernard. I assure her again, as I have assured so many others in the past three months, that Sir Bernard's report is advice to the Government. It does not represent the Government's view. My hon. Friend will know that I have spent the past three months visiting all the hospitals that were mentioned for significant change in Sir Bernard's advice. I have visited 24 of them. In addition, I have met a variety of national and professional bodies, about 30, not to mention politicians, all of whom have been kind enough to give me their views on the various aspects of the Tomlinson report. I hope that my hon. Friend will be

encouraged by the fact that the Government are taking that advice so seriously and want to probe it in such depth before we come to any conclusions.

Sir Bernard was effectively seeking to reconfigure health care in London. He recognised the inadequacies and the patchiness of family doctor health services and some community services. He recognised the achievements of the great teaching hospitals and their international standing. He also recognised that, in the market, medical excellence, which used to be available only in London, is now available more widely across the country. My hon. Friend and I will be pleased about that. As a result, those who once had to come to London to be treated at those hospitals no longer have to do so. Contracts are now being placed elsewhere. All those facts must be taken into account.

Arising from that, the Government do not have an option not to consider change. Change is taking place now —rightly so, and to the benefit of health care delivery to Londoners. I stress to my hon. Friend that that is an important part of our considerations. Whenever we emerge from this process we want to be able to say that it has benefited the health care of Londoners. We shall take that factor into account.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, the Government welcome the broad conclusions reached by Sir Bernard. There is some evidence that there are areas of duplication in some specialties in London and we are therefore considering the need to establish, as Sir Bernard recommended, a series of specialty reviews, including cancer. We firmly believe that there is need to consolidate and thereby strengthen specialty provision in the capital. Only by doing so shall we ensure that London will continue to have world-class centres of excellence in the next century.

As my hon. Friend explained, Professor Tomlinson recommended that the Royal Marsden's services on the Chelsea site should form the basis of an integrated and rationalised west London cancer service at the Charing Cross site, and also recommended that the Sutton site should be left as at present organised. Sir Bernard formed the view that by concentrating a greater number of patients on the one site there could be significant benefits for teaching and research, thus strengthening the special health authority's essential role in increasing the effectiveness of research and development within the NHS.

I stress—I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree—that Sir Bernard recognised the excellent work done by the Royal Marsden and its specialist teams. I stress, too, that he has not recommended that teams should be broken up or their services closed down. However, centres of excellence are not found only in London: they have now been established throughout the United Kingdom.

The Government recognise that many of the London postgraduate teaching hospitals are highly rated by patients, by the Universities Funding Council and by many others. Indeed, I congratulate the Royal Marsden's partner, the Institute of Cancer Research, on achieving such high ratings in this year's Universities Funding Council research rating assessment exercise which has recently been published. In part, that rating depends on the facilities provided by the special health authority, which is currently not part of the NHS market.

My hon. Friend has spoken eloquently and passionately about the need to ensure that the Royal Marsden hospital remains on its present sites and I have sympathy with her view. Indeed, it will be taken into account when the Government reach their conclusions on the details of the report. As part of the programme of visits that I mentioned earlier, I visited the Royal Marsden late last year when the hospital, the Institute of Cancer Research and the chairman were able to put to me their views on the proposed move. Since then, some of them have made further comments to me. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that we are making every effort to take account of the opinions of those affected before reaching conclusions. I must, however, stress that the position of the Royal Marsden is no different from that at any other institution covered in the Tomlinson report. As with the rest of London, the Government seek the best solution to safeguard the health and health care interests of London and Londoners.

To show how seriously we take the issues of research and teaching, we have also started a comprehensive review of the special health authority's research programmes. The Royal Marsden, in line with the other special health authorities, has been asked to provide evidence to an independent review group of both national and international experts, set up by the Department.

It has been Government policy for some time that the special health authorities should join the internal market, which will happen in April 1994, but we wish to ensure that that move does not put the high-quality research at risk. I mentioned earlier that the research review conducted by Professor Peckham will report in the summer. We have also instructed a consultancy group to look at the excess costs of the authorities over comparable hospitals. The study has now reported and the findings are being discussed with the relevant authorities.

Trust configuration is a separate issue from closure or change of use of hospital sites, and does not imply prior acceptance of any recommendations about the use of hospital sites. Once we have made a decision on the future of the Royal Marsden we shall be in a position to consider its trust application. When I say "made a decision", I stress that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will make proposals on which there will be statutory consultation.

The Government value tradition and recognise the respect and affection in which the Royal Marsden is held both nationally and internationally. But it is not sufficient to rest on past glories. I am conscious that the authority, supported by many charitable sources, has invested millions of pounds in new equipment, and in bricks and mortar. However, the Government cannot let that fact drive the need to change. If, after consultation, hospitals are closed, it is hoped that much of that investment can be used elsewhere.

We are determined to maintain and, indeed, reinforce the best research and teaching of postgraduate students of all disciplines. Much of the NHS work in the special health authority meets specific patient needs and can be funded in part through the internal market with support for the extra service costs of research and teaching. I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall exercise the greatest care in ensuring that the new arrangements reinforce the best research in those centres while allowing high-quality institutions, both inside and outside London, to benefit from NHS support for research.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 18 January 1993

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Israel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations on the case of the imprisonment of Mordecai Vanunu were made during the visit of Prime Minister Rabin of Israel to London on 10 December 1992.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not raise this subject. But we have privately made representations to the Israelis about certain humanitarian aspects of Mordecai Vanunu's case.

United Nations

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total size of the staff of the United Nations; and what is its cost.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: According to the United Nation's proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-93, staff costs funded from the regular budget of the United Nation's for the calendar year 1992 amounted to $893 million, representing 75·6 per cent. of the total budget. This represents a provision for 10,129 posts.

In addition, according to the Secretary-General in his report "Composition of the Secretariat" dated 7 October 1992, there are approximately 21,000 staff occupying posts funded from voluntary contributions. The report states that the total staff employed in the United Nations and its subsidiary organs is 31,127.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the currrent conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Treasury have given Departments discretion to offer up to £100 advance of salary for the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel. This discretion has not been taken up by the FCO diplomatic wing, which has no plans to do so. The Overseas Development Administration, which administers itself separately, has given its staff an entitlement to a salary advance of up to £100 for this purpose. Its has no plans to change this.

Bosnia (No-fly Zone)

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning breaches by Croatia of UN Resolution 781 concerning the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The UN Secretary General has issued regular reports to the Security Council giving details of violations of the no-fly zone established by resolutions 781 of 9 October and 786 of 11 November. It is clear from these that, to varying degrees, all parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including the Croats, have conducted flights outside the terms permitted in the resolutions. The total of unauthorised flights to 10 January was 375.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of the number of Croatian air force flights in contravention of UN resolution 781; and what steps he will take to enforce impartially the no-fly zone in Bosnia-Herzgovina.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The UN Secretary General has issued regular reports to the Security Council giving details of violations of the no-fly zone established by resolutions 781 of 9 October and 786 of 11 November. It is clear from these that, to varying degrees, all parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including the Croats, have conducted flights outside the terms permitted in the resolutions. The total of unauthorised flights to 10 January was 375. The Security Council is currently considering a resolution on enforcement of the no-fly zone which will apply to all parties.

Somalia

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he has taken to inquire into the facts of the killings at Kismayu in Somalia; and what representations he has made to prevent such massacres from recurring.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The alleged killings in Kismayo are of great concern. Belgian troops deployed there are investigating the reports. A recent meeting in Addis Ababa between the Somali factions has reached provisional agreement on a cease-fire, disarmament and encampment of militias. This should help prevent such incidents.

Cameroon

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current human rights situation in Cameroon.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* We welcome the lifting of the state of emergency in North West province announced by the Cameroon Government on 29 December and the release of detainees. We hope that the situation in the country will now improve. These encouraging developments do not, however, absolve the Government of Cameroon from their responsibilities for earlier serious human rights abuses in Cameroon. We have called upon the authorities to investigate the allegations. A statement in similar terms was issued by the European Community and its member states on 11 January, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Cameroon concerning human rights abuses.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 3 December at column *316*. We have continued to make our views known to the Cameroon authorities.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the message to all Christians by the Archbishop of Bamenda in Cameroon, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* We strongly support the Archbishop's call for the abolition of torture and warmly welcome his appeal for peace and reconciliation.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the use of torture in Cameroon.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* We have received numerous reports from different sources alleging ill-treatment or torture of detainees. We have called on the Cameroon Government to institute inquiries into these cases.

Nuclear Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on the purpose of and participants in the conference on the nuclear future-dilemmas of arms control, reduction and proliferation, to be held at his departmental conference centre at Wilton Park from 11 to 15 January.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to Wilton Park under its chief executive, Mr. Geoffrey Denton. I have asked him to arrange for a written reply to be given.

Letter from Geoffrey Denton to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 21 December 1992:

Thank you for your question asking for a satement on the purpose of and the participants in the conference on "The Nuclear Future: Dilemmas of Arms Control, Reduction and Proliferation". I hope the following will answer your question.

The purpose of the conference, as for all Wilton Park conferences, is to provide a forum for the exchange of views, in order to promote international understanding of the issues and to enhance the reputation of the UK as a country that believes in resolving international problems through peaceful dialogue.

The participants will be drawn from 15–20 countries, and several professions: military and civilian defence staff, diplomats and other officials, businessmen, academics, media.

More specifically, the conference will discuss the future of nuclear weapons with due reference to the fact that the ending of the East-West military confrontation has coincided with a situation where the role of nuclear and chemical and biological weapons has increased outside Europe.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Scott Inquiry

34. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General how many members of the Attorney-General's Department are involved full-time or part-time in supporting Lord Justice Scott in his inquiry.

The Attorney-General: One lawyer from the Treasury Solicitor's Department has been transferred on loan to the Department of Trade and Industry and assigned on a full-time basis to be Secretary to the inquiry.

38. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Attorney-General what legal documentation has been supplied by his Department to Lord Justice Scott in regard to his inquiry into arms and military exports to Iraq.

The Attorney-General: No legal documentation has been supplied so far. Departmental papers will be made available to Lord Justice Scott as and when he requests them.

Serious Fraud Office

35. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the objectives set for the Serious Fraud Office in 1993.

The Solicitor-General: In 1993 it remains the objective of the Serious Fraud Office to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its work in investigating and prosecuting serious and complex fraud.

Right to Silence

36. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Attorney-General what comments he made on the right to silence in his evidence to the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

The Attorney-General: I discussed this issue with the Royal Commission at a meeting when they sought my views on a range of issues. My personal thoughts on the ability of the court to draw inferences from silence were set out in my speech last October to the Howard League for Penal Reform, a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House.

Crown Prosecution Service

37. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a further statement on recruitment to the Crown prosecution service.

The Solicitor-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply today to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall).

Racial Hatred

39. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions there have been in each of the past three years for incitement to racial hatred.

The Attorney-General: In 1990, there was one prosecution for offences contrary to part III of the Public Order Act 1986; in 1991, there were four such prosecutions; and in 1992, one. At present two cases are waiting to be tried.

Paintings (Charity Commission)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Attorney-General what response he has made to submissions he has received from senior University of London academics, concerning the scheme devised by the Charity Commission for the sale of paintings from the Founder's collection, Royal Holloway and Bedford new college.

The Attorney-General: I have replied that I have found nothing in those submissions to cause me to revise my view that the Charity Commissioners had sufficient evidence before them to reach a decision to approve a scheme and that I would not be furthering the interests of charity by commencing an appeal against their decision to do so.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Staff in the Departments for which I have responsibility (the legal secretariat, the Crown prosecution service, the Treasury solicitor's department and the Serious Fraud Office) are aware of the availability of salary advances for the purchase of bicycles. All permanent staff with a minimum of two months service (other than the Serious Fraud Office which has no minimum requirement) are eligible to apply. Any advance made for the purchase of a bicycle is currently limited to £100. I have no plans to review these conditions.

Seamus McElwaine

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Attorney-General what examination is being undertaken by the Director of Public Prosecutions of the papers arising from the verdict of the jury in the inquest into the death of Seamus McElwaine.

The Attorney-General: On 13 January 1993 the Director of Public Proscutions for Northern Ireland asked the Royal Ulster constabulary for a full report on the inquest into the death of Seamus McElwaine.

The director will consider this report and decide what further steps, if any, are required.

Ambiguous Statutes

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Attorney-General what guidance he has issued to Government Ministers about the implications of the ruling in the case in the House of Lords of Pepper v. Hart about the right of courts to have access to the *Official Report* in seeking to interpret the wording of ambiguous statutes; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: On 26 November 1992 the House of Lords decided by a majority that courts could look at parliamentary materials if the legislation is ambiguous or obscure or leads to an absurdity; the material that could be relied upon consists of a statement by a Minister or other promoter of the Bill; and the statements relied upon are clear.

By established convention advice given by the Law Officers, and the fact that they have advised, is not normally disclosed.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Joyriders

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidelines to police authorities to discourage the misuse of the term joyriders to describe offences arising from taking vehicles without the owner's consent.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The law provides for offences of taking and driving away of motor vehicles without the owner's consent and for aggravated taking of motor vehicles. These are the terms which are used by the Home Office for statistical returns. Chief officers of police view such offences with great seriousness, but the use of other terms in less formal circumstances is a matter for them. It would not be an appropriate subject for Home Office guidance.

Replica Guns

Mr. James Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to control the sale of replica guns.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Under the Firearms Act 1982 the sale of any imitation firearm which can be readily converted to fire live ammunition is already subject to the same strict licensing controls as real firearms. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary agrees with the advice offered to him by the Firearms Consultative Committee that controls on the sale of other types of replicas would be neither feasible nor effective. But he intends to implement the committee's recommendation to extend the range of offences which apply to the misuse of imitation firearms.

Computers (Prisons)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisons in England and Wales do not have a computer; and what is his Department's policy on the provision of such equipment in each prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Every prison in England and Wales has a computer. The prison service information technology strategy incorporates plans to extend the use of information technology throughout the service where clear benefits in cost and efficiency can be identified.

Mr. Paul Malone

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment he has made *(a)* of the reliability of evidence produced at the trial of Paul Malone and *(b)* of new evidence presented to his office in this case;

(2) if he has decided to refer the case of Paul Malone back to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend will be in a position properly to consider all the representations made on Mr. Malone's behalf—including those about the reliability of evidence given at his trial, as well as the new

evidence submitted to him—only when the Metropolitan police have completed the inquiries they are presently carrying out at the request of the chief constable of Cheshire. He will then decide whether there are grounds for referring Mr. Malone's conviction to the Court of Appeal.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions *(a)* in 1992, *(b)* in 1987, *(c)* in 1982 and *(d)* in 1977, Metropolitan and City of London police officers were authorised to carry firearms in the course of their duty; and on how many occasions those firearms were used.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The only readily available information is contained in the following table:

Year	*Number of operations*[1]	*Number of occasions when shots were fired*
1991		
City of London	71	0
Metropolitan	1,520	6
1987		
City of London	16	0
Metropolitan	1,248	3
1982		
City of London	255	0
Metropolitan	6,035	1

[1]The figure for 1982 is for the number of occasions on which firearms were issued. From 1987 onwards, the figures are for the number of firearms operations.

I will write to the hon. Member when the information for 1992 is available.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what distinction is drawn between the use of concealed weapons and rifles, carbines or semi-automatic weapons when authorisation is granted to Metropolitan police and City of London police officers to carry firearms; and on what basis.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Firearms may be issued only on the authority of a senior officer, to an authorised firearms officer. Decisions as to whether a firearm is concealed when carried, and the type of firearm, are based on an assessment of operational requirements.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recorded incidents of assaults against Metropolitan and City of London police officers occurred in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1987, *(c)* 1982, and *(d)* 1977; and in how many of these incidents firearms were used against police officers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers of officers in the Metropolitan police who have suffered serious assault necessitating periods off work are as follows:

Year	*Number of officers*	*Number of incidents involving firearms*
1977	779	7
1982	464	1
1987	752	20
1992	n/a	n/a

There were 12 assaults on officers in the City of London police in 1992, none of which involved firearms. The City of London police do not hold a record of the number of assaults on police officers prior to 1991.

Prisoners (Self-injury)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements exist for ensuring that any tendency to deliberate self-harm in an inmate is known to the authorities of a prison to which such an inmate is sent from court or transferred from another prison establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Where a prisoner is being handed over from police custody into prison custody, or vice-versa, information about possible suicide risk is conveyed via the exceptional risk form, instructions on which have been issued to both police forces and prison establishments.

In London special arrangements exist under which prisoners' inmate medical records accompany them in a sealed pouch when they are escorted to court, so that they are immediately accessible should the prisoner for any reason be returned from court to a different prison establishment.

All prisoners are seen by a member of health care staff on arrival at the establishment as part of the reception process. Prisoners must also be examined by a doctor within 24 hours in cases of first reception and reception following conviction, sentence or transfer. This examination includes an assessment of possible risk of suicide or self-harm.

Where prisoners are transferred between prison establishments, any warnings about possible risk of suicide or self-harm will be contained in the inmate medical record (IMR), which accompanies the prisoner when transferred under escort.

In many cases the prison service also receives information about possible risk of suicide or self-harm from a variety of agencies and individuals who are involved with prisoners in the pre-trial period and at court, including probation officers, solicitors, court staff, social workers, psychiatrists and the prisoner's family. Such information is generally conveyed to the receiving prison by telephone or via the escorting officers.

It is the continuing responsibility of the suicide prevention management group at each prison establishment to ensure that liaison with other agencies works effectively and that any information received is carefully assessed and acted on appropriately.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of deaths from an act of deliberate self-harm that took place in prisons in England and Wales during 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Forty-one prisoners died from an act of deliberate self-harm in England and Wales in 1992.

Travellers

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the traditional travelling community is classified as an ethnic minority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The criteria for defining a racial group for the purposes of the Race Relations Act 1976 were established by the judgment in Mandla *v.* Dowell Lee

(1983). Gipsies have been accepted as meeting these criteria—Commission for Racial Equality *v.* Dutton (1988); the position of other travelling groups would depend on whether they satisfied the same criteria.

Squatters

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment he has made of the reasons for the trend in the numbers of squatters; and what estimate he has made of the trend in the average age of squatters;

(2) if he will make a distinction in policy on squatting between privately owned properties that are squatted which are individually owned and those owned by commercial bodies; if he will give estimates for the numbers involved in both these categories in London and elsewhere; and from what sources his Department makes its estimate;

(3) what assessment has been made of the criminality of squatters relative to their neighbours.

Mr. Jack: Cases of squatting do not necessarily come to official notice and no central records are kept of the numbers and characteristics of squatters, or of which properties are squatted in. This absence of accurate statistical information, combined with the shifting nature of the squatting population, means that it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of squatters' numbers, average age, their criminal behaviour, or of the type of properties occupied.

However, the Home Office consultation paper on squatting, which was issued in November 1991, reported the 1986 London housing survey's estimate that at that time there were 12,500 squatters occupying 7,500 properties in London. It also estimated that 52 per cent. of these squatters were under 25; 40 per cent. were between 26 and 40; and 8 per cent. were over 40. The consultation paper also reported a survey of local authority housing in April 1990, when 5,200 dwellings in England were reported as being squatted in; 90 per cent. of these were in London. More recent estimates of the total number of squatters have ranged from 30,000 to 50,000.

The Home Office consultation paper on squatting suggested, as one option for changing the law, that additional protection could be extended to private individuals who own property which is squatted in, but not to commercial owners of property, on the ground that more hardship is likely to be caused in the former type of case. This distinction was not, however, supported by the majority of respondents to the consultation paper, and the Government are, in any case, committed to strengthening the law against those who squat in a range of different premises.

Charities

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the Charities Act 1992 to allow charities operational exclusively within Wales to refer to themselves as national charities.

Mr. Jack: Section 4 of the Charities Act 1992 empowers the Charity Commissioners to direct a charity to change its name where that name includes any word or expression for the time being specified in regulations by the Secretary of State, and the inclusion of the word is, in the opinion of the commissioners, likely to mislead the public in any respect as to the status of the charity. The word "national" has been so specified. It is therefore for the commissioners to determine whether the use of the word is misleading in any particular case.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has no plans to amend section 4 of the 1992 Act nor the regulations made by him under that section.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to seek to amend section 3(2) of the Charities Act 1992 to allow charities producing Welsh language publicity to use the words "elusen cofrestredig" either in addition to or instead of the words "registered charity" on publicity materials.

Mr. Jack: Section 3(2) requires a registered charity to include a statement indicating that it is so registered in certain publications and documents issued by or on behalf of it. The statement must be made in English. However, there is nothing to preclude a charity from also providing the same information in another language if it so wishes. The Government have no present plans for further legislation on this matter.

Wolds Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reported incidents took place at the Wolds prison during 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1992, 49 incidents at Wolds remand prison were reported to the incident management support unit at prison service headquarters. From 5 April 1992, when Wolds opened, until the end of 1992, a total of 13,300 incidents at all prisons were reported to the unit.

Prison Transfers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what policy his Department adopts in respect of an inmate being moved from one prison establishment to another to ensure that there is no delay in the transfer of the moneys belonging to that inmate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Governors of all prison service establishments have been instructed to ensure that moneys are forwarded promptly when prisoners are transferred, where possible by the day following transfer. This is not achieved in all cases, and we continue to look at ways, including computerisation of prisoners' money and earnings, to minimise delays.

Qat

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to banning the import of the qat plant from Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia; and what advice he has received on qat from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

Mr. Jack: The plant is not subject to international control, and the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs advised in 1988 that there was insufficient evidence to justify bringing the plant under the controls of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. That remains the present position, but the situation will continue to be monitored carefully.

Gambling

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to monitor the effects of excess gambling.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government do not routinely monitor the effects of excessive gambling. Research on specific issues is commissioned as necessary, most recently into the extent and nature of amusement machine playing by young people ("Amusement Machines: Dependency and Delinquency, Home Office Research Study 101, 1988").

Sentencing

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average sentence for someone convicted of murder.

Mr. Jack: The mandatory sentence for murder in England and Wales is life.

The average time served under sentence in prison service establishments by those first released on licence is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (table 8.5 of the volume for 1990, Cm. 1800), a copy of which is in the Library.

Assaults on Women, Walsall

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults, including rape, were committed against women in the H division of Walsall, since 1980.

Mr. Jack: The available information for H division has been provided by the West Midlands constabulary. It is in terms of notifiable offences recorded by the police, with the most appropriate offence categories being rape and indecent assault on a female. Other types of assault do not distinguish between male and female victim.

Year	*Rape*	*Indecent assault on a female*	*Total*
1980	6	77	83
1981	3	58	62
1982	11	72	83
1983	11	56	67
1984	3	47	50
1985	9	77	86
1986	3	56	59
1987	12	61	73
1988	17	78	95
1989	13	56	69
1990	9	63	72
1991	17	60	77
[1]1992	9	28	37

[1] January to June.

Racial Incidents, Walsall

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recorded racial incidents have occurred in Walsall each year since 1985.

Mr. Jack: The information is not available centrally.

Dangerous Dogs Act

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many pit bull type dogs have been destroyed in each county or sheriff court area in the United Kingdom since the legislation permitting destruction was introduced; and what assessment he has made of whether the court procedures to identify the characteristics of the breed of dogs destroyed are proving a satisfactory and consistent basis for court procedures.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on the number of pit bull terriers destroyed in each county and sheriff court area in the United Kingdom as a result of proceedings under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 is not collected centrally.

The decision whether any particular dog is of the type known as the pit bull terrier is ultimately a matter for the courts, having regard to all relevant evidence and advice. Circulars on the Act were issued to the police, the Crown prosecution service and the courts, both at the time of coming into force of the Act and subsequently. These contained general guidance on the provisions, and on the assistance which may be available in determining whether a particular dog is of the pit bull type.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce amendments to the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to provide that a dog with a pure-bred pedigree as a Staffordshire bull terrier shall not be treated as a pit bull terrier.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 applies—amongst others—to dogs "of the type known as the pit bull terrier". It is ultimately for the courts to decide whether a particular animal falls within this definition, and they will take into account all relevant considerations. Evidence of pedigreee may in some circumstances be a factor in determining the question.

A Home Office circular containing advice about the operation of the Act, issued last August, and sent to the police, the Crown prosecution service and the courts, drew attention to a list provided by the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Breed Council of clubs and societies willing to give advice in cases where there is doubt whether the dog is a Staffordshire bull terrier.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 have been successful.

Mr. Jack: The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 did not come into force until August 1991. Information on the number of prosecutions under this Act for 1992, the first full year for which information will be recorded centrally, is expected to be available around the autumn of 1993.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The current conditions applying in the Department and its agencies are that there should be

an operational need or other identifiable value for money improvement justifying the advance—maximum £100—and that the advance is repayable over one year. Only one such advance has so far been made to an official of my Department. Departments and agencies generally have recently been given discretion to offer a larger advance and to revise the eligibility and repayment rules. These changes are being considered in the context of a Departmental review of travel allowances, and revised rules are expected to be promulgated in the spring.

Reed Report

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish his response to the Reed report.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The final summary report of the Department of Health and Home Office joint review of services for mentally disordered offenders—the "Reed report"—was published on 27 November 1992. In reply to a question on that day from my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nichols), my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) explained how the Government intended to respond or were already responding to the review.

So far as my Department is concerned, a key objective identified and endorsed by the review is the diversion of mentally disordered offenders from the criminal justice system wherever possible. Since my hon. Friend's announcement, this has been given a further boost by the issue of an invitation to local agencies to apply for funding to support court-based duty psychiatrist schemes. We are already funding a number of other diversion projects as well as a series of regional conferences organised by the Mental Health Foundation which are intended to promote inter-agency co-operation in this field.

Police Central Computer

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to privatise or contract out the operation of the police central computer in whole or in part.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As announced last year in "The Citizens' Charter: First Report" (Cm 2101), the operation of the police national computer is among the functions of the Home Department which are included in the current market testing programme.

Police Complaints

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide police complaints figures, under the headings used in the annual report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, for the following police stations for each of the past five years *(a)* Hackney, *(b)* City Road and *(c)* Stoke Newington.

Heading	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Hackney					
Incivility	3	6	2	0	1
Assault	49	24	38	26	20
Irregularity in practice	2	1	0	1	4
Traffic irregularity	0	0	0	0	0
Neglect of duty	8	3	1	0	1
Corrupt practice	0	0	1	1	1
Mishandling of property	1	0	0	1	1
Irregularity in relation to evidence/perjury	0	0	7	2	0
Oppressive conduct or behaviour	4	2	3	5	3
Racially discriminatory behavour	1	1	0	0	1
Unlawful arrest or detention	4	1	2	3	5
Impropriety in connection with the search of premises	3	2	2	0	3
Other crime	1	1	0	1	3
Other	0	0	0	0	2

Complaints in the Metropolitan police are counted by the main allegation known at the time of receipt.

Heading	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Stoke Newington					
Incivility	2	1	3	2	1
Assault	22	25	46	58	35
Irregularity in practice	0	0	2	1	1
Traffic irregularity	0	0	0	0	1
Neglect of duty	2	0	1	1	1
Corrupt practice	2	0	0	5	0
Mishandling of property	2	4	0	0	0
Irregularity in relation to evidence/perjury	1	0	3	6	1
Oppressive conduct or behaviour	5	2	0	5	2
Racially discriminatory behavour	1	0	0	0	1
Unlawful arrest or detention	2	1	2	7	2
Impropriety in connection with the search of premises	3	4	1	3	0
Other crime	0	0	0	0	3
Other	0	0	1	1	0

Complaints in the Metropolitan police are counted by the main allegation known at the time of receipt.

Heading	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
City Road					
Incivility	5	2	1	0	0
Assault	13	7	6	10	10
Irregularity in practice	0	1	1	0	1
Traffic irregularity	1	0	0	0	0
Neglect of duty	1	0	0	0	1
Corrupt practice	0	1	0	0	0
Mishandling of property	0	3	1	0	0
Irregularity in relation to evidence/perjury	1	0	1	0	0
Oppressive conduct or behaviiour	3	4	2	1	1
Racially discriminatory behavour	0	0	1	0	0
Unlawful arrest or detention	1	0	1	0	0

Heading	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Impropriety in connection with the search of premises	0	0	0	0	2
Other crime	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0

Complaints in the Metropolitan police are counted by the main allegation known at the time of receipt.

Betting Shops

Mr. Tim Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what comments and advice were received from the Association of Chief Police Officers in answer to his consultation document on the evening opening of betting shops.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Neither the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland nor the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland were opposed to the evening opening of betting offices, though both favoured the continuation of a prescribed latest closing time.

Alcohol and Drug Misuse

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he is making for payment in respect of treatment for alcohol or drug misuse ordered by the courts prior to 1 April 1993 but not completed by that date; and who will pay *(a)* for that part of the treatment prior to 1 April and *(b)* that part of the treatment after 1 April.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 December 1992]:* Treatment for drug or alcohol misuse may be ordered by the courts (as an additional requirement of a probation order, under provisions introduced on 1 October 1992 by the Criminal Justice Act 1991) only if suitable treatment is available.

Alcohol and drug misusers who are receiving treatment prior to 1 April 1993 and are eligible for income support will generally have preserved rights after 1 April to their existing level of benefit.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who will pay for residential treatment for alcohol or drug misuse ordered by the courts after 1 April 1993.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* Residential treatment for drug or alcohol abuse may be ordered by courts—as an additional requirement of a probation order, under provisions introduced on 1 October 1992 by the Criminal Justice Act 1991—only if suitable treatment is available.

From 1 April 1993 local authorities will be responsible for assessing the social care needs of alcohol and drug misusers. People who commence treatment in a residential setting after 1 April 1993 and who are eligible, will be entitled to claim ordinary income support, including premiums, and a residential allowance. The local authority will take account of these payments and any other income when assessing the individual's ability to contribute towards the cost of care. Local authorities and probation services will need to liaise to ensure that the needs of those offenders supervised by the probation service who have drug and alcohol misuse problems are considered within community care.

A special transitional grant of £539 million is being made available to local authorities in England in 1993-94 which is ring fenced for use on community care, including the provision of care for alcohol and drug misusers.

Where such residential treatment is to be provided by local authorities then, from 1 April 1993, assessment, availability and funding will be in accordance with the community care arrangements which come into effect on that date. Other residential treatment (not under community care arrangements) could also be ordered—again, provided that was available.

Police Forces

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by how many extra police officers the police forces in Thames Valley and Nottinghamshire have been supplemented in 1993-94; if these officers are permanent augmentations; and for what duties they have been provided.

Mr. Charles Wardle: *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* In common with all provincial police force, Thames Valley and Nottinghamshire have been given no increase in their permanent establishments for 1993-94. I understand that my right hon. and noble Friend has written to the hon. Member about detailed aspects of this matter.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

South Africa

42. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid is being given to South Africa in the current year.

Mr. Hurd: We expect our bilateral aid to black South Africans to rise to over £11 million this financial year. Our share of EC aid will add a further £11 million. This is money well spent.

Southern Africa

43. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of aid from Her Majesty's Government to southern Africa is for educational purposes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1991-92, 13 per cent. of British bilateral aid to southern Africa was for educational purposes.

Somalia

44. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid has so far been paid to Somalia since the present food shortage began; upon what items; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the beginning of the current crisis Britain has committed £45·2 million of humanitarian assistance to Somalia. So far £37·9 million has been spent on food supplies, transport and logistical support, medical supplies, water and sanitation equipment, and tools and seeds.

India

45. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current aid levels to India.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Aid for India in 1992-93 is expected to be £95 million.

Aid Allocation

46. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria are used to determine the proportion of overseas aid allocated *(a)* bilaterally and *(b)* multilaterally.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A high proportion of our multilateral aid spending is determined by negotiated or assessed international commitments, including our share of the European Community's aid budget. Otherwise, our aid resources are mostly spent bilaterally.

ACP Countries

47. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken to enable ACP countries to get real increases in prices paid for primary products.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Prices for primary products are primarily determined by international markets. We participate, however, in the European Community's Stabex and Sysmin schemes under the Lomé convention to help compensate African, Caribbean and Pacific countries for falls in their commodity export earnings.

Black Rhino

48. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what allocations have been made by his Department to schemes for the protection of the black rhino.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 1990, Britain has committed £167,200 to projects which aim to protect the rhinoceros, including £33,600 specifically for a project in Tanzania on the black rhino. We are also supporting a number of projects, worth over £18 million, concerned with the protection and conservation of wildlife. Many of these should also benefit the rhinoceros.

Rwanda

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what attempts have been made by his Department's Overseas Development Administration to assist refugees from Rwanda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Rwandian refugees are being assisted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to which Britain is a major contributor. We are, not assisting Rwandan refugees bilaterally. We are, however, funding an agricultural resettlement project run by ACORD in Sud-Gisaka, Rwanda, which has existed since 1986 and was set up following the arrival of 2,000 refugees of Rwandese origin from Uganda.

Children

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration his Department's Overseas Development Administration has given to the recent report by UNICEF on the state of the world's children, in regard to the effects of United Kingdom's aid policy on children abroad.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: UNICEF's annual "State of the World's Children" report is a valuable guide to issues affecting mothers and children. Staff in the ODA value its information.

Kashmir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are for an aid Minister to visit Kashmir to discuss aid projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no plans for my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development to visit Kashmir. Aid projects are clearly difficult in the current situation, but we would be happy to consider appropriate projects when circumstances permit.

Developing Countries

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list (i) Britain's official flows to developing countries, broken down into official development assistance and other official flows in 1991, (ii) Britain's private flows to developing countries, broken down into private export credit, direct investment, bank lending and voluntary agencies, in 1991 and (iii) the percentage shares of gross national product for net overseas development aid and total flows to developing countries in 1991.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom net aid flows

	1991 £ million
Official development assistance (oda)	1,814
Other official flows	293
Total official flows	2,107
Guaranteed private export credits	−2
Direct investments[1]	3,000
Other bilateral securities and claims	−680
Total private flows	2,318
Net grants by private voluntary agencies	215
Total flows	4,640
Percentage share of gross national product	
Net oda	0·32
Total flows	0·81

[1] The 1991 figure for direct investment is a preliminary estimate.

I also refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister for Overseas Development, in another place on 25 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *69-70*, corrected on 9 December 1992 at column *9-10*, which set out revised figures for 1990 and the basis on which banking flows were calculated.

Yugoslavia (Aid)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding aid to former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government have received a great many representations from many sources.

PRIME MINISTER

Engineers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to restrict the use of the term "engineer" in official Government documents to only chartered or incorporated engineers.

The Prime Minister: In referring to engineers, Government documents should make it clear whether particular qualifications are envisaged but, in the absence of any general restriction on the use of the term "engineer", it would not be appropriate to restrict its use to specified categories of engineer which form only part of the wider engineering profession. The Fairclough initiative is, however, examining this issue and the Government will consider its recommendations when received.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations he has received from the Institution of Electrical Engineers.

The Prime Minister: I have recently received a letter from the institution concerning vocational qualifications and my office will respond in due course.

Travel Expenses

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his reply on 9 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *668*, if he is now in a position to publish the total cost to the Exchequer for his travels within the European Communities since 1 July 1992.

The Prime Minister: The total cost of my travels within the European Communities between 1 July and 31 December 1992 is estimated to be £328,000.

Polling Stations (Access)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has to co-ordinate policies between Scotland and England and Wales on the operation of schemes to purchase temporary ramps to improve access to polling stations; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None. In England and Wales and in Scotland, a grant of 50 per cent. of the cost is available towards the purchase of temporary ramps to provide access to polling stations for disabled voters.

Standards of Conduct

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will introduce legislation to require *(a)* political parties in advertisements, *(b)* lawyers in court and *(c)* journalists in newspapers to (i) tell the truth, (ii) provide equal length or space to a right to reply, (iii) submit controversial claims to a statutory tribunal and (iv) submit themselves to fines for transgressing or for appearing at the time of judgment to have transgressed good taste or a code of conduct.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Forestry

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will bring forward proposals to introduce an integrated United Kingdom policy on forestry, covering *(a)* consumption of forests, *(b)* problems caused by deforestation, *(c)* the links between forestry and third world debt and *(d)* import controls on hardwoods.

The Prime Minister: The Government are committed to working for the effective implementation of the statement of principles on the world's forests agreed at the United Nations conference on environment and development in Rio last June. As part of this process we are preparing a United Kingdom national plan for forests. Policies on the issues listed in the question need to be integrated and co-ordinated with our broader environmental aid and trade policies. Co-ordination is achieved by regular contact between the Government Departments responsible for these matters.

Office and Travel Costs

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what is the total cost to public funds of overseas travel by himself and those accompanying him on official business since he has held his present position to the most recent available date.

The Prime Minister: The total cost of my overseas official visits undertaken between 22 November 1990 and 31 December 1992 is estimated to be £1,816,000.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what are the total costs of running his office, including travel, in each year since 1989-90.

The Prime Minister: The costs are as follows:

	£
1989-90	7,669,276
1990-91	8,225,816
1991-92	8,663,758

Note: Salaries and wages, notional pension liability, administration costs, the costs of office and the grant-in-aid to the Chequers Trust are included. The Prime Minister's salary is excluded.

Jamaica

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make representations within the European Community for the suspension of all economic aid to, and favourable trade arrangements with, Jamaica until that country improves its human rights record.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* We discuss aid policy towards specific developing countries regularly with other member states and with the European Commission. Full account of human rights considerations is taken in these discussions. We have no plans to argue for the suspension of economic aid to, and favourable trade arrangements with, Jamaica.

Company Directors

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the progress made to date in his policy of encouraging company directors to voluntarily keep their wages and other remunerations at levels that do not promote wage inflation.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* As I have previously made clear, pay in the private sector is a matter for the private sector to determine. However, I am encouraged by evidence that average boardroom pay increases are now falling to more realistic levels.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister how many staff were employed by his press office in each year since 1979.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* Ten people including support staff are currently employed in 10 Downing street on press and public relations activities. Detailed figures were not recorded separately prior to 1987-88, but until 1 April 1992 the complement was eight. This was then increased to 10 by the addition of one press officer and one typist, to enable the press office to respond effectively to the growing number of press inquiries.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on the level of value added tax on bloodstock in the United Kingdom and the rates levied in France and Ireland, *Official Report*, 28 October 1992, column *288*, what subsequent representations he has received on the issue; what replies were made; what action has now been taken; and if he will make a statement on the Government's current policy on this issue.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 10 December 1992]:* The Commissioners of Customs and Excise have just received the Jockey Club's report to the Paymaster General on this subject. It is being considered as quickly and constructively as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Exports

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out, as a percentage of the total value of United Kingdom exports, for each year since 1979, the value of *(a)* manufactured goods and *(b)* services.

Mr. Nelson: Information on exports for manufactured goods is published regularly in the Central Statistical Office (CSO) "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and is also available on the CSO database which may be accessed by the House of Commons Library. Information on services credits and exports of goods and services is available on the CSO database.

European Communities (Budget)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he will be making to the cash limit on the vote of the budget of the European Communities.

Sir John Cope: The cash limit for this vote—class XX, vote 1—will be reduced by £1,217,503,000 to £132,497,000.

Provision of £1,350,000,000 was taken on this vote to cover the difference between, on the one hand, United Kingdom contributions to the EC up to the level provided for under Community legislation, and paid direct from the Consolidated Fund under the terms of the European Communities Act 1972, and, on the other hand, those contributions sought by the EC Commission, reflecting a budget adopted by the European Parliament, but not agreed by the Council.

The council, Commission and European Parliament have subsequently adopted an amending and supplementary budget, resolving the legal uncertainty. Payments from May 1992 have reverted to full payment from the Consolidated Fund. Therefore, April's payment of some £132·5 million from this vote will be the only expenditure incurred.

EDUCATION

Teacher Training

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what assessment he has made in the last two years of the effectiveness of basic counselling skills for students in initial teacher training establishments; and how many establishments have been studied for this purpose;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of teacher training courses in developing group management skills; and if he considers further specific measures are needed in this regard.

Mr. Forth: The Secretary of State's criteria for the approval of courses of initial teacher training (ITT) require that students should be trained both in the effective management of groups of pupils and in the pastoral skills required to interact well with individual children. All ITT courses must be approved by my right hon. Friend before they start. Courses are also monitored regularly by OFSTED to ensure that they continue to comply with the Secretary of State's criteria.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students successfully completed courses in the teaching of pupils with severe learning difficulties for each of the last five years *(a)* on initial teacher training, *(b)* on postgraduate certificate of education courses and *(c)* on in-service training courses; and what is his projection to the next five years.

Mr. Forth: The Secretary of State's criteria for the approval of courses of initial teacher training require that all courses should develop in students the ability to identify special educational needs or learning difficulties. Since 1984, it has been the Government's policy that specialist qualifications of this kind should be acquired after initial training and a period of classroom experience. The specialist courses of initial training have therefore now been phased out. Data on the final output of these courses is not readily available.

The long in-service training courses which equip teachers with such specialist qualification have been a priority for specific grant support for a number of years. For 1992-93, this is sufficient to support the training of 206

new and 90 existing students. Information on the numbers successfully completing such courses is not collected centrally. Projections beyond 1992-93 are for local determination.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of in-service training for articled teachers; and what percentage have withdrawn from the scheme since its inception.

Mr. Forth: An evaluation of the management and organisation of the articled teacher scheme, which is a two-year course of initial teacher training leading to a postgraduate certificate of education, was carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research during the first year of the scheme's operation. Her Majesty's inspectorate has recently completed a two-year study which focused mainly on five articled teacher schemes. I understand that OFSTED will shortly be publishing a report of this study. Both of these studies focused on the articled teacher scheme in England. During the first two years of the scheme approximately 4 per cent. of students withdrew before completing their training.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make a statement about the way in which the principles of good classroom management are being implemented by teachers and their trainers; and what contribution his Department has made in this process and the extent to which implementation has been achieved;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of those involved in the provision of teacher training in determining whether potential teachers have the ability to relate well to pupils.

Mr. Forth: The Secretary of State's criteria for the approval of initial teacher training—ITT—courses require that courses must provide satisfactory training for students in classroom management. No students can gain qualified teacher status unless they have demonstrated in the classroom both the ability to teach effectively and secure effective learning, and the ability to manage pupil behaviour. Assessment of students' ability to relate well to children is done both when the application for teacher training is submitted—by means of an interview—and also through assessment of the student's teaching practice. My right hon. Friend has not studied the effectiveness of trainers in making such assessments.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of initial teacher training establishments in introducing students to the concept of peer support and its uses.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has not made an assessment of peer support within ITT courses.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities provide midday supervision and other non-teaching staff with training in the management of pupils' behaviour; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of this training.

Mr. Forth: Information about training of this kind is not collected centrally and my right hon. Friend has made no assessment of its effectiveness.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities provide in-service training in classroom management for supply teachers.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of staff providing training in teaching skills have had at least one term's regular teaching experience in the last five years.

Mr. Forth: The Secretary of State's criteria for the approval of initial teaching training courses include the requirement that, from the beginning of the current academic year, all staff at institutions who are concerned with training students in teaching skills must have had at least one term's experience of teaching in school in the previous five years.

OFSTED monitors courses regularly to ensure that accredited courses comply with this requirement.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many schools counted separately in the primary, secondary and special education sectors offer pupillages to prospective initial teacher training students; and what is the percentage of schools involved;

(2) how many entrants to initial teacher training last year undertook a period of pupillage, or other work with children, before starting their courses; what percentage of all students this was; and what contribution his Department has made to encourage this practice;

(3) how long a period of pupillage in a school lasts on average; what are the longest and shortest periods of times; and what advice is given by his Department to encourage high quality student experience.

Mr. Forth: Many courses of initial teacher training—ITT—require students to spend soem time in schools prior to the start of the course. However, information about the numbers of schools and prospective students involved in such schemes of work experience, and the lengths of the schemes, is not held centrally.

The Government have given financial support to a number of taster courses providing school experience for people who are interested in teaching.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps have been taken in the last two years to promote multicultural awareness and equal opportunities in school and initial teacher training establishments.

Mr. Forth: In the last two years the Government have continued the phased introduction of the national curriculum, which is designed to challenge and stimulate all pupils whatever their ethnic or cultural origin. The National Curriculum Council and the Schools Examination and Assessment Council, which advise my: :right hon. Friend on the curriculum and assessment, are required in exercising their functions to take account of the ethnic and cultural diversity of British society and the importance of promoting equal opportunities for all pupils regardless of ethnic origin and gender. The Government are also proposing to strengthen religious education, which provides opportunities to study other faiths and cultures and develop greater tolerance and understanding.

The criteria for the approval of courses of initial teacher training—ITT—include a requirement that they should

help student teachers to develop an awareness of individual differences, including social and cultural dimensions. The Department has encouraged the development of ITT courses for people from ethnic minority communities. The Department issued guidance in August 1992 about the design and management of such courses, drawing on conclusions from Her Majesty's Inspectorate inspections.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage the recruitment of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds; and what success has been achieved in the last two years.

Mr. Forth: The Government have adopted a range of measures to encourage people from ethnic minority backgrounds to consider a career in the teaching profession. They include "Teaching as a Career"—TASC—publications, advertising, participation at careers events, stimulating the development of special access courses, and supporting relevant local projects.

The Government introduced ethnic monitoring of teachers in January 1990 following recommendation by the Swann committee, but response so far has been poor, though it is improving. As a result, it is not yet possible to draw conclusions about the percentage of teachers nationally who are from ethnic minorities, nor to identify improvements over the last two years.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of local education authority induction programmes for new teachers.

Mr. Forth: The Department published a report in March 1992 by Her Majesty's inspectorate on the induction of new teachers. A new grant to support expenditure by local education authorities on improvements in induction training was introduced, through the grants for education support and training programme—GEST—with effect from the 1992-93 financial year. Evidence about the effectiveness of local education authorities' induction arrangements is taken into account when decisions about the allocation of GEST support are made.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the way in which initial teacher training establishments are selecting applicants on the basis of their personal qualities for effective classroom management and for relating well to children, the way in which his Department is contributing to more effective selection procedures and the number and percentage of applicants who are not accepted for initial teacher training.

Mr. Forth: The Secretary of State's criteria for the approval of initial teacher training—ITT—courses require institutions to ensure that entrants to teacher training have the necessary personal qualities for the profession, including an ability to manage and to get on well with children. No one can be accepted on an ITT course without being interviewed.

The number of applicants not accepted for ITT courses in 1992 were, for undergraduate courses, around 9,900 (39 per cent. of applicants); and for postgraduate courses around 8,800 (35 per cent. of applicants).

School Buildings

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice has been published in the last two years on school building design; and what were the principal purposes of such advice in each case.

Mr. Forth: The Department has published nine documents over the past two years to assist those concerned with the provision and management of school buildings. These are: "Educational Design Initiatives in City Technology Colleges" (Building Bulletin 72); "A Guide to Energy Efficiency" (Building Bulletin 73); "A School for Armenia" (Building Bulletin 74); "Close Circuit TV Surveillance Systems in Educational Buildings" (Building Bulletin 75); "Maintenance of Electrical Systems" (Building Bulletin 76); "Designing for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (Building Bulletin 77); "Energy Efficient School Refurbishment" (Broadsheet 27); "School Glazing and Vandalism" (Broadsheet 28); "Energy Use in Educational Buildings" (Broadsheet 29). Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest information available to him on the money needed to bring all school buildings into a good state of repair.

Mr. Forth: The latest information available is that contained in the "Survey of School Buildings" published by the Department in 1987. A realistic estimate of the cost of remedying the principal deficiencies identified by the survey, which covered county and voluntary controlled schools in England, is some £2 billion at 1990 prices. LEAs in England spent over £2 billion on capital expenditure on school buildings between 1986-87 and 1989-90. We estimate that between 1990-91 and 1993-94 LEAs will spend some £2·5 billion on their schools. Much of this will go on remedying deficiencies.

Education matters in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland and of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Personal and Social Education Programmes

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effective provision of personal and social education programmes in schools in the last two years.

Mr. Forth: During the last two years Her Majesty's inspectors of schools have published a number of reports focusing specifically on aspects of personal and social education; and have also addressed the subject, as appropriate, in their reports on individual schools. OFSTED is now responsible for providing my right hon. Friend with information and advice about all aspects of school education, which includes personal and social education.

Examinations

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of *(a)* Walsall and *(b)* west midlands school children of GCSE age take the exams; and what proportion carry on from GCSE to A-level.

Mr. Forth: It is estimated that 91·8 per cent. of pupils, who were 15 years old at the beginning of the 1991-92 academic year in Walsall schools, were entered for GCSE examinations compared with 91·7 per cent. in the whole of the west midlands. Information on the proportion who carry on from GCSE to A-level is not available centrally for individual local authority areas.

School Discipline

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities have used their powers of intervention under section 28 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986; and on how many occasions.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest information he has concerning the number of indefinite exclusions of pupils from *(a)* local education authority maintained schools and *(b)* grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: Information on indefinite exclusions is not collected centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of local education authority serious incident reporting systems.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has made no assessment of the effectiveness of local education authority serious incident reporting systems.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he has taken on recommendations *(a)* 68 and *(b)* 69.1 of the Elton report on discipline in schools.

Mr. Forth: Recommendation 68 deals with the importance of positive parental influence. The Government's stance on this is well known: parents should instil the values of responsible citizenship into their children. Recommendation 69.1 concerns education for parenthood. The National Curriculum Council has issued guidance to schools on the content of family life education, including education for parenthood, and its place in the wider curriculum.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps have been taken by his Department to overcome bullying and racial harassment in schools.

Mr. Forth: The Government expect schools to deal firmly with bullying and racial harassment. Copies of the pack "Action against Bullying" were sent to all schools in England in July 1992. The Department is also funding research to develop and test a range of intervention strategies against bullying in schools and further guidance will be issued in due course. Guidance on responses to racial harassment was given to chief education officers in 1989 and 1992. OFSTED has been asked to ensure that all inspecting teams appointed under the Schools Act 1992 pay particular attention to the arrangements for securing good discipline and behaviour.

Records of Achievement

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of records of achievement in giving due weight to a wide range of pupil achievements and personal qualities.

Mr. Forth: Records of achievement are a valuable means of recording and reporting pupils' achievements. The national record of achievement is an effective summary for school-leavers to take forward to further education and working life. Recent evaluation has shown that take up of the NRA among schools has been high. New regulations governing reports on pupils' achievements require schools to use the format as part of the NRA to provide a specified minimum of information for school-leavers. Copies of the regulations and the explanatory circular have been placed in the Library.

Management Training

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of management training programmes for head teachers and other senior staff.

Mr. Forth: It is for individual schools and teachers to decide which training programmes can most effectively meet their particular needs. The Department has helped by supporting the development and assessment of a number of new management training initiatives in recent years. We also commissioned a survey of overall provision for school management training in February 1989 to guide and support the work of the school management task force, the body we established to lever up standards of provision in this field. The Office for Standards in Education has responsibility for inspecting the training of teachers including management training programmes.

Articled Teachers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many people have become articled teachers since the inception of the scheme; and in what sectors and subjects.

Mr. Forth: Around 1,200 primary and secondary phase students have been recruited to the articled teacher scheme in England since its inception in 1990. Secondary training has been in the subjects of business studies, design and technology, English, modern foreign languages, mathematics, science and religious education.

Pupil Behaviour

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the provision that local education authorities make for their most difficult pupils; and how many local education authorities have been studied in this regard.

Mr. Forth: As part of its detailed enquiry into discipline in schools, the Elton committee asked LEAs about their provision for pupils whose behaviour teachers found most difficult to manage. Its report commented on both the nature and quality of the provision made. For the future

inspecting teams appointed under the Schools Act 1992 will pay particular attention to schools' arrangements for securing good discipline and behaviour.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of local education authorities in promoting better co-ordination between various local agencies dealing with pupils with behaviour or attendance problems and their families.

Mr. Forth: The importance of effective co-ordination with other agencies is stressed in much of the guidance produced by the Department of Health on the Children Act 1989 and in the guide to the Act for the education service which the Department of Education commissioned from the Open university. Where school attendance is concerned, the education welfare service has a long history of close collaboration with social services and other agencies. The importance of these contacts was stressed in the Department's circular 2/86 "School Attendance and Education Welfare Services".

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many cases of bullying have been reported in each local education authority in the primary, secondary and special education sectors in each of the last three years; and what percentage of those cases were racially motivated.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research his Department has sponsored in the last two years on the implications for pupil behaviour of arranging pupils in groups for teaching purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: No such research has been commissioned in the last two years. The behavioural implications of grouping pupils for teaching purposes were however discussed in Her Majesty's inspectorate's 1987 publication "Good Behaviour and Discipline in Schools" and in "Discipline in Schools", the report of the committee of inquiry into discipline in schools chaired by Lord Elton, published in 1989.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much money under the grants for education support and training scheme has been allocated since 1990-91 for programmes dealing with the management of pupil behaviour; and what percentage of overall funding this is.

Mr. Forth: Some £7·6 million of expenditure has been supported over the three years from 1990-91 to improve support services for the most difficult pupils through approved projects in 24 local education authorities (LEAs). A further £3·5 million was supported over the two years from 1990-91 to help improve teachers' practical skills in managing pupil behaviour. Together, these grants supported £4·2 million in 1990-91 (1·2 per cent. of the overall education support grants and LEA training grants programmes in that year); £4·2 million in 1991-92 (1·2 per cent. of the overall grants for education support and training—GEST—programme); and are supporting £2·7 million in 1992-93 (0·7 per cent. of the overall GEST programme).

Education Welfare Officers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many education welfare officers are employed by each local education authority; what is the ratio of officers to pupils in each local education authority and if he will make a statement about the adequacy of this provision.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally. It is for each individual local education authority to determine whether the number of education welfare officers employed is sufficient to enable it to meet its statutory responsibilities.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the number of educational psychologists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, qualified specialists in hearing and visual impairments and other specialist support staff needed to ensure that all statements of special educational needs are prepared within six months while work with other children with special needs is maintained at satisfactory levels.

Mr. Forth: The provision of suitable numbers of specialist staff to ensure that all statements of special educational needs are prepareed within six months is for LEAs to determine. The recent Audit Commission/HMI report on provision for pupils with SEN noted, however, that the time taken for making assessments and statements is largely a matter of effective management. In discharging their duties under the Education Act 1981, it is essential for LEAs to work closely with district health authorities and social services departments, who also have important roles to play in this process.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Advances of salary up to a maximum of £100 are available to junior staff for the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel. The conditions applying to the scheme are being reviewed in the light of the reply that my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) gave on 16 December 1992 to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) at columns *285-86*.

Grant-maintained Status

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list each one-day conference in the "Going GM: A conference for Heads and Governors" series, hosted by his Department, that has been held or is planned, giving dates, venues and the speakers for each one.

Mr. Forth: The information available is as follows:

Venue	Date	Speakers/Workshop contributors GM Heads	DFE Officials
Leeds	16 November 1992	3	4
Bolton	12 December 1992	6	7
Sheffield	15 January 1993	5	5
Manchester[1]	30 January 1993	6	5

[1] Planned.

My noble Friend the Minister of State spoke at the initial conference in Leeds. A GM bursar contributed at Bolton. A representative of the GMSC has attended to run a workshop explaining the services that the GMSC can offer to schools once they are approved for GM status.

Additional DFE conferences are planned as follows:

Newcastle: 10 and 11 February
Leicester: 15 February
Nottingham: 1 and 29 March
Birmingham: 19 March

Details of contributors to these conferences have yet to be confirmed.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what are the *(a)* editorial, *(b)* design, *(c)* printing, *(d)* distribution and *(e)* total costs, of the conference material sent to potential participants in the series of one-day conferences called "Going GM: A conference for Heads and Governors";

(2) if he will list the total conference costs of the series of one-day conferences hosted by his Department entitled "Going GM: A conference for Heads and Governors", including staff time for civil servants within his Department; and what are the projected costs for all such conferences.

Mr. Forth: The conference material sent to potential participants includes a letter of invitation and a copy of the standard GM information pack. Printing and distribution costs for the information pack included with the invitations were approximately £18,000. The initial mailing of invitations and packs was carried out at a total cost of around £15,000. Further mailings have fallen within the terms of the contract with the departmental despatch centre and therefore costs cannot be identified separately.

The total costs to date for conference accommodation and facilities for the three conferences held at Leeds, Bolton and Sheffield are approximately £20,000. The expected cost of a further seven conferences is approximately £45,000. There is a contract for specialised support services for the conference series at a total cost of £67,000. Disaggregating the costs of civil servants' time could not be achieved other than at disproportionate cost.

Education, Enfield

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he will take to ensure that Enfield is able to fulfil its duty to provide full-time education to all its pupils.

Mr. Forth: There is no reason why all pupils in Enfield should not receive full-time education. Enfield council will get its fair share of the underlying 2·6 per cent. increase in education standard spending, once account has been taken of the transfer of responsibility for further education from local authorities to the new funding council.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Interpretation of Legislation

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the decision of the House of Lords in the case of Pepper *v.* Hart on references to the utterances of Ministers on the contents and intent of Bills during their passage in Parliament, when Acts are subsequently interpreted in the courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On 26 November 1992, the House of Lords decided by a majority that courts could look at parliamentary materials if the legislation is ambiguous or obscure or leads to an absurdity; the material that could be relied upon consists of a statement by a Minister or other promoter of the Bill; and the statements relied upon are clear.

Legal Aid

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many of the claims made by solicitors for payment by the legal aid fund were settled within one month in 1991-92.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In 1991-92 the Legal Aid Board had a general target of paying 80 per cent. of solicitors' bills within six weeks of receipt measured by its performance in March 1992. This target was surpassed, with 87 per cent. of bills being paid within that time.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many claims for payment by solicitors are awaiting payment from the London legal aid area office; and how many have been outstanding for over one month.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On 6 January 1993 the London area office had a total of 31,651 costs claims of all types in the process of being paid. Of these 2,844, or 9 per cent. had been held in the office for more than one month.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many people in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* Lancashire and *(c)* England received legal aid for each year since 1987 in respect of (i) advice and assistance for divorce, (ii) road or work accidents, (iii) regaining custody of children taken into local authority care and (iv) alleged criminal acts triable at a Crown court; and what is his estimate for the total number of people eligible for legal aid in the categories mentioned for the next financial year.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available in the form requested. The following table shows the number of bills paid for advice and assistance for divorce for each of the last five years for England and Wales, for legal aid area 7 which comprises parts of Lancashire including Pendle together with Greater Manchester, and for legal aid area 15 which comprises the rest of Lancashire and Merseyside.

	England and Wales	Legal Aid Area 7	Legal Aid Area 15
1987-88	237,056	18,531	13,599
1988-89	232,494	18,005	13,412
1989-90	225,066	18,132	12,460

	England and Wales	Legal Aid Area 7	Legal Aid Area 15
1990-91	215,895	17,315	11,681
1991-92	231,065	16,867	11,770

The number of legal aid certificates for proceedings related to road and work accidents is available only for England and Wales. Figures for the last five years are:

Year	Number
1987-88	26,113
1988-89	27,745
1989-90	29,181
1990-91	30,416
1991-92	38,679

The following table shows for each of the past five calendar years the total number of criminal legal aid orders made in: *(a)* England and Wales; *(b)* the magistrates' courts in Lancashire and the Crown court centres in the northern circuit of the Lord Chancellor's Department; and *(c)* the Pendle magistrates' court and the Crown court at Burnley.

Year	(a) England and Wales	(b) Lancashire and Northern Circuit	(c) Pendle and Burnley
1987	496,975	12,639	670
1988	511,895	[1]—	[1]—
1989	502,675	10,303	708
1990	507,813	13,583	880
1991	517,118	10,889	737

[1]No figures available.

Figures are not available for certificates issued for proceedings for regaining children taken into local authority care. In England and Wales it is estimated that in the next financial year 48 per cent. of households will be eligible for civil legal aid and 21 per cent., for advice and assistance. There is no upper financial eligibility limit for criminal legal aid.

Commercial Court

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *757*, from what date Mr. Justice Colman will be available to commence sitting in the commercial court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Mr. Justice Colman was eligible to sit in the commercial court immediately following his appointment. The day to day deployment of High Court judges is, however, a matter for the Lord Chief Justice, after considering the needs of the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court, the divisional court and the Court of Appeal, criminal division. In deciding where judges are to be deployed there are different questions of priority to be decided. The Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice consider a reduction of waiting times in the latter two courts to be of high priority.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury explained in a written answer on 16 December 1992 at column *285-86* that, as part of the ongoing programme for delegating to Departments and agencies greater responsibility for managing personnel management policies, Departments and agencies have been given the freedom to determine the conditions on which advances of salary to assists civil servants in the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel are made. Staff in the Lord Chancellor's Department, and in the Department's executive agencies, are eligible for a salary advance to assist with the purchase of a bicycle for home-to-office travel. The maximum advance is currently £100 repayable over a period of one year. Departments and agencies will shortly have discretion to set their own limit and rules for eligibility and repayment. No decisions have yet been reached on how this discretion might be applied within the Lord Chancellor's Department and its agencies.

Court Listing

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on what basis his Department makes available court listing information in *(a)* manuscript and printed form and *(b)* machine readable form.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Crown court centres usually distribute lists of cases to be heard, or likely to be heard, or the information they contain, to all interested parties as soon as they are available.

Lists of cases with fixed hearing dates and cases likely to be heard within a particular period are distributed at least 10 days prior to the first hearing date. These lists are usually in printed form and are posted.

A daily list is printed and published usually by 3 pm, showing the cases due to be heard on the next sitting day. However, some courts publish a provisional list earlier in the day. The information on this list is notified to parties either by the hand delivery of a copy, or by sending a copy by facsimile machine or, more commonly by means of a telephone call. The hon. Member is aware from my answer of 16 December 1992 at col. *239* that the central criminal court is distributing such lists in a machine readable form on an experimental basis.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Electricity Generation

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to quantify the external costs of each form of electricity generation.

Mr. Eggar: Last December my Department published an independent report on environmental and other social costs of different methods of electricity generation.

The report, commissioned by the former Department of Energy and entitled "The Social Costs of Fuel Cycles" is the work of a team from the Centre for Social and

Economic Research on the Global Environment (CSERGE), led by Professor David Pearce of University college London. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

My Department is also currently supporting the participation of the Energy Technology Support Unit in a joint European Community/USA study to develop a methodology for assessing the external costs of fuel cycles. Phase I of this study is nearing completion: phase II is expected to commence during 1993.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the cost per tonne of British coal used in producing electricity in 1991; what estimates his Department has for the cost per tonne in 1995; and if he will make a statement.;

(2) what was the cost per tonne of imported coal used in producing electricity in 1991; what estimates his Department has for the cost per tonne in 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 13 January 1993]:* The average cost of coal, both home produced and imported, used by the major generating companies in producing electricity in 1991 was £43·47 per tonne. The cost of British coal used in power stations is a commercial matter for the companies concerned. My Department has not produced forecasts of future energy costs since 1982.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost, in coal equivalent tonnes, of natural gas used to produce electricity in 1991; what estimates his Department has for the cost in 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 13 January 1993]:* The cost of natural gas used to produce electricity is a commercial matter for the two major generating companies concerned. My Department has not produced forecasts of future energy costs since 1982.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of interruptions to electricity supply to consumers since 1990.

Mr. Eggar: The Office of Electricity Regulation—OFFER—includes an assessment of interruptions of electricity supply to consumers in their annual "Report on Distribution and Transmission System Performance". The latest edition of this report (for the year 1991-92), covers the last 10 years and is available from OFFER's library.

Inward Investment

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many inward investment projects in Northumberland and Blyth valley were begun in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sainsbury: In 1990, 13 overseas companies decided to invest in Northumberland with one of those investments being made in Blyth. The figures for 1991 are five and one respectively. Figures for 1992 are not yet available. These figures do not include relocations from other regions of the United Kingdom.

These figures are based on information provided by the companies at the time of the announcement of the decision to invest. There is no requirement to notify the Department and so the figures include only those projects where the Department's Invest In Britain Bureau and its regional partners were involved or, which have come to their notice. They take no account of subsequent developments.

Betws Colliery

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from companies expressing an interest in taking over production of coal at the Betws colliery in Ammanford; when he received these representations; and if he will ensure that the pit is maintained whilst these representations are being considered.

Mr. Eggar: Since the announcement of the proposed closures in October 1992, my Department has received three representations from companies which may be interested in taking over the operation of Betws. British Coal has given assurances that the fabric of the pit will be maintained so that if, following the consultation process at present under way, it is decided to keep it open, that will be possible. We will need to consider the position again once the outcome of the consultations is known.

Newspapers

Mr. Beggs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the exclusive arrangements for the supply and distribution of newspapers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading referred the supply of newspapers from publishers to wholesalers and wholesalers to retailers in England and Wales to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on 19 August 1992. The commission was asked to report back to the President of the Board of Trade within 12 months.

The terms of reference exclude Scotland and Northern Ireland primarily because their newspaper distribution arrangements are different. The Office of Fair Trading continues to keep the market for the supply of newspapers in Scotland and Northern Ireland under review.

Offshore Exploration

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to impose on discharges from exploration rigs in the Celtic sea, the same standards that are applied by the United States of America, Holland and Norway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Offshore environmental standards are established on the basis of regional agreements. The standards imposed on discharges from exploration rigs in the Celtic sea are consistent with those agreed in the Paris Commission (PARCOM), which administers the Paris convention for the prevention of marine pollution. This covers the whole of the north east Atlantic area. In appropriate cases more stringent requirements can be imposed under licence conditions. The Netherlands and Norway are members of the Paris Commission and their standards similarly reflect those agreed in the Paris Commission.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what advice he received from the Joint Nature

Conservation Committee and the Countryside Council for Wales prior to the issuing of licences for exploration in blocks 103/2, 103/3, 103/6, 103/7, 106/25, 106/29, 107/21, 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/19 and 104/21; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the shortest distance in nautical miles between the eastern extremity of block 103/3 and Romsey Island;

(3) what is the shortest distance in nautical miles between the eastern extremity of block 103/7 and Grassholm;

(4) what is the shortest distance in nautical miles between the Pembrokeshire Coast national park and *(a)* the eastern extremity of block 106/29, *(b)* the southern and eastern extremities of block 107/21, *(c)* the northern extremity of block 103/19, *(d)* the northern extremity of block 103/20, *(e)* the northern extremity of block 104/16 and *(f)* the northern extremity of block 104/17;

(5) what is the shortest distance in nautical miles between the Skomer marine nature reserve and *(a)* the eastern extremity of block 103/7 and *(b)* the northern extremity of block 103/19.

Mr. Eggar: The shortest distance in nautical miles—nm—between the eastern extremity of block 103/3 and Romsey Island is 5·4 nm and between the eastern extremity of block 103/7 and Grassholm is 6·1 nm. The shortest distance in nautical miles between the Pembrokeshire coastal national park and *(a)* the eastern extremity of block 106/29 is 3 nm, *(b)* the southern and eastern extremities of block 107/21 is 3·6 nm, *(c)* the northern extremity of block 103/19 is 8·6 nm, *(d)* the northern extremity of block 103/20 is 6·4 nm, *(e)* the northern extremity of block 104/16 is 5·7 nm and *(f)* the northern extremity of block 104/17 is 7·7 nm. The shortest distance in nautical miles between Skomer marine nature reserve and *(a)* the eastern extremity of block 103/7 is 10·0 nm and *(b)* the northern extremity of block 103/19 is 12·7 nm. These figures are accurate to within 0·1 nm.

No licences have been issued for exploration in blocks 103/2, 103/3, 103/6, 103/7, 106/25, 106/29, 107/21, 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/19 and 104/21.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to order independent environmental impact assessments before any new drilling begins in the Celtic sea.

Mr. Eggar: Prior to offering blocks for licence the Department consults relevant environmental organisations. Where appropriate special conditions, which may include a requirement for an environmental impact assessment, are attached to licences which take into account the environmental sensitivity of each block. These conditions are agreed with the consultees.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what environmental monitoring on the impact of offshore drilling in the Celtic sea has been carried out by his Department or the Department of Energy since 1973.

Mr. Eggar: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food carries out general monitoring of the coast of England and Wales to establish background levels of marine pollutants. At the completion of the latest well in the Celtic sea, the University of Bangor will be carrying out a survey to assess any effects of drilling on the marine environment.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: DTI offers advances of salary for this pupose to all staff—including those in its agencies—other than casuals. Advances are subject to a £100 maximum repayable over 12 months and to proof of purchase being made available. The conditions will be reviewed from time to time within overall rules established by HM Treasury.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what arrangement his Department has made to ensure that the inspectors of the Organisation for Chemical Weapons, following the ratification of the chemical weapons convention, will be admitted to any site in the United Kingdom for which inspection has been requested;

(2) what further United Kingdom legislation will be necessary to enable the inspectors and the national authority to carry out its duties following the ratification of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Sainsbury: Primary legislation will be required to provide the necessary powers to ensure that the United Kingdom fulfils its obligations under the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangement his Department has made to ensure that information will be made available to the public by the national authority, following the ratification of the chemical weapons convention, on the United Kingdom's compliance with the convention.

Mr. Sainsbury: No decision has been taken about the information to be made available to the public by the national authority. We will consult interested bodies. Information received by the national authority will be subject to the terms of the annex to the chemical weapons convention dealing with the protection of confidential information.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish his review of the assisted areas map; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our intention is to announce the results of the assisted areas map review as early as possible, taking account of the outcome of the coal review and after the necessary clearance of the European Commission.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to announce the decision on the bid for assisted area status lodged by Waveney district council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Consideration is now being given to bids received, including that from Waveney district

council. Our intention is to announce the results of the assisted areas map review as early as possible, taking account of the outcome of the coal review and after the necessary clearance of the European Commission.

Cashmere

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement outlining the steps that have been taken to prevent Chinese attempts to circumvent the quota of cashmere goods allowed into the Community under the existing bilateral agreement.

Mr. Needham: Following representations from the United Kingdom, the EC has introduced a separate tariff line exclusively for cashmere sweaters. As a result of the completion of the single market the quota for cashmere sweaters has now been established on an EC basis. Both of these measures, which took effect on 1 January 1993, will enable import levels to be monitored more effectively than in previous years.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

European Cultural Festival

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what benefits accrued to the arts in Wales from the European cultural festival organised during the United Kingdom Presidency of the European Council; what proportion of the total financial allocation was dedicated to Wales; and how many permanent jobs were created.

Mr. Brooke: During the European arts festival some 70 events were held across the Principality in every art form —dance, theatre, classical music, jazz, opera, the visual arts and film. Approximately £320,000 was allocated to enable these events to take place. In addition, the festival planned and supported extensive education and community programmes involving some 100 schools in Wales. The festival has provided a good deal of additional short-term work for artists in Wales through the initiation of a wide range of new projects.

Gambling

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has of *(a)* the net level of gambling each week, *(b)* the proportion of national lottery stakes that might go to good causes or in taxation and *(c)* the level of spending on the national lottery that would be required to produce £20 million for good causes and taxation.

Mr. Brooke: Overall responsibility for gambling, excluding the national lottery, rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. On question *(a)*, I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 9 November 1992 at cols. *632-33*.

(b) The proportion available for good causes will depend on the exact level of prizes considered appropriate, on the projected costs of operating the lottery, and on the level of tax. Taxation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

(c) The turnover required to produce any given amount for taxation and good causes will depend on *(b)*.

British Library (Yorkshire)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Natonal Heritage if he will make a statement on the plans of the British Library with regard to its buildings and services in Yorkshire.

Mr. Key: The British Library's policy is to provide a service to users from its sites in London and Boston Spa, Yorkshire. The document supply centre will continue to operate from Boston Spa. In addition, during the last two years, the Library has relocated to Yorkshire its acquisition processing and cataloguing, its bibliographic services, computing and telecommunications and a substantial part of its administration.

The British Library Board will continue to review the needs of its users, including long-term requirements.

Football Ground Safety

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what financial provision will be made for implementing the football ground safety measures proposed by the Taylor report following decreases in the funding by pools company revenue.

Mr. Brooke: In the 1990 Budget, pool betting duty was reduced from 42·5 per cent. to 40 per cent. for five years to help finance the implementation of the Taylor report and in particular the achievement of all-seating. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has since made clear the conditions under which he would be prepared to extend the reduction for a further five years: he would need to be satisfied that the football leagues and football clubs had gone ahead with planning for their own contribution to implementing the required ground improvements. I am not aware of any plans by the pools companies to reduce their funding of Taylor-related work at football grounds.

Manchester Olympics Bid

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he plans to meet the chairman of the North West tourist board to discuss Merseyside's share in the Manchester 2000 Olympics bid.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans to do so.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Department and its agency, the Historic Royal Palaces Agency, are able to provide advances of salary to assist staff with the purchase of bicycles for home to office travel. Advances currently up to a maximum of £100 are available to non-industrial staff who have served in the civil service for at least two months. Advances are not available to staff employed on a casual basis. The advances are interest-free and are repayable over one year. Immediate repayment is required should the member of staff cease to be a civil servant or dispose of the bicycle.

The Department has no plans to change eligibility or repayment rules, or to raise the maximum amount of loan.

Indian Subcontinent

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of the 14 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *14*, on flights to and from the Indian sub-continent, what assessment he has made of the reasons for *(a)* the difference between the number of arrivals and departures in each year and *(b)* the trend in the difference.

Mr. Key: Reliable conclusions cannot necessarily be drawn from the differences between the data on passengers arriving and departing on flights from or to the Indian sub-continent. This is because the data relate to all such passengers irrespective of where they joined or left the flights, and also because the data include passengers who changed flights in the United Kingdom without passing through immigration control.

Information up to 1990 on international migration to and from the Indian sub-continent is given in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' annual reference volume "International Migration 1990". Information up to 1991 on citizens of Indian sub-continent countries who were accepted for settlement, that is, allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom, is given in the Home Office Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 1991". Both of these publications are available in the Library of the House.

Television Licences

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will set out the reasons used by the National TV Licence Records Office for withdrawing a full concessionary TV licence entitlement from Richmond Row sheltered housing complex in Jedburgh; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations he has received about the operation of the current rules governing eligibility for full concessionary TV licence schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Under section 180 and schedule 18 of the Broadcasting Act 1990, responsibility for the administration of the television licensing system, including determining eligibility for concessionary licences in individual cases, passed to the BBC with effect from 1 April 1991. Any questions about specific schemes should therefore now be directed to the secretary of the BBC, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on particular cases. Since the establishment of the Department of National Heritage in April last year, we have received 107 letters from hon. Members and 178 letters from members of the public about the operation of the concessionary licence scheme.

Dulwich Picture Gallery

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received on behalf of Dulwich picture gallery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* I have received no representations on behalf of the Dulwich picture gallery. However my right hon. Friend met representatives from the gallery and the arts community at Christie's on Thursday 7 January.

Bletchley Park

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the future of Bletchley park as a museum dedicated to the cryptographers of world war two.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The Bletchley park site is owned by Property Holdings and British Telecom. I understand that the Government and British Telecom are planning to dispose of Bletchley park, and that a decision on its future is one for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to take.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Expenditure Plans

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his spending plans for 1993-94 for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) on 8 December 1992 at column *601*. That covered expenditure plans for the years 1993/94 – 1995/96. Further details will be given in the Northern Ireland report "Public Expenditure and Priorities 1993/94 – 1995/96" which will be published on 12 February, and the 1993-94 estimates which will be laid before the House in due course.

Human Rights

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many recommendations have been made by the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights since it was set up; and how many of these have been accepted by Government and implemented.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Commission has made many valuable recommendations, for example on fair employment, education, race relations and other human rights issues, which the Government have been pleased to accept. To identify all the recommendations made by the Commission and accepted by the Government since it was created in 1973 could be done only at disproportionate cost. But all the Commission's reports are published, and the Government's response to each report is laid in the Library of the House at the same time.

Ambulance Service

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the percentage of ambulances in each service in Northern Ireland that responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in 1991-92.

Mr. Hanley: The available information is as follows:

Ambulance Service	Percentage responded within (a) eight minutes	(b) twenty minutes
Northern Health and Social Services Board	54·87	95·69
Southern Health and Social Services Board	55·97	90·43
Eastern Health and Social Services Board	59·09	92·87
Western Health and Social Services Board	51·73	92·62
Overall figure for Northern Ireland	56·80	93·15

Separate figures on the percentage of calls responded to between 14 and 20 minutes are not available.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of ambulance staff in Northern Ireland employed by the NHS in 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991, using whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Hanley: The number of whole-time equivalent ambulance staff employed by the Northern Ireland health and personal social services was as follows:

	Number
1987	584·75
1988	573·50
1989	575·47
1990	581·52
1991	587·04

Seamus McElwaine

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on his discussions with the Government of the Republic of Ireland concerning the use of lethal force by the security forces in Northern Ireland, following the verdict of the jury in the inquest into the death of Seamus McElwaine.

Mr. Mates: A range of security-related issues, including the use of force by the security forces in Northern Ireland, is regularly discussed with the Irish Government at meetings of the intergovernmental conference.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to deal with the issues raised by the verdict of the jury in the inquest into the death of Seamus McElwaine.

Mr. Mates: The Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, who is the holder of an independent statutory office, has asked for a full report from the police in the light of the inquest jury's findings. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment further.

St. Mary's College of Education

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the changes from 85 per cent. to 100 per cent. grant status for the maintained sector of education in Northern Ireland will apply to St. Mary's college of education.

Mr. Hanley: St. Mary's college is a teacher training establishment and therefore the new arrangements for grant for schools do not apply.

Absent Parents

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) in how many cases in each of the past five years court action has successfully resulted in an absent parent paying maintenance;

(2) in how many cases in each of the past five years an absent parent has failed to pay maintenance.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that this information could not be made available except at disproportionate cost.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will implement a refrigerant recycling and reclaim policy covering all departmental equipment currently using chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will publish targets for departmental reuse and recycling; if he will implement an equipment conversion and replacement programme for all departmental uses of chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Office of Public Service and Science is committed to the Government's policy for reducing the use of substances controlled under the Montreal protocol. The use of chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons within the department continues to be reduced, with the aim of total elimination within the time scale of the protocol. Due attention is paid to the proper disposal of ozone-depleting chemicals.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce a leakage prevention programme for all refrigeration and air conditioning equipment owned and operated by his Department; if he will publish targets for reductions in leakages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Air conditioning plant in use within the Office of Public Service and Science is regularly checked for leaks as part of the ongoing maintenance programme. A stipulation of any new installation of air conditioning equipment is the use of ozone-friendly refrigerants.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: On 16 December, my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary announced that Departments and agencies had been given the freedom to determine the conditions on which advances of salary to assist civil servants in the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel are made. The Office of Public Service and Science and its agencies are considering how to proceed with this matter. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Oil Spillages

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what analysis has been undertaken by the research councils of the nature and effect of chemical dispersants when used to treat large spillages of oil.

Mr. Robert Jackson: None, but I will draw their attention to the hon. Member's question.

EMPLOYMENT

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in her Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if she will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of her Department; what plans she has to change the conditions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The conditions are as follows. Staff must be able to demonstrate an operational case justifying the advance or some other identifiable value-for-money improvement that can be achieved by the advance; applications for advances must be reasonable in relation to the amount of expenditure and the individual's grade; advances must be repaid over 12 months; and any outstanding balance must be repaid immediately if the individual leaves the Department or sells or otherwise disposes of the bicycle. There are no plans to change these conditions.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will instruct the manager of the Cardiff adjudication sector to report the number of unemployment benefit disqualification decisions made by adjudicating officers in that sector under each paragraph of section 28(1) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, and the periods for which disqualification was imposed, in a convenient week before the end of January; and if she will place this information in the Library.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 18 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about unemployment benefit disqualifications under Section 28(1) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992. This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as the Chief Executive of the Agency.

You may recall that, during my absence, Mr. Johnson wrote to you in June 1992 in response to a similar question. To assemble information about the length of the periods of disqualifications imposed by the adjudication officers at the Cardiff sector during a specific week we would need to identify and examine each case in which disqualification was imposed. As mentioned previously this could only be done at disproportionate cost to public funds.

We do not collect or publish the type of information you have requested because the period of disqualification is decided in the light of the circumstances of each individual case and, without knowledge of those circumstances, no meaningful interpretation could be placed on it. Quality assurance of the adjudication process includes scrutiny of the evidence taken into account by adjudication officers in exercising their discretion in setting disqualification periods. This is carried out by adjudication management at local level and by the Central Adjudication Service as part of their statutory function to report on the standard of adjudication on benefit claims.

I am sorry that I cannot help you further in this matter.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Unemployment

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, columns *250-51*, if she will list the numbers of people represented by the unemployment rates given.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* Only unemployment rates are published on a monthly basis and these were given in my answer to the hon. Member of 16 December, *Official Report*, columns *250-51*. The corresponding numbers of unemployed represented by the rates given in my earlier answere are not available as such figures are only produced on the basis of annual averages. The latest annual data relates to 1991 and is as follows:

Estimates of the number of unemployed—annual averages[1]

Country	[1]*Number of unemployed*
Belgium	303,000
Denmark	259,000
France	2,308,000
Germany[2]	1,346,000
Greece[3]	303,000
Ireland	219,000
Italy	2,436,000
Luxembourg	3,000
Netherlands	485,000
Portugal	204,000
Spain	2,450,000
United Kingdom	2,627,000

[1]Published by the Statistical Office of the European Community (SOEC) and compiled according to internationally recognised International Labour Office (ILO) guidelines.

[2]Figures for the Federal Republic of Germany relate to the territory before 3rd October 1990.

[3]Figure refers to spring 1991.

DEFENCE

British Aerospace Space Division

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the effect on the United Kingdom defence procurement programme of the takeover of the BAe Space Division by Matra-Marconi.

Mr. Aitken: While I understand that there has been a dialogue between the two companies, I am advised that no current discussions are taking place. There are therefore no implications for defence procurement.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Staff in junior grades throughout the Ministry of Defence and its agencies are eligible to apply for an advance of salary of up to £100 to assist with the purchase of a bicycle for use in travelling between home and office, provided they have been in post for at least two months and are not employed in a casual capacity. The definition of "junior staff" is staff in grades which are entitled to class 3 rates of subsistence, ie. higher executive officer and below.

My Department and its agencies are considering whether to alter the scheme in light of the recent changes notified by Treasury and announced by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury on 16 December 1992, *Official Report*, cols. *285-86*.

Infantry Battalions

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual running cost of each type of United Kingdom infantry battalion, including the further battalions based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the National Radiological Protection Board study into British nuclear test participants will be concluded; and how many participants are projected to be living by this date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand that the National Radiological Protection Board study will be concluded as soon as is practically possible consistent with the maintenance of the highest standards of scientific rigour. It is not possible to predict how many participants will be alive at the time of publication of the report.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensation payments have been issued to foreign personnel as a result of British nuclear tests in the south Pacific.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will release details of radiation dosage levels to all living British nuclear test participants and, in the event of death, to the deceased participant's next of kin.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The recorded radiation exposure is provided on request to the individual test participant or, in the event of death, to the next of kin.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the maximum possible distance between locations on mainland Christmas island and the Grapple Y nuclear test.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The mustering location at the greatest distance from the Grapple Y test was 43km away.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if all dosage levels for radiation contamination have been released to the National Radiological Protection Board for their study into possible illness in British nuclear test participants.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All recorded radiation exposures of participants in the United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear weapons tests and experimental programmes were passed to the National Radiological Protection Board at the time of its first study.

Pulheems Tests

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how Pulheems tests are carried out; and how such information is passed on to service personnel general practitioners.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Pulheems tests are used to assess and categorise medical fitness. They are carried out on a regular basis by qualified medical personnel in accordance with standard tri-service regulations. All service general practitioners have access to these regulations. Pulheems ratings for individual personnel are recorded on personal records.

Air-to-surface Missile

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral answer of 27 October 1992 to the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), *Official Report*, columns 861-62, when he will be able to announce a choice of system to meet the United Kingdom's sub-strategic requirements for nuclear capability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 27 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *862*, that we expect to reach a decision early this year.

Frigates (Pakistan)

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions are taking place with the Pakistan Government about the sale or lease of frigates or other warships to Pakistan.

Mr. Aitken: Discussions with the Pakistan Navy, which has expressed interest in acquiring a range of Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels when these ships leave service over the next year or so, are at an early stage.

Medical Records

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will release all medical records for service men and women for the purposes of pensions appeals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Disability pensions are the responsibility of the Benefits Agency. Where ex-service personnel make application, medical records are passed to the agency and released to the claimants as necessary for the conduct of the case.

Radioactive Contamination

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if every person with a blue book entry was subjected to some level of radioactive contamination; and what the term "gamma" refers to in such entries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No; the term "gamma" refers to external exposures to gamma radiation.

Seamus McElwaine

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the soldiers involved in the incident leading to the death of Seamus McElwaine are still serving in the Army; whether any of these soldiers are still serving in Northern Ireland or have served there since the incident; and what disciplinary procedures the Army intends to initiate following the verdict of the jury.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on the deployment of individual soldiers. The Director of Public Prosecution for Northern Ireland has asked for a full report from the police in the light of the inquest jury's finding. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Korea

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of United Kingdom forces stationed in Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The requirement for the continued deployment of a platoon of British troops for the UN honour guard in Korea has been reviewed in the light of the gradual withdrawal of the garrison from Hong Kong, "Options for Change", and the considerably changed global commitments which British armed forces now face in the 1990s. With these considerations in mind, and in view also of the progress which has been made in easing links between the Republic of Korea and North Korea, it has been decided that the British contingent of the UN honour guard, currently comprising one officer and 36 men, drawn from the Hong Kong garrison, will be withdrawn by 15 March 1993. The four British personnel who form part of the Commonwealth liaison mission in Seoul will follow within approximately two months.

The United Kingdom has consistently supported efforts to bring about reconciliation on the Korean peninsula; we continue to do so and have welcomed the moves which both sides have made to this end since prime ministerial talks began in September 1991. Notwithstanding the withdrawal of these troops, our membership of the United Nations Command, and of the Military Armistice Commission in Korea remains unchanged. This move does not imply any lessening of our efforts to urge the government of North Korea to take further steps towards a peaceful reconciliaton with South Korea, including full co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Authority and the full implementation of a bilateral north-south inspection regime.

WALES

Rate Support Allocations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet a deputation of Clwyd county councillors and officials and hon. Members to discuss the rate support allocations.

Mr. David Hunt: No. The Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance (WCCLGF) is the appropriate forum for discussion of the distribution of revenue resources between local authorities in Wales. I chaired a meeting of WCCLGF on 12 January at which the position for 1993-94 was discussed.

Assisted Area Status

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the designation of assisted area status in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The representations received about the review of assisted areas are currently being considered. The Government hope to be able to make an announcement on the outcome of the review in the near future.

Parenthood

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to develop a post-school education strategy aimed at promoting socially responsible parenthood.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office is funding training and initial resource material costs to support district health authorities' introduction of the child development programme in Wales—a parent support programme of targeted health visiting which encourages parenting skills in all areas of early child development. So far the programme has been introduced by Pembrokeshire, South Glamorgan, West Glamorgan, Powys and Gwynedd health authorities.

In addition, the Health Promotion Authority for Wales' "Health for All in Wales" strategy defines the major health promotional challenges facing Wales. Parenting is identified as one of the areas to be developed in pursuit of this strategy.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment has been made by his Department of the impact of a withdrawal of the search and rescue helicopter squadron from RAF Brawdy upon response times in dealing with coastal and offshore emergencies in and around the Ceredigion and Pembroke North constituency;

(2) what has been the average response time taken by Sea-king helicopters from RAF Brawdy to reach the scene of a coastal or offshore emergency in and around the Ceredigion and Pembroke North constituency in each of the last three years; and if he will publish estimated response times for helicopters from *(a)* RAF Chivenor and *(b)* RAF Valley to reach future coastal or offshore emergencies in or near the constituency;

(3) what research has been conducted by his Department on the effect of withdrawing the search and rescue helicopter squadron from RAF Brawdy upon established contingency plans drawn up by the Dyfed fire brigade to deal with offshore emergencies;

(4) what estimate he has made of how many lives have been saved in and around the Ceredigion and Pembroke North constituency in each of the last five years, due specifically to the swift response of the search and rescue helicopter squadron at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of the Dyfed county fire brigade to discuss the implications of withdrawing the search and rescue helicopter squadron from RAF Brawdy upon responses to coastal and offshore emergencies in and around the county.

Mr. David Hunt: Such discussions would be, in the first instance, for my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment has been made by his Department into the effect of withdrawing the search and rescue helicopter squadron from RAF Brawdy upon the training needs of local county firefighters in tackling offshore emergencies.

Mr. David Hunt: Such matters would be, in the first instance, for my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the amount of *(a)* Government grants and *(b)* European Community grants given to each of the assisted areas in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Drugs and Alcohol

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the establishments in Wales which provide residential facilities for *(a)* those with alcohol problems and *(b)* those with drug problems; if he will show for each establishment (i) the capital grant and (ii) the total revenue grant provided by his Department in each of the last five years; and if he will provide estimated figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The names of residential facilities in Wales for drug and alcohol misusers are not held centrally. Those which have received funding from the Department since 1987-88 and the amounts they have received are listed in the following table. With the exception of Dyfrig house, which provides facilities only for alcohol misusers, they cater for both drug and alcohol misusers. It is not possible at this stage to estimate figures for 1993-94.

Establishment	1987-88 £	1988-89 £	1989-90 £	1990-91 £	1991-92 £	[1] 1992-93 £
Ty Plamyra, Newport	—	—	—	[2] 1,623	[3] 8,300	[3] 8,673
Rhoserchan project, Aberystwyth	—	—	[2] 6,286 [3] 17,000	[3] 1,790 [2] 10,000	[2] 9,901	[3] 10,000
Ty Glyn, Cardiff	—	—	—	[3] 8,383	[2] 974	[3] 10,000
Ty Rodyn, Bangor	—	[3] 7,500	—	[3] 7,500	—	—
Dyfrig house, Cardiff	—	—	—	[2] 15,156	[2] 9,170	—

[1] Represents allocations made up to 31 December 1992.
[2] Capital funding.
[3] Revenue funding.

Treatment Centres

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what reasons underlay the timing of the notification to health authorities of their allocation of places at the treatment centres.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since 1989-90 when the treatment centre initiative was launched there have been a number of changes to the arrangements under which the Department has allocated places at the centres to health authorities in order to ensure the best possible usage of the centres. The exact timing of the allocations was therefore affected by a variety of factors in each year.

Hill Farmers

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many producers are entitled to hill livestock compensatory allowances in Wales; and what proportion of those are located in *(a)* severely disadvantaged and *(b)* disadvantaged areas.

Mr. David Hunt: About 15,000 claimants currently receive hill livestock compensatory allowances in Wales. Of these some 11,000 (73 per cent.) are located in the severely disadvantaged areas and 4,000 (27 per cent.) in the disadvantaged areas.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the average incomes of *(a)* all farms and *(b)* farms which presently receive hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in *(a)* disadvantaged areas, *(b)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(c)* less-favoured areas in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: Separate incomes data is only available in this form since 1985-86 from when the information requested is given in the table:

	(a) All farms		*(b) All farms which presently receive hill livestock compensatory allowance payments*					
	All dairy and livestock farms income		*Seriously disadvantaged area income*		*Disadvantaged areas income*		*Less favoured area income*	
	Current prices £	*Real terms*[1] £	*Current prices* £	*Real terms*[1] £	*Current prices* £	*Real terms*[1] £	*Current prices* £	*Real terms*[1] £
1985-86	7,914	11,145	7,913	11,145	5,938	8,363	7,616	10,727
1986-87	8,508	11,655	9,604	13,156	3,129	4,286	7,906	10,830
1987-88	11,243	14,793	10,703	14,083	5,985	7,875	9,453	12,438
1988-89	15,767	19,709	15,721	19,651	10,353	12,941	14,250	17,813
1989-90	12,277	14,111	10,022	11,520	5,370	6,172	8,805	10,121
1990-91	10,500	11,053	9,932	10,455	1,592	1,676	7,561	7,959
1991-92	13,968	13,968	15,340	15,340	4,386	4,386	12,254	12,254

[1] Deflated by the RPI 1991-92 = 100.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the number and proportion of farms, together with farms which presently receive hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in total and broken down by *(a)* disadvantaged areas, *(b)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(c)* less favoured areas.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1991 there were 6,594 main agricultural holdings in Wales with land in the disadvantaged areas but not in the severely disadvantaged areas, and a further 13,901 holdings with land in the severely disadvantaged areas making a total of 20,495 main holdings with land in the less favoured areas. These figures represent 22 per cent. 47 per cent. and 69 per cent. of all main holdings in Wales respectively.

Four thousand claimants currently receive hill livestock compensatory allowances in the disadvantaged areas only and a further 11,000 in the severely disadvantaged areas making a total of 15,000 claimants in the less favoured areas. These figures represent 13 per cent. 37 per cent. and 50 per cent. of all main holdings in Wales respectively.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hill livestock compensatory allowance rates in cash terms and real terms in each year since 1982.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is at table 17 of the statistical tables prepared in connection with last year's autumn review of hill livestock compensatory allowances. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what hectarage of land in Wales is in *(a)* less-favoured areas, *(b)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(c)* disadvantaged areas; what proportion of land in Wales each figure represents; and how many farmers are involved.

Mr. David Hunt: There are estimated to be 1,644,000 hectares of land in Wales in the less favoured areas, of which 1,158,000 hectares are in the severely disadvantaged areas and 486,000 hectares in the disadvantaged areas. These figures represent 79 per cent., 56 per cent. and 23 per cent. of the total land area of Wales respectively. In 1991 there were 20,495 main agricultural holdings in Wales with land in the less favoured areas, of which 13,901 holdings had land in the severely disadvantaged areas and 10,357 holdings had land in the disadvantaged areas.

NHS Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of *(a)* nursing and midwifery staff, *(b)* managerial staff and *(c)* clerical and administrative staff in the NHS in each year since 1989.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information, which relates to whole-time equivalents of staff employed by the NHS as at 30 September each year, is given in the following table:

	Nursing and midwifery staff	*[1]Managerial staff*	*Clerical and administrative staff*
1989	28,037	187	7,378
1990	28,093	416	7,653
1991	27,991	686	8,047
1992[2]	27,519	848	8,238

[1] General managers, senior managers and managers in the administrative and clerical staff group. The growth in the number of senior managers arises from the extension in 1989 of senior managers terms and conditions of service to second and third level managers.

[2] The implementation of the Project 2000 nursing education reforms in 1992 has led to the reclassification of some student nurses as students. Precise estimates of this effect are not readily available centrally. But overall in 1992 about 1,000 nurses have been reclassified. Those in the student intakes prior to 30 September 1992 have been excluded from the 1992 count.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Advances of salary to assist staff with the purchase of bicycles for home to office travel are not currently available within my Department nor in its agency, Cadw.

Ambulance Service

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the percentage of ambulances in each service in Wales that responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in 1991-92.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The ambulance service classifications in Wales and their standard response times are:

	50 per cent. minutes	*95 per cent. minutes*
Urban areas	7	14
Rural areas	8	18
Sparsely populated areas	8	21

The information for 1991-92 is shown in the following table:

	Percentage arriving within	
	7 minutes	*14 minutes*
Urban		
South Glamorgan	42	84
	8 minutes	*18 minutes*
Rural		
Clwyd	60	97
Gwent	52	93
Mid Glamorgan	53	96
West Glamorgan	61	96
	8 minutes	*21 minutes*
Sparsely populated		
East Dyfed	55	94
Gwynedd	55	94
Pembrokeshire	36	84
Powys	44	83

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of ambulance staff in Wales employed by the NHS in the years 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991, using whole time equivalents.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information, which relates to ambulancemen/women, ambulance officers and control assistants employed by the NHS as at 30 September each year, is shown in the following table:

Ambulance staff (whole-time equivalents)

	Number
1987	1,589
1988	1,566
1989	1,579
1990	1,548
1991	1,564

Newport Waferfab Company

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total amount of public money committed, or promised under certain conditions, to the Newport Water Fab company or its parent company, in December 1992; and if he will publish details of any conditions attached.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not available as it is commercial in confidence.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce the budget for the Cardiff Bay development corporation for the next financial year, both as to gross expenditure and net of receipts from land sales and other income.

Mr. David Hunt: I expect to announce the grant-in-aid for Cardiff Bay development corporation shortly.

Land Authority for Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what targets he has set for gross expenditure and receipts from sales of land from the Land Authority for Wales in the year 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None, yet.

Butetown Link Road

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Cardiff Bay development corporation concerning its grant to South Glamorgan county council towards the cost of constructing the Butetown link road; how such a grant should be adjusted for inflation and design changes; what representations he has received from South Glamorgan county council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The financing of the Butetown link is a matter for South Glamorgan county council and Cardiff Bay development corporation. I have received representations from the leader of South Glamorgan county council on this issue.

EC Waste Water Directive

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the National Rivers Authority regarding the publication of a timetable and criteria for implementation of the European waste water directive in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The timetable and criteria for implementation of the EC's urban waste water treatment directive are set by the directive itself. Regular meetings to discuss implementation issues are held between the National Rivers Authority and relevant Government Departments, including the Welsh Office.

West Glamorgan Family Health Services Authority

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the individuals he has appointed to the West Glamorgan family health services authority since September 1992, and list their qualifications and previous health service experience.

Mr. David Hunt: The following were appointed to serve from 1 December 1992:

Mr. Robert John Davies BSc ACA ATII
Mr. Douglas Stuart Williams ARICS
Mrs. Carole Maureen Hyde

In making appointments I aim to strike an appropriate balance between continuity and the introduction of new members. Both Mr. Davies and Mr. Williams have health service experience acquired since they were first appointed to the FHSA in 1990. Mrs. Hyde is a new member.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephone System

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee (1) if he will conduct a survey to establish the proportion of outgoing calls through the House of Commons telephone system which connect; (2) what recent changes have been made in the operation of the House of Commons telephone system; and what assessment has been made of its present operation.

Mr. Michael Martin: In accordance with a resolution of the former Services Committee, and with the agreement of the other place, the Palace of Westminster telecommunications exchange was improved during the 1992 summer recess to provide additional abbreviated dialling facilities and a "least-cost-routing" package which enables outgoing calls to be directed automatically by the cheapest supplier. Some problems with routing have been identified, but have all been rectified. A survey is therefore not considered necessary. Anyone experiencing difficulty with an outgoing call should report the fact to extension 4444. An immediate investigation of the problem will be made and the result notified to the caller. Any Member with a query about the telecommunications system itself should contact the Serjeant at Arms, who has administrative responsibility for these matters.

SCOTLAND

Special Advisers

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* names and *(b)* previous occupations of special advisers appointed to his Department in the current Parliament.

Mr. Lang: The special advisers appointed to my Department in the current Parliament are G. MacKay and A. Young, both of whom were previously special advisers.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: All permanent non-industrial staff in the Scottish Office with at least two months service are eligible to receive a salary advance of up to £100 to assist with the purchase of a bicycle for home-to-office travel. This provision also extends to staff in all the Scottish Office agencies. The arrangements are currently subject to review.

Shetland (Oil Pollution)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of the current estimate of wildlife lost due to oil pollution in the Shetland Isles as a result of the MV Braer incident.

Sir Hector Monro: Scottish Natural Heritage has reported the recovered losses of birds and mammals set out in the table, up to and including 13 January. The corresponding information on the recoveries of live creatures which have been affected by oil is also shown.

	Recovered dead	Recovered live
Birds		
Fulmar	2	0
Great northern diver	11	2
Black throated diver	1	0
Long-tailed duck	92	29
Eider duck	48	49
Shag	442	109
Cormorant	1	0
Great black-backed gull	8	0
Herring gull	2	1
Common gull	1	0
Kittiwake	8	2
Common guillemot	7	8
Black guillemot	103	14
Razorbill	1	0
Puffin	1	0
Little auk	4	2
Rock dove	1	1
Starling	1	0
Rock pipit	1	0
Purple sandpiper	1	0
Totals	736	217
Mammals		
Grey seal	3	4
Common seal	0	1
Otter	3	0
Rabbit	1	0
Totals	7	5

Numbers of sea fish of a variety of species and marine invertebrates such as sea urchin, starfish and octopus were also found dead on the tide line.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider extending the joint Natural Environment Research Council—Scottish Office, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries study by Glasgow university into sandeel biology and breeding seabirds in the Shetland Isles to investigate the effects on both of the recent oil spill.

Sir Hector Monro: The research project referred to by the hon. Member is in fact two separate research projects, funded from different sources. The research study carried out by Glasgow university into seabird breeding success in the Shetland Isles is funded principally by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

The second project, into the biology of sandeels in the vicinity of seabird colonies in Shetland has been running parallel to the University of Glasgow study and is funded jointly by The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department, Department of the Environment, Scottish National Heritage, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Worldwide Fund for Nature, and Cadbury Ltd. While this project is due to come to an end in March we are currently considering possible extension in the light of the recent developments. We are anxious to ensure that any extension is consistent with the strategy for future studies into the Shetland environment which will be developed by the ecological steering group, the establishment of which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 11 January.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The number of staff in the information officer grades employed in the Scottish Office information directorate as at 1 April each year from 1979 to 1992 is set out in the table:

	Number of staff
1979	22
1980	24
1981	20
1982	22
1983	20
1984	20
1985	19
1986	20
1987	22
1988	23
1989	28
1990	31½
1991	33½
1992	29½

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many certificates he has signed under section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* No certificates have been signed under section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Seed Potatoes

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the importance for Scotland of light grade regions for seed potatoes in the European Community.

Sir Hector Monro: I very much welcome the successful conclusion of negotiations in Brussels with agreement that high grade seed regions should be established in the European Community. The protection provided by this agreement is of great significance to the Scottish seed potato industry and will help to maintain its worldwide reputation for the protection of high quality potatoes.

It is proposed to give effect to the measures around the middle of the year. This means current arrangements for planting and entry of crops to the seed potato classification scheme will be unchanged for the start of the 1993 season. To comply with the measures some legislative and procedural changes will be necessary later in the year in preparation for the marketing stage of the 1993 crop. The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department will provide further details and consult the industry about these changes in due course.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from Dr. Jim Swire of the Lockerbie relatives about the need for baggage reconciliation rules among airlines.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

Records show that my Department has received 25 letters from Dr. Swire since the Lockerbie tragedy. In the last two years, nine of these letters related to baggage reconciliation.

TRANSPORT

Motorways

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway in England are currently *(a)* open, *(b)* under construction and *(c)* planned.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are 1,664 miles of trunk road motorway and a further 28 miles of non-trunk motorway controlled by local authorities.

Two motorway schemes are under construction—M3 Bar End to Compton and the M4 second Severn crossing. They will add seven miles to the network.

A further 250 miles of motorway are planned, including the upgrading to motorway of the A1 from London to Newcastle.

Car Bumpers

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to bring forward regulations to standardise the height of car bumpers.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Current car designs with deep plastic bumpers allow compatibility over a wide range of heights. We have no intention to regulate for a specific height as this would be unnecessarily design restrictive. However, the International Standard Organisation recommends in ISO2598 that the height for car bumper tests be 445 mm, and we are working with our European partners to ensure that truck bumpers are of a compatible height compared with car bumpers, and that car bumpers are pedestrian friendly.

A19

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to authorise the funding for the installation of lighting along the A19 through Peterlee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are no current plans to install lighting on the A19 through Peterlee.

Road Accidents, Greenwich

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 9 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *113-14* on road traffic accidents in Greenwich, if he will now make available comparable accident and injury statistics for 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The table shows the number of injury accidents in Greenwich town centre in 1991, and the resulting number of casualties. Data for 1992 are not yet available.

Year	*Injury Accidents*	*Casualties*			
		Vehicle users		*Pedestrians*	
		Killed	*Injured*	*Killed*	*Injured*
1991	22	0	16	0	8

Greenwich town centre is defined as the one-way system where Creek road, Romney road and Greenwich High road meet, together with the adjacent section of Greenwich High road.

Drink Driving

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of *(a)* deaths and *(b)* pedestrian injuries caused by drivers under the influence of drink in (i) the west midlands and (ii) Walsall in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The most recent available information relates to 1990 and is shown in the following table.

Casualties in accidents where at least one driver is over the legal blood or breach alchohol limit

	Total deaths 1990	*Pedestrian deaths 1990*	*Pedestrian injuries 1990*
West Midlands	33	8	67
Walsall	3	0	8

[1] Accidents where a driver was positively breath tested or where coroners reports showed a blood alcohol level over the limit. No assumption is made of the cause of the accident.

Salvage Industry

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider measures to revive the British salvage industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The salvage industry depends on the amount of salvage work available (which varies with the level of world shipping and the number of casualties requiring salvage assistance). The industry also depends on the level of the awards paid after salvage has taken place. Both of these commercial realities are largely beyond the Government's control and influence. However, by negotiating the terms of the 1989 salvage convention, which are already applied through Lloyd's open forum 1990, we have sought to allow increased awards when salvors' efforts have prevented or mitigated a major marine pollution incident.

Aircraft Incidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Civil Aviation Authority's investigations into the incidents on 7 December 1992 when a carbon aerial from an aircraft crashed into a house at Watchfield, Oxfordshire; and what compensation is available to the property owner.

Mr. Norris: There was no such incident on 7 December. However, at approximately 11.30 am on 25 November 1992 an object, later identified as a static wick, which discharges static electricity from the wings of aircraft, fell through the bathroom roof of a property in Watchfield, Oxfordshire. Although it caused a two inch hole in the roof no one was injured.

On being informed, the Civil Aviation Authority initiated an investigation into the incident. Despite a thorough investigation, they were unable to identify the aircraft from which the object had fallen. Stringent design and maintenance requirements for United Kingdom aircraft ensure that incidents such as this are rare.

However, when they do occur the Civil Aviation Act 1982 clearly places the legal liability upon the aircraft operator to indemnify the third party who suffers a material loss or damage. As it has not proven possible to indentify the aircraft operator involved, the CAA cannot take the matter any further.

Rail Timetables

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate and publish a study of the procedures that would be necessary after privatisation, prior to the publication of a comprehensive all-line timetable for a future Christmas or new year holiday period, that would provide equivalent information to that contained in the supplementary timetable published by the British Railways Board.

Mr. Freeman: Such a study would be inappropriate. At present it is for British Rail to determine and publish timetables for the services it runs. After privatisation, RailTrack will be responsible for drawing up the timetable, and we are confident that the private sector will see a commercial opportunity in publishing it.

Traffic Congestion

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of methods used in North American cities to reduce traffic congestion in urban areas.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department keeps in touch with the methods used overseas, both in North America and elsewhere. Conditions overseas are not necessarily the same as in this country, and techniques—for example, the width and layout of roads—may need to be modified considerably before they can be used here.

Ships (Safety)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if Her Majesty's Government will now make an additional response to the second report 1991-92 from the Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, on safety aspects of ship design and technology (HL 30-1).

Mr. Norris: No.

Public Transport (Disabled Access)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he achieved during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC to make public transport accessible to disabled people across Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: In December 1991 the Transport Council asked the Commission to draw up an action programme on the accessibility of transport to people with reduced mobility. This action plan was expected to be ready during the United Kingdom presidency. The Council is still awaiting this document which it will wish to consider carefully before taking further action.

This is an area where much can and is being achieved at national and local level and my Department continues to work towards improving access to public transport for people with disabilities. A significant number of low floor, fully accessible buses will be introduced in London as a demonstration project shortly. This will be followed later this year with a similar trial outside London with funding support from my Department.

Helicopter Coverage Group

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to amend the helicopter coverage group criteria to secure a speedier recommended response time to emergencies at night and in bad weather.

Mr. Norris: My Department has no plans to amend the existing all weather-night response time established under the helicopter coverage criteria, which continue to prove operationally acceptable, nor will they be amended under the MOD's future provision of military helicopters for search and rescue. However, under these provisions, all weather-night coverage in the west will be improved in the first half of 1996 by the re-equipping of RAF Valley with Sea King aircraft.

Motorways

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many schemes, including dual 14 to 16-lane motorways, are planned in *(a)* Yorkshire and Humberside and *(b)* in England;

(2) if he will list the conurbations in England where 14 to 16-lane motorways travel through or near residential and school properties; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many miles of dual motorways creating a 14 to 16-lane system of traffic there are in *(a)* Yorkshire and Humberside and *(b)* in England.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Heathrow Rail Link

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will set out the reasons for the delay in constructing the proposed rail service between Heathrow and Paddington; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that a fast main line is built between Heathrow airport and London city centre as soon as possible.

Mr. Freeman: Discussions between BAA plc and British Rail about the funding of the Heathrow express project are continuing. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I met Sir John Egan and Sir Bob Reid on 10 December to review progress. I am hopeful that agreement on terms for funding the railway will be reached soon.

Heathrow Underground Link

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made an official visit on the Piccadilly line to Heathrow since April 1992.

Mr. Norris: No. However, I am kept fully informed of service performance on all underground lines, and I am pleased to say that the Piccadilly line has been one of the Underground's most consistently reliable lines since April 1992.

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect his plans to commercialise British Rail will have on the future development of rail services on the west coast main line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We believe that our proposals for privatising British Rail, with the operation of passenger services by private sector franchisees, will lead to an improvement of services on the west coast main line, since private sector operators should be more efficient and more responsive to passengers' wishes.

Nuclear Fuel (Transport)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what approaches he has had from the International Maritime Organisation in regard to stricter regulations for the carriage of irradiated nuclear fuel.

Mr. Norris: None. The IMO provides the machinery through which member states can develop international regulations and codes relating to maritime matters including those for the safety of life at sea and the prevention of marine pollution. These regulations are then implemented nationally by parties to the convention.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his role in relation to transport of nuclear fuel by BNFL transport division and the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation of Japan.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department of Transport has to be satisfied that containers carrying such material comply with International Atomic Energy Agency standards, and that they are transported in ships complying with the Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods and Marine Pollutants) Regulations 1990 and international coventions and codes for safety and pollution prevention.

Railway Crossings

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to examine *(a)* the criteria and *(b)* the specific railway crossings where incidents show the effectiveness of the hazard warning lights to be reduced by fog; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: A review of the safety of automatic open level crossings was carried out in 1986 by Professor P. F. Stott. His report recommended a number of improvements including revisions to the advance warning signs to reduce sign clutter, and to the backing boards of the "STOP" traffic signs to increase their conspicuity. British Rail has adopted these recommendations and is implementing them.

Advice on driving in fog is contained in the highway code. Drivers should be driving at a speed which enables them to stop within the limits of their vision.

Transport Organisations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each organisation with transportation responsibilities in London; and which of them have formal liaison arrangements with his Department.

Mr. Norris: The main organisations with transport responsibilities in the transport field in London are:

British Rail
British Waterways Board
City of London Police
Civil Aviation Authority
Corporation of London
London Boroughs and their respective associations
London Boroughs Transport Committee
London Docklands Development Corporation
London Planning Advisory Committee
London Regional Passengers Committee
London Transport
Metropolitan Police
Parking Committee for London
Port of London Authority
Traffic Commissioner for the South East and London
Traffic Director for London

The Department has formal liaison arrangements with all of these. It also maintains close contact with consumer groups, private sector transport operators (either directly or through their representative bodies), and with the other organisations concerned with transport in London including the south east regional planning conference, the London tourist board and the motoring organisations.

Cars

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what range of forecasts have been made by his Department on the number of cars normally kept in Greater London in *(a)* 1995, *(b)* 2000 and *(c)* 2025.

Mr. Norris: The Department's current forecasts of the number of cars normally kept in Greater London are as follows:

(a) in 1995, 2·57 to 2·66 million cars.

(b) in 2000, 2·78 to 2·99 million cars.

(c) National forecasts are produced for years up to 2025, but the local projections produced are more short-term and only cover years to 2011. The forecast for 2011 is 3·20 to 3·61 million cars.

These are based on an estimate of 2·38 million cars in 1991.

Road Works, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each organisation which has a statutory right to carry out works on London roads.

Mr. Norris: No list of all such organisations is held centrally, but it would be very extensive. The main organisations with rights to carry out work on highways are the highway authorities and the utilities, such as gas, water, electricity and cable TV.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Until recently the authority for Departments to make advances for these purposes was subject to justifying them on value for money or operational grounds.

Three agencies of my Department—the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, the Transport Research

Laboratory and the Vehicle Certification Agency—have been prepared to consider requests. No applications have been made to date.

Advances have not been available to staff in the remaining agencies or elsewhere in the Department.

As a result of recent changes in the scope of the delegation my Department will be looking again at the case for making such advances.

Abandoned Vehicles

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will allow local authorities to have direct access to computer records at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency offices in connection with the removal of abandoned vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Direct access to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's computer records raised important questions of data protection and security of personal information, as well as cost. There are no plans at present to offer this service to local authorities.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average time taken at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency office in Swansea to process VQ4 requests from local authorities for details of abandoned vehicles; and what is the current number of outstanding VQ4 requests.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The average time taken by DVLA to process postal VQ4 inquiries is eight working days. Enquiries received on magnetic tape are replied to within four days. There is currently no backlog.

Hoskins Data Services

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of co-operation exists between the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency offices and Hoskins Data Services.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Hoskyns Group plc provides an agency service for a number of local authorities for enquiries to DVLA on magnetic tape. DVLA co-operates closely with Hoskyns on this service.

Pedestrian Deaths

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of pedestrians who were killed in road crashes were above the age of 60 years in the most recent available year.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Data for the most recent available year (1991) show that there were 1,496 pedestrian fatalities in road crashes of which 736, or 49·2 per cent., were over the age of 60.

Transport Services, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent the £270 million public spending on transport, detailed in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement will be spent on transport services in London.

Mr. Norris: In his autumn statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Department of Transport would be spending £6·4 billion next year. Of this, £1 billion will go to London Transport. As many projects relate both to inside and outside London, it is not possible to identify exactly how much of the remaining £5·4 billion will be spent on transport services in London.

Moss Roads

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce an investigation into the means of correcting the deteriorating condition of moss roads in Lancashire and in other areas.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* This is a matter for the local highway authority.

Bridge Closures, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he was consulted on the closures of Waterloo, Hammersmith and Battersea bridges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* These bridges are all on roads which have been designated under paragraph 5, schedule 5 of the Local Government Act 1985. London boroughs are required to give notice of proposals to exercise, on designated roads, certain powers under the Highways Act 1980 or the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The circumstances requiring notification are described in the 1985 Act. On 1 September 1992, the traffic director for London became responsible for dealing with designated road notifications.

My Department received notifications relating to the closure of Battersea bridge. I understand that the traffic director for London was consulted about the proposal to close Waterloo bridge. The work on Hammersmith bridge does not require notification.

MV Braer

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the dispersants currently stockpiled in Shetland which are available to the marine pollution control unit, but have not yet been used to disperse oil from MV Braer.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The dispersants currently stockpiled by and available to the marine pollution control unit in Shetland are:

370 tonnes Dasic LTSW
135 tonnes Finasol
26 tonnes Dispolene 34S

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the dispersants that have been used to date to disperse oil from the MV Braer, the quantity of each dispersant which has been used, and the date on which it was used.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The dispersants used to disperse oil from the MV Braer were:

6 January
75 tonnes Dasic LTSW
10 tonnes BP Enersperse 1037
15 tonnes Dispolene 34S
7 January
1 tonne Dasic LTSW
9 January
20 tonnes Dasic LTSW

Salvage Tugs

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider measures to encourage the building and/or provision of high-powered ocean-going salvage tugs to be on station around the coasts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The EC Commission is undertaking a comprehensive study of the availability of salvage facilities (tugs) in the North sea. We have made our contribution to that work.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the targets set by his Department for roadside tests of vehicles for 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will list the number and category of vehicles tested.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* Targets for roadworthiness checks at the roadside during 1992-93 are as follows:

	Number
Public Service Vehicles	23,900
Goods Vehicles exceeding 3,500 kg design gross weight	130,000
Cars and Goods Vehicles not exceeding 3,500 kg design in gross weight	72,000
Total	225,900

No targets have yet been set for 1993-94, but the inspectorate is planning on the basis that enforcement levels will be similar to 1992-93 for the first two categories.

The 1992-93 target for cars and light goods vehicles was exceptionally high because of the additional work monitoring and change in testing regime for vehicles between 3,000 and 3,500 kg. So the inspectorate is planning only 55,972 checks in 1993-94. Further information on 1992-93 can be found in the inspectorate's business plan.

Cargo Transfers

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the current arrangements for the storage and maintenance of specialist equipment needed for the ship-to-ship transfer of cargo from vessels in distress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The Department of Transport's ship-to-ship transfer equipment is currently stored by contractors at Milford Haven and is subject to regular maintenance, exercise and review. I am satisfied with these arrangements.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many inspectors and examiners were on the payroll of the Vehicle Inspectorate Agency in each of the past five years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The staff numbers and grades directly involved in vehicle inspection and enforcement are as follows:

	March 1989	*March 1990*	*March 1991*	*March 1992*	*October 1992*
Tester	391	370	306	271	263
Assistant Vehicle Examiner	0	0	62	86	91
Professional and Technical Officer[1]	480	474	477	465	449
Senior Traffic Examiner[2]	—	—	—	38	31
Traffic Examiner[2]	—	—	—	175	172

[1] A limited amount of Inspection work is done by more senior management staff.
[2] Traffic Examiner grades were not part of the Vehicle Inspectorate until April 1991.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much capital has been invested in the Vehicle Inspectorate Agency in each of the past five years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The following capital expenditure has been invested in the Vehicle Inspectorate in fixed assets in each of the past five years.

£000's cash

	Capital Spend
1988-89	2,443
1989-90	2,258
1990-91	3,476
1992-93[1]	3,276

[1] Forecast.

Roadside Tests

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles and what types have been prohibited after a roadside test in each of the last two years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The numbers of vehicles prohibited by the vehicle inspectorate following roadworthiness checks at the roadside during 1990-91 and 1991-92 are as follows:

	1990-91	*1991-92*
Public Service Vehicles	1,955	1,744
Goods Vehicles exceeding 3,500 kg design gross weight	7,363	7,628
Goods Vehicles not exceeding 3,500 kg design gross weight	1,141	4,680
Total	10,459	14,052

Departmental Employees

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many employees of his Department are based in offices in Wales; which agencies or other parts of his Department they work for; and what plans he has for their continuing employment in Wales.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* There are 4,268 employees of my Department

based in offices in Wales. Of these, 163 belong to the central Department and work in the Marine Directorate, the general register and records office of shipping and seamen, the south Wales traffic area office, internal audit and personnel management. A total of 3,312 work for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, 102 for the Driving Standards Agency, 224 for the Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency and 467 for the DVOIT Agency. The level of employment in these activities depends on demand for the services concerned, and on the consequences of any privatisation, market testing or contracting out of services currently provided directly by the Department and its agencies.

Oil Pollution

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what emergency response plans exist in respect of possible oil pollution around the south coast of England.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The Department of Transport maintains the Government's national contingency plan through the marine pollution control unit. This plan is complemented by the appropriate local authority contingency plans and port plans.

Salvage Personnel

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the numbers of fully trained and experienced salvage personnel in the United Kingdom to deal with future pollution incidents caused by maritime casualties.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The Department of Transport maintains, under contract, response teams with specific responsibility for deploying equipment for dealing with chemical and oil tanker incidents. In addition, liaison is maintained with leading salvors and their capability. I am satisfied with these arrangements.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fisheries Inspectors

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fisheries inspectors are employed by his Department.

Mr. Curry: The current total number of land-based British sea fisheries officers employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is 79, of which 68 are based in the coastal district offices and 11 in the London headquarters. A further 14 officers carry out fisheries protection duties under contract through aerial and surface surveillance operations.

Dairy Inspection Charges

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether dairy inspection charges are the same across the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: Dairy inspections are charged at the same rates in England and Wales. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, however, the enforcement regime is different and there is no charge for inspection visits.

Horticulture

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his promotion of the British horticultural industry during the United Kingdom Presidency of the EC.

Mr. Curry: We promoted our horticultural industry during the United Kingdom presidency as vigorously as ever, especially during the informal agricultural council in Cambridge. The British horticulture industry will also directly benefit from Community measures adopted under the United Kingdom presidency including the single market arrangements for plant health, bee health and the fruit and vegetable regime and the extension of the hops conversion aid scheme. In addition, the sector will have the advantage of the whole range of measures on the single market adopted during the United Kingdom presidency.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many men are employed on vessels of 12 m length and under; and what percentage of total employment in the fishing industry this represents.

Mr. Curry: This information is not available.

EC Land (Expenditure)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish expenditure figures in ecus paid by EC member states on agriculture per hectare of land in agricultural use over the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Curry: The table shows expenditure on CAP market support measures from the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund by member state.

EAGGF guarantee expenditure per hectare by member state

1987

	1 *Expenditure million ecu*	*2* *UAA million hectare*	*3* *Average ecu/per HA (1÷2)*
Belgium	821·5	1·406	584·28
Denmark	1,058·8	2·818	375·73
Germany	3,993·0	12·000	332·75
Greece	1,341·2	5·741	233·62
Spain	604·1	27·121	22·27
France	5,662·1	31·401	180·31
Ireland	956·3	5·676	168·48
Italy	3,903·5	17·404	224·29
Luxembourg	1·5	0·127	11·81
Netherlands	2,727·8	2·204	1,237·66
Portugal	147·2	4·532	32·48
United Kingdom	1,748·8	18·505	94·50

1988

	1 *Expenditure million ecu*	*2* *UAA million hectare*	*3* *Average ecu/per HA (1÷2)*
Belgium	721·5	1·395	517·20
Denmark	1,212·4	2·815	430·69
Germany	4,904·4	11·915	411·62

	1 Expenditure million ecu	2 UAA million hectare	3 Average ecu/per HA (1÷2)
Greece	1,318·8	5·741	229·72
Spain	1,887·2	27·110	69·61
France	6,209·7	31·354	198·05
Ireland	1,081·3	5·701	189·67
Italy	4,349·7	17·404	249·93
Luxembourg	3·0	0·127	23·62
Netherlands	3,831·5	2·019	1,897·72
Portugal	157·2	4·532	34·69
United Kingdom	1,992·8	18·510	107·66

1989

	1 Expenditure million ecu	2 UAA million hectare	3 Average ecu/per HA (1÷2)
Belgium	585·8	1·395	419·93
Denmark	1,015·1	2·809	361·37
Germany	4,191·7	11·885	352·69
Greece	1,650·9	5·741	287·56
Spain	1,903·2	27·110	70·20
France	4,810·5	30·710	156·64
Ireland	1,241·3	5·697	217·89
Italy	4,621·8	17·297	267·20
Luxembourg	1·8	0·126	14·29
Netherlands	3,749·9	2·019	1,857·31
Portugal	174·4	4·532	38·48
United Kingdom	1,917·0	18·031	106·32

1990

	1 Expenditure million ecu	2 UAA million hectare	3 Average ecu/per HA (1÷2)
Belgium	873·7	1·363	641·01
Denmark	1,113·7	2·809	396·48
Germany	4,365·6	11·868	367·85
Greece	1,949·7	5·741	339·61
Spain	2,120·8	27·110	78·23
France	5,142·6	30·581	168·16
Ireland	1,668·5	5·697	292·87
Italy	4,157·1	17·215	241·48
Luxembourg	5·2	0·127	40·94
Netherlands	2,869·0	2·019	1,421·00
Portugal	214·2	4·532	47·26
United Kingdom	1,979·0	18·447	107·28

1991

	1 Expenditure million ecu	2 UAA million hectare	3 Average ecu/per HA (1÷2)
Belgium	1,434·2	—	1,052·24
Denmark	1,200·5	—	427·38
Germany	5,201·9	—	438·31
Greece	2,178·3	—	379·43
Spain	3,269·8	—	120·61
France	6,318·3	—	206·61
Ireland	1,716·8	—	301·35
Italy	5,152·7	—	299·31
Luxembourg	2·8	—	22·05
Netherlands	2,638·5	—	1,306·83
Portugal	314·6	—	69·42
United Kingdom	2,396·3	—	129·90

Sources: (1) EAGGF Guarantee Reports 1987-91.
(2) The agricultural situation in the Community Reports 1988-91. UAA statistics not available for 1991. Average expenditure/hectare was calculated using the 1990 area.
Note: UAA = Utilised agricultural area.

Folic Acid

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that daily dietary supplements of folic acid remain available under the terms of the forthcoming European directive on dietary supplements to those women who are at risk of bearing children with neural tube defects;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact of the forthcoming European directive on dietary supplements on the availability of those folic acid supplements which the chief medical officer's expert advisory group has recommended should be taken daily by women at risk of bearing children with neural tube defects.

Mr. Soames: No proposals for a directive on dietary supplements have yet been made by the Commission. However, our policy is to ensure the continued availability of safe and properly labelled products, including folic acid supplements.

Pig Disease

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contingency plans he has made to compensate farmers for any outbreak of Aujeszky's disease coming from free movement of pigs within the single market; and what funds he has available for this purpose.

Mr. Soames: Stringent safeguard controls relating to the import of pigs have been negotiated. If, in spite of these, there is an outbreak of Aujeszky's disease, legislative powers remain to reactivate the levy.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the directors of the Pig Disease Eradication Fund Ltd. to comply with his request to make available to his Ministry remaining funds in its account; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Our officials are discussing this matter with industry representatives.

Rabbits

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from organisations representing rabbit breeders on myxomatosis vaccine.

Mr. Soames: A number of representations have been received from organisations representing rabbit breeders, and from individuals owning rabbits, expressing concern that no myxomatosis vaccine is currently available in the United Kingdom. I share this concern and can confirm that applications to licence such vaccines, including one received recently, will be assessed as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether suitable vaccines can be imported for myxomatosis and viral haemorrhagic disease in rabbits; and what steps his Department has taken to assist in making such vaccines available to vets.

Mr. Soames: No veterinary vaccine may be imported into or marketed in the United Kingdom without a product licence. The veterinary medicines directorate will assess any applications for such licences for myxomatosis or viral haemorrhagic disease vaccines as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will establish a fund to compensate owners for loss or damage to domestic and show rabbits as a consequence of myxomatosis.

Mr. Soames: It is not Government policy to offer compensation in such circumstances.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) of 8 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *15*, if he will make a statement on the current position on myxomatosis vaccine.

Mr. Soames: No myxomatosis vaccine is currently licensed in the United Kingdom. However, the veterinary medicines directorate has recently received from Intervet (UK) Ltd. an application to licence such a vaccine. The data supporting the applications are being assessed as rapidly as possible against the standard Medicines Act criteria of safety, quality and efficacy.

Badgers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ensure that no licence is given to allow hunts to enter dogs into badger setts during the breeding period of December to June.

Mr. Soames: The badgers' breeding season is one of the factors which will be taken into account when considering an application to interfere with a badger sett. However, each application will be considered on its merits.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his proposed budget for badger culling and live tests in 1993-94.

Mr. Soames: The adoption of the live test as part of this Department's badger control strategy is currently under consideration. However, provisional estimates indicate that the direct running costs of a pre-emptive strategy based on such a test could be approximately £900,000 in 1993-94.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure lactating badgers are not kept from their cubs when caught in live traps for the proposed bovine TB brocktest.

Mr. Soames: Written instructions are provided to field staff on the operation of the current badger control strategy. Staff must visit traps as early as possible in the day following the night of capture and sows showing signs of being recently suckled must be marked and released.

No decision has yet been made about the introducing of a new strategy based on a live test.

Hens

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the most recent report his Department has produced on the efficiency of methods used for the automated slaughter of hens; and whether each method meets the standards laid down by the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

Mr. Soames: There is no specific report on the efficiency of methods used for the automated slaughter of hens, but the Ministry's veterinary officers regularly monitor the welfare conditions of poultry at slaughter, including the methods used for the automated slaughter of hens. Automated slaughtering methods appear to be working effectively and any problems detected are dealt with speedily. The welfare of poultry at slaughter is covered by primary and secondary legislation and a statutory code of practice. A list of these, and details of implementation of the Farm Animal Welfare Council's recommendations on the subject, is in the Library of the House.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle were infected with bovine tuberculosis for the last five years in each affected county.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of confirmed cattle tuberculosis breakdowns in each affected county in England and Wales for the years 1988-91 were as follows:

	Year(s) in which cases occurred	*Number of herds*	*Number of confirmed reactors*
England			
Avon	1988	8	42
	1989	10	49
	1990	9	10
	1991	17	23
Bedfordshire	1988	1	1
	1990	1	1
Cheshire	1991	1	2
Cornwall	1988	18	42
	1989	45	110
	1990	33	50
	1991	47	107
Derbyshire	1988	6	7
	1989	2	3
Devon	1988	17	33
	1989	12	22
	1990	19	35
	1991	10	19
Dorset	1988	6	8
	1989	5	5
	1990	4	6
	1991	4	10
Gloucestershire	1988	11	33
	1989	13	31
	1990	15	22
	1991	36	47
Hampshire	1989	1	1
	1991	1	1
Lancashire	1990	1	1
Leicestershire	1989	1	1
Lincolnshire	1989	1	2
Northamptonshire	1990	1	1

	Year(s) in which cases occurred	Number of herds	Number of confirmed reactors
Northumberland	1988	1	1
	1989	1	1
	1990	2	2
Nottinghamshire	1988	1	1
Shropshire	1990	1	1
	1991	1	1
Somerset	1988	2	2
Suffolk	1989	1	3
Surrey	1991	1	1
Sussex East	1989	1	5
	1991	2	2
Sussex West	1989	1	12
	1991	1	1
Warwickshire	1991	1	1
Wiltshire	1988	7	8
	1989	4	4
	1990	5	5
	1991	3	7
Yorkshire North	1991	2	2
Yorkshire South	1989	1	1
	1991	1	1

	Year(s) in which cases occurred	Number of herds	Number of confirmed reactors
Wales:			
Clwyd	1989	1	1
Dyfed	1988	12	16
	1989	5	9
	1990	8	21
	1991	3	4
West Glamorgan	1988	1	1
Gwent	1989	1	4
Powys	1989	1	1

The total numbers of confirmed cattle tuberculosis breakdowns in each affected county in Scotland in the years 1988 to 1991 were as follows:

	Number of herds	Number of confirmed reactors
Scotland:		
Aberdeenshire	7	12
Argyll	1	1
Ayrshire	7	9
Berwickshire	1	1
Inverness-shire	1	1
Kircudbright	3	4
Midlothian	1	1
Wigtown	4	5
Roxburgh	1	1
Shetland	1	1

Complete figures for 1992 in the form requested are not yet available. However, the numbers of confirmed cattle tuberculosis breakdowns in the first nine months of 1992 in each administrative region were as follows:

	Number of herds	Number of confirmed reactors
South Eastern	0	0
Eastern	0	0
Northern	6	6
South Western	104	364
Midlands and West	3	5
Wales	10	39
Scotland	2	3

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many and what forms of genetically modified organisms have currently been *(a)* approved for use in the United Kingdom and *(b)* pending approval for use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: All genetically modified organisms are subject, in addition to general controls on genetic modification, to any specific legislation controlling the uses for which they are intended. My Department is responsible for giving approval—whether statutory or not—for the use of a number of commodities, which may contain or consist of genetically modified organisms, notably:

veterinary medicines
agricultural pesticides
novel foods
crop varieties.

Statutory approval has been given for seven vaccines for use in treating pigs, and non-statutory clearance for the food use of a genetically modified yeast. Approval has been sought for marketing, throughout the EC, four genetically modified chrysanthemum varieties, and an application for non-statutory clearance for the use in this country of a further yeast has also been received.

In addition, one experimental permit for a genetically modified pesticidal virus has been issued and a further permit has been applied for.

Until 1 February, general control over the use of genetically modified organisms lies with my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set up an ethical committee to examine proposals for genetically modified animals with the power to examine proposals before they are submitted for patent, and to control the importation and use of any such animal, or product derived for any such animal developed outside the United Kingdom and the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to him on 11 January at column *622*. I do not propose to anticipate any advice that we may receive from that ethical committee, whose work will cover genetically modified animals as well as other animals bred by advanced techniques.

Habitats

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what preparations his Department is making in terms of the impact of the EC habitats directive and its effect on agriculture in this country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: While the implementation of the EC habitats directive is primarily a matter for the Secretary of State for the Environment, the consultations between our Departments will ensure that the implications for agriculture are taken into account. There will be full public consultation on the Government's proposals.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the hill livestock compensatory allowance rates in cash terms and real terms in each year since 1982.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is contained at tables 16 and 17 of the statistical data prepared for the 1992 "Autumn Review of the Economic Conditions in the Hills and Uplands", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many producers are entitled to hill livestock compensatory allowances in England; and what proportion of those are located in *(a)* severely disadvantaged and *(b)* disadvantaged areas.

Mr. Gummer: Some 15,000 producers in England are currently entitled to claim hill livestock compensatory allowances; of these about 11,000 are in the severely disadvantaged area and 4,000 in the disadvantaged area.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number and proportion of farmers in England who receive hill livestock compensatory allowance payments.

Mr. Curry: Around 15,000 farmers in England receive payments under the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme representing about 11 per cent. of the total number of farmers in England.

Farm Land

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what hectarage of land in England is in *(a)* less favoured areas, *(b)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(c)* disadvantaged areas; what proportion of land in England each figure represents; and how many farmers are involved.

Mr. Curry: The figures requested are as follows:

	Hectares (million)	*Percentage of English land area*	[1] *Number of farms in less favoured areas*
All less favoured areas	1·805	14	21,300
Of which:			
Severely disadvantaged	1·405	11	14,500
Disadvantaged	0·401	3	6,800

[1] In whole or in part (main holdings June 1991).

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department and agencies offer advances of salary of £50-£100 to permanent, non-industrial staff in executive officer or equivalent grades and below, for the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel. One application is permitted every five years.

Potatoes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he considered comments made to him in response to the consultation letter from his Department of 26 November 1992 on potatoes which arrived at his Department after the deadline of 7 December 1992.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. We are considering all replies received to date.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the responses to the consultation letter of 26 November 1992 concerning an EC potato regime were supportive of the principle behind the present potato marketing scheme establishing both high quality standards and a stable market for potatoes as being more appropriate than the proposals set out in Com(92) 185 final.

Mr. Gummer: Eight.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from interested parties about the proposed changes in the Potato Marketing Board aid scheme; and how many have supported the proposals to abolish the Potato Marketing Board aid scheme.

Mr. Curry: Since the publication of the proposals for an EC potato regime which as drafted do not make provision for the area (quota) controls and support buying arrangements of our potato marketing scheme, we have received a number of representations, mainly from growers or their representatives, the majority of which are in support of the continuation of the scheme.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those outstanding recommendations contained in any of the reviews of the

Potato Marketing Board aid scheme conducted by Government over the past 10 years which have yet to be fully implemented.

Mr. Curry: Following the 1988 review of the potato marketing scheme the Government announced their intention to abolish the guarantee arrangements as soon as parliamentary time permitted. The Agriculture Bill currently in another place contains the necessary provisions. All other recommendations have already been implemented.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that potato producers in the United Kingdom will be competing fairly with EC competitors in other member states under the regulations provided for in the proposed draft EC potato scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 12 January 1993 to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) at column *721*.

Fish Merchants

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to assist with grants those small business fish merchants who are now required to pay just below £30,000 to bring handling facilities up to the hygiene standards now demanded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: EC grants were, until recently, available under regulation 4042/89 to investments involving the marketing and processing of fisheries and aquaculture produce. This scheme was aimed at fish processors and projects involving the upgrading of hygiene standards were eligible. However, the limited EC funding available to it meant that competition for grants was intense and not all eligible projects could be warded aid. The scheme closed to applications in the United Kingdom on 31 December 1992. Proposals to replace it are to be considered by the EC as part of the general review of its structural funds this year.

Wool

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider introducing a fall-back system of support available to low volume producers to enable higher returns than farmgate prices to be paid for wool to ensure the national flock is clipped annually.

Mr. Curry: No.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from integrated parties about the proposal to terminate the guaranteed price for wool; and how many supported the proposed change.

Mr. Curry: I have received a small number of representations to the effect that the wool guarantee should be retained.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the cost to United Kingdom sheep producers of the proposal to terminate the guaranteed price for wool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The wool guarantee is intended to operate as a means of price stabilisation, not continuous support. However, there will be some short term impact on producers' returns, of the order of £26 million in relation to the 1993 clip. Total direct subsidies payable to sheep farmers in respect of 1992 are estimated to amount to about £480 million.

Milk

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish figures for the annual consumption of whole and low fat liquid milks since 1974, and figures for the total quantity of milk going for liquid sales and manufacture in each year.

Mr. Gummer: The following table gives the annual volume of sales for liquid consumption and for manufacture through MMB schemes in the United Kingdom since 1974. The sales for liquid consumption of whole milk, semi skimmed milk and skimmed milk are then combined with the net volume of trade in each to provide estimates of consumption. Consumption estimates on a comparable basis are not readily available for the years 1974 to 1981.

	Sales through MMB schemes in the United Kingdom (million litres):			*Consumption (million litres, product volume)*[2]		
	for liquid consumption	*for manufacture*	*Total*[1]	*Whole Milk*	*Semi Skimmed Milk*	*Skimmed Milk*
1974	7,698	5,399	13,098	—	—	—
1975	7,862	5,270	13,133	—	—	—
1976	7,760	5,858	13,618	—	—	—
1977	7,484	6,921	14,406	—	—	—
1978	7,381	7,713	15,094	—	—	—
1979	7,305	7,811	15,116	—	—	—
1980	7,196	7,986	15,182	—	—	—
1981	7,093	7,982	15,084	—	—	—
1982	7,001	8,928	15,942	6,815	102	74
1983	6,977	9,450	16,442	6,689	149	123
1984	6,958	8,473	15,446	6,395	366	151
1985	6,898	8,350	15,263	6,135	500	206
1986	6,851	8,597	15,460	5,598	747	412
1987	6,816	7,800	14,630	5,371	900	436
1988	6,792	7,426	14,231	5,131	989	547
1989	6,793	7,146	13,951	4,804	1,250	603
1990	6,780	7,403	14,194	4,481	1,524	644
1991	6,745	6,901	13,655	4,127	1,802	709
1992(p)	6,736	6,797	13,543	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Note: [1] The total sales figures for years from 1981 do not equal the sum of sales for liquid consumption and for manufacture as the measurement of sales is adjusted for waste in transit.
[2] Data not readily available for years 1974-1981.
(p) = Provisional.
n.a. = not available.

Farm Incomes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish figures of average farm incomes for all farms and mostly sheep farms, distinguishing between severely disadvantaged and disadvantaged areas, for the most recent available year.

Mr. Gummer: Details of farm incomes in 1990-91 for all types of farm are contained at table 4.2 in "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom" (1992 edition). Details of incomes for sheep farms during 1990-91 and the two subsequent years in the less favoured areas are contained in table 21 of the statistical data prepared for the 1992 autumn review of the economic conditions in the hills and uplands. Copies of both the sources referred to are in the Library of the House.

HEALTH

Management Consultants

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent by the West Midlands regional health authority on the services of management consultants in 1990, 1991 and 1992, respectively.

Dr. Mawhinney: Decisions to employ management consultants are matters for individual health authorities and details of any expenditure incurred are not separately identifiable in their annual accounts or otherwise collected centrally.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of *(a)* the number of hospital admissions postponed or denied by the yellow warning issued by the London emergency bed service at 3 pm on 7 January and *(b)* the extent of the related increased demand for emergency admissions.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the reasons why hospitals in various health districts in the North East Thames region were unable to cope with demand for treatment at the beginning of the year and so issued a yellow warning; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The yellow alert issued recently by the London emergency bed service was occasioned by an unexpectedly sharp rise in demand for emergency admissions to hospitals in north and east London and in west Essex. The yellow alert affected 11 hospitals which were thereby encouraged to take appropriate action on elective admissions to make room for the increased emergency admissions that were mostly occurring outside London. No patient requiring urgent treatment has had that treatment cancelled. Careful and flexible bed management and proper planning of elective workload levels helps hospitals to manage unexpected demands for their services while minimising disruption of elective work.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the statistical basis she is using to evaluate the impact of the implementation of the proposals of the Tomlinson report on the mechanism of the London emergency bed service, stating the current proportion of beds within the area of the service kept vacant for emergency admissions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The emergency bed service and its status reports on the availability of emergency beds are for use when there are unexpected demands. The Tomlinson report does not recommend any change in this system.

Nicotine Patches

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by her Department of the safety of nicotine patches; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Licensing Authority and its advisory body the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM), in assessing applications for product licences for nicotine patches, considered all the available evidence which included clinical trials; data from usage in other countries published or unpublished, whether or not favourable to the drug. The CSM has to be satisfied that the drug is safe and efficacious for the indication proposed, in this case treatment of nicotine withdrawal symptoms associated with smoking cessation in nicotine dependant persons, and that it is of good quality. These are the only criteria which can be considered under the Medicines Act.

Ritodrine

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the drug ritodrine; what guidance she has issued on its use; and what plans she has to review its usage.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Committee on Safety of Medicines has recently conducted a full investigation into the safety and efficacy of ritodrine. This review was prompted by a publication in the medical literature which expressed concern about the risks and benefits of ritodrine and by two recent deaths in the United Kingdom following treatment with the drug. The committee concluded that the drug was effective and safe when administered correctly. They recommended a number of changes to the prescribing information which are currently being implemented. The manufacturer of ritodrine has written to all doctors emphasising the measures which should be adopted to ensure that the drug is administered safely. As with all medicines licensed for use in the United Kingdom, the safety of ritodrine is being kept under constant review by the Medicines Control Agency.

Intensive Therapy Units

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number and location of the intensive therapy units in England and Wales; and how many organ donors have arisen in each during the past 12 months.

Mr. Sackville: Not all intensive therapy units in England and Wales can be identified from information collected centrally. According to information provided by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority (UKTSSA) organs were retrieved from 732 donors in 216 units in England and Wales in 1992. The table gives the regional distribution:

Region	*Number of Units*	*Number of Donors*
Northern	15	51
Yorkshire	9	59
Trent	16	67
East Anglian	10	33
North West Thames	13	32
North East Thames	20	55
South East and South West Thames	34	110
Wessex	10	34
Oxford	10	38
South Western	12	48
West Midlands	22	70
Mersey	14	37
North Western	18	61
Wales	13	37

Reports from UKTSSA showing the names of all these units, the number of donors in each of them and the names of all hospitals that have retrieved organs during the past ten years have been placed in the Library.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the findings of Sir Roy Griffiths in relation to the operation of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make public the reports she has received from Sir Roy Griffiths in respect of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Roy Griffiths was asked to work with West Midlands regional health authority in looking at its management systems to enable the authority to discharge its functions more effectively in the future. Sir Roy has been keeping the Department and region in touch with progress and a number of changes have now been made. As indicated at the outset there are no plans for a formal report on his work to be published.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the actions of Sir James Ackers, former chair of the West Midlands regional health authority, in respect of financial losses to the health services in the west midlands; and when she proposes to make good these losses.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir James Ackers was chairman of West Midlands regional health authority for over 10 years, during which time many excellent developments in health care took place. Recently, the region has faced a number of difficulties arising from management of its regionally managed services. When Sir James became aware of the problems he instigated remedial action, including changes in managerial structures, lines of accountability, the limits of authority and the standing and financial orders together with a number of senior management changes. Management of the West Midlands regional health authority and the provision of health services for the people of the west midlands is the responsibility of the regional health authority. Allocation and use of resources to meet these objectives are therefore matters for them.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will order the publication of the report by the district auditor into the West Midlands regional health authority currently in the hands of senior management of that authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The district auditor's report on the West Midlands supplies division was published on 10 September 1992. No other reports are currently complete.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial settlement was made in respect of the resignation of Sir James Ackers as chair of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: No decision has been made.

Family Health Service Authorities

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for reorganising the family health service authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Circular EL(92)47, priorities and planning guidance 1993/94, copies of which are available in the Library, sets out the Government's position on the organisation of family health service authorities. It states that

"the full benefits of current arrangements have yet to be realised".

We believe that FHSAs have a major role to play in the further development of primary care.

Doncaster Health Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will dismiss those of her appointees to the Doncaster healthcare trust who neither reside nor work in south Yorkshire.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Health Authority Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who is consulted when candidates for appointment as chairman or non-executive directors of health authorities are selected; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Mawhinney: Nominations for appointment as chairmen of district health authorities are made by regional health authority chairmen, and I make the appointments on behalf of the Secretary of State. The appointment of non-executive members of district health authorities is the responsibility of the regional health authority chairmen. There is no requirement to consult anyone in making such appointments. However, in making these public appointments I take into account local views, including those of hon. Members.

European Year of the Elderly

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she is taking in connection with the European year of the elderly.

Mr. Yeo: The Department, in co-operation with the Department of Social Security, has overall co-ordinating

responsibility for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in the United Kingdom and we are now well advanced with our plans. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health launched the Year in the United Kingdom at the age resource awards, which were presented in London on 17 December 1992 by HRH The Prince of Wales.

Following consultation with a wide range of national voluntary and professional bodies, statutory authorities and other relevant Government Departments, we have set up a group to advise on the conduct, promotion and evaluation of the programme of events to celebrate the year. The group involves representatives of organisations reflecting the interests of older people, including the National Pensioners' Convention, and will take direct account wherever possible of the views and preferences of older people themselves. The programme in the United Kingdom will focus on four major themes:

Combating "ageism" and promoting positive images of ageing;

Volunteering;

Health promotion and active leisure, including remaining mentally active;

Social integration, including problems of isolation and loneliness, information needs, housing, transport and community care issues.

Four task groups have also been set up to examine each of these themes and put forward specific proposals.

There will be two elements to the year in the United Kingdom: a core programme involving national events focusing on the four themes, including cultural and sporting events, exhibitions and conferences; and a general programme, consisting of activities organised by individual groups and voluntary bodies.

The Department has committed £81,000 in the current financial year for the costs of a secretariat—based at Age Concern England headquarters—to co-ordinate the core programme and to disseminate news and information.

Midwives

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to review the current clinical grading system for midwives; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will establish an expert committee to review the pay conditions and grading structures for midwives in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to review the current clinical grading system for midwives. These are matters for the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had recently regarding the pay and conditions of midwives working within the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: We receive representations periodically about pay and conditions from a variety of sources including midwives and their representative organisations.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response the Government made to the recommendations by the House of Commons Select Committee on the changes needed in the clinical grading and pay structure for midwives.

Mr. Sackville: The Health Committee did not make any specific recommendations about clinical grading and the pay structure of midwives.

Alcohol and Drugs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the establishments in England which provide residential facilities for *(a)* those with alcohol problems and *(b)* those with drug problems; if he will show for each establishment (i) the capital grant and (ii) the total revenue grant provided by his Department in each of the last five years; and if he will provide estimated figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Yeo: Information on residential and non residential facilities for drug misusers is available in the SCODA directory and for alcohol misusers in the Alcohol Concern directory, copies of which are in the Library. Funding for drug and alcohol projects are provided directly and indirectly by the Department from a number of sources. In part grants are from small centrally administered budgets such as the specific grant for alcohol and drug misusers. Other funds are provided locally by health authorities, either from money specifically allocated to them for drug misuse services, which totals £20 million in 1992-93, or from their general allocations. Details of projects funded from all these sources could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Killingbeck Hospital

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the discussions between her Department and Yorkshire regional health authority about the decision to transfer the management of Killingbeck hospital to the United Leeds Teaching hospital trust;

(2) what assessment she made of the process of consultation between the Yorkshire regional health authority and *(a)* Leeds community health council, *(b)* employees of Killingbeck hospital and *(c)* local hon. Members before the decision was announced to transfer the management of Killingbeck hospital to the United Leeds Teaching hospital trust; and if she will make a statement;

(3) if she will make a statement on the future management of Killingbeck hospital in Leeds.

Dr. Mawhinney: I will write to the hon. Member with full details.

Interleukin-6

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether she will set out the cost to the United Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust of the further investigation currently being undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand into the Interleukin-6 research project; and if she will make a statement.

(2) whether her Department will instruct the United Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust to publish the Coopers and Lybrand report on the cost of the Interleukin-6 research project; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that the investigations by Coopers and Lybrand into the Interleukin-6 research project on behalf of the United Leeds teaching hospitals national health service trust are not yet complete. The costs of any investigation and decisions about publication of any report will be matters for the trust.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in her Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if she will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of her Department; what plans she has to change the conditions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: All permanent staff with at least two months' service in the Department of Health and its agencies are able to apply for an advance of salary to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel. The maximum advance for purchase of a bicycle is £100. This provision was introduced in the Department in June 1992. We have no immediate plans to change these conditions.

Birth Defects

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, (1) pursuant to her answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *420*, what steps she is taking to ensure that women at risk of bearing children with neural tube defects are aware of the benefits which would accrue from taking a daily dietary supplement of folic acid;

(2) when the potential benefits of dietary supplementation with folic acid by women at risk of bearing children with neural tube defects were first drawn to her or her predecessor's attention.

Mr. Sackville: It was not until July 1991, when the first results of a Medical Research Council study were published, that it was concluded that a daily dietary supplement of folic acid could significantly reduce the risk of recurrence of neural tube defects.

Guidance was issued at once to doctors, senior nurses, midwives and health visitors. The subsequent 1992 report of the Chief Medical Officer's Expert Advisory Group endorsed the earlier guidance and extended it to include also women with no history of neural tube defects. There has been widespread publicity and action is in hand to ensure the public are fully aware of this important advice.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *420*, whether she will consider claims for ex gratia payments from those women who may have delivered or who have had aborted babies suffering from neural tube defects, and who had been given placebos in earlier studies involving folic acid supplementation.

Mr. Sackville: We do not consider that it would be appropriate to make payments to women for not being given a treatment which at the time was unproven.

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has concerning the average cost of a national health service abortion performed *(a)* in a national health service hospital and *(b)* in a private clinic under agency arrangements.

Mr. Sackville: The estimated average cost of a surgical abortion in a national health service hospital is £270 for a straightforward in-patient case and £140 for a day case (at 1990-91 figures). Some two thirds of abortions performed in national health service hospitals are carried out on a day case basis (i.e. the patient does not stay overnight). No information is held centrally about the cost of abortions performed in the private sector under agency arrangements.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what has been the total number of abortions performed under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967; how many of these were performed in national health service hospitals; and what was the total estimated cost at current prices;

(2) how many of the total number of abortions so far performed under the Abortion Act 1967 were performed in private clinics under national health service agency arrangements; and what was the total cost of those abortions at current prices.

Mr. Sackville: Of the 3,546,681 abortions performed in England and Wales since the Abortion Act 1967 came into effect, and up to 31 December 1991, 1,387,829 were performed in national health service hospitals. Since 1981, when information was first collected about agency arrangements between NHS authorities and the private sector, a total of 74,680 abortions have been so provided. The total cost of these is not known centrally. Information is not available centrally to enable the total cost of all abortions to be estimated.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has concerning the average cost to patients of abortions performed in private abortion clinics; and how many such abortions in total have now been performed under the provisions of the Abortion Act 1967.

Mr. Sackville: The total number of abortions performed in private abortion clinics and hospitals under the Abortion Act 1967 since it came into effect, and up to 31 December 1991, is 2,158,852. We do not collect centrally information about fees charged by all private clinics.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will indicate, without revealing the names of the doctors concerned, how many and what percentage of all abortions on babies of 18 or more weeks gestation in the latest year for which figures are available were carried out by each of the 10 doctors who have performed the greatest number of such abortions.

Mr. Sackville: This information is available only from the abortion notification forms submitted to the Chief Medical Officer under regulation 4 of the Abortion Regulations 1991, and cannot be disclosed because of restrictions set out in regulation 5.

Hospitals, Birmingham

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what dates in the last six months she visited hospitals in Birmingham; and if she will give details of her visits.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not visited any hospitals in Birmingham in the last six months. However, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State—my hon. Friend the Member for

Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville)—and I have visited hospitals in and around Birmingham on a number of occasions since July.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to make a decision regarding the proposal from the West Midlands regional health authority to close the accident and royal orthopaedic hospitals in Birmingham.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend has received proposals from the regional health authority to close the Accident and Royal Orthopaedic hospitals and transfer the services to the Birmingham general hospital. An announcement will be made once the consideration of the proposal is complete.

Philip Lyndon

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total cost so far to the Yorkshire health authority of the Philip Lyndon inquiry including the costs of his suspension.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bryan Askew, the chairman of Yorkshire regional health authority for details.

Medical Treatment Abroad

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assistance is available for parents whose children contract a medical condition, treatment for which cannot be obtained in the United Kingdom, to receive treatment in *(a)* another EC country, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Japan and *(d)* any other country.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no general powers under national health service legislation allowing purchase of treatment outside the EC for patients resident in England. There are powers under EC legislation for individual patients to be referred elsewhere in the Community for treatment with the prior authorisation of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Capital Programmes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, in granting approvals in to the capital programmes of NHS trusts, it is her policy to act in accordance with the previous outline capital programmes of regional health authorities or any undertakings regional health authorities may have given relating thereto.

Dr. Mawhinney: With the introduction of capital charges all capital developments, whether in trusts or directly managed units, have revenue consequences for purchasers. The national health service management executive requires all new capital developments to be supported by a business case which demonstrates that the scheme meets purchaser requirements, has their support, and can be afforded by them. Schemes in regional health authorities previous outline programmes are subject to these criteria in the same way that any new proposals are. The NHS management executive's outposts are responsible for recommending major capital schemes for inclusion in trust capital programmes and work closely with regional health authorities in drawing up their proposals.

Merseyside Regional Health Authority

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will establish an independent inquiry into the Merseyside regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to do so.

Ambulance Service

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the percentage of ambulances in each service in England that responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is in the table. In 1991-92 ambulance authorities had the option to return information on either the basis of emergency telephone calls received or of emergency patient journeys, with consequent variation in the basis of calculation. It is not considered that this has any significant impact on comparisons. The data are provisional.

Emergency calls: Non-metropolitan authorities 1991-92

Ambulance authority	*Response within 8 minutes per cent.*	*Response within 19 minutes per cent.*
Cleveland[1]	70	94
Cumbria[1]	53	87
Durham	[2]54	[3]96
Humberside[1]	73	99
North Yorkshire[1]	61	96
Derbyshire	50	[3]97
Leicestershire[1]	52	96
Lincolnshire NHS Trust	65	[3]96
Nottinghamshire	[2]58	[3]97
Cambridgeshire[1]	38	84
Norfolk NHS Trust	55	91
Suffolk	[2]53	[3]91
Bedfordshire[1]	57	95
Hertfordshire[1]	62	96
Essex	55	96
East Sussex[1]	67	98
Kent[1]	59	96
Surrey	[2]50	[3]91
West Sussex[1]	64	97
Dorset[1]	61	97
Hampshire[1]	55	97
Wiltshire[1]	62	96
Isle of Wight[1]	58	99
Berkshire[1]	51	93
Buckinghamshire	[2]58	[3]96
Northamptonshire	[2]67	[3]98
Oxfordshire	[2]51	[3]92
Avon[1]	59	99
Cornwall NHS Trust	[2]44	[3]92
Devon[1]	57	94
Gloucestershire[1]	55	94
Somerset[1]	55	91
Hereford and Worcester[1]	56	97
Shropshire	49	[3]93
Staffordshire	[2]57	[3]99
Warwickshire[1]	54	94
Cheshire[1]	57	90
Lancashire	67	[3]99

[1] Return based on number of emergency patient journeys.
[2] Response within 7 minutes.
[3] Response within 20 minutes.

Emergency calls: Metropolitan authorities 1991-92

Ambulance authority	*Response within eight minutes Percentage*	*Response within 14 minutes Percentage*
Northumbria Metropolitan NHS trust[1]	59	97
West Yorkshire Metropolitan	34	83
South Yorkshire Metropolitan[1]	[2]29	76
London Ambulance Service[1]	15	64
West Midlands Metropolitan[1]	72	92
Mersey Metropolitan[1]	66	94
Greater Manchester Metropolitan	[2]59	97

[1] Return based on number of emergency patient journeys.
[2] Response within seven minutes.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of ambulance staff in England employed by the NHS in 991, using whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Sackville: As at 30 September 1991, there were some 18,190 whole-time equivalent ambulance staff employed by the national health service (including those in NHS trusts).

Engagements

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list her engagements for 4, 5 and 6 December 1992.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My official engagements were as follows:

Friday 4 December: Meeting with Departmental officials and attendance at the Service for the Citizen Conference at the QEII conference centre.

Saturday 5 December: Meeting with the Guildford and Godalming Branch of National Asthma Campaign.

Domiciliary Services

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health visitors and district nurses providing domiciliary services to elderly people were employed in England on the most recent date for which this information is available.

Mr. Sackville: The Department collects information about the numbers of health visitors and district nurses, but data on their type of work (e.g. domiciliary services to elderly people) is not separately identifiable.

Community Care

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are being made to monitor the community care policy from April.

Mr. Yeo: We are currently considering how best to do this.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the assessment of the community care needs of London boroughs in 1993-94.

Mr. Yeo: Standard spending assessments provide the Government's view of appropriate expenditure. Within each SSA there are components for adult social services. Authorities also have available the special transitional grant for community care and other relevant specific grants. However, it is for each authority to decide within its available resources how much it is appropriate to spend in the light of their own judgments.

Varicose Veins

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many varicose vein surgical operations are undertaken by the national health service annually for males under 40 years of age.

Mr. Sackville: The number of hospital episodes in England 1989-90, the latest year for which figures are available, involving surgical operations under the national health service for varicose veins on males under 40 years of age, are estimated to be 4,200.

Residential Care

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken to improve the provision of residential care places in the London area.

Mr. Yeo: It is for each local authority to determine how best to meet the need for social services, including residential care, in their area. The local authorities in London are, like all social services authorities throughout the country, currently considering this in working towards the introduction of the new community care arrangements in April.

Unwanted Pregnancies

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the impact on the number of unwanted pregnancies and the cost of associated social problems of the changes to the selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: Changes to the range of contraceptives available on national health service prescription will be made only on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs. The committee will ensure that all the real clinical needs of patients continue to be met.

Special Hospitals

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is *(a)* the normal capacity and *(b)* maximum capacity of each of the special hospitals in England and Wales;

(2) what was the population for each of the three special hospitals in England and Wales for the latest date available.

Mr. Yeo: The available information is in the table.

Hospital	*Current number of beds*	*Number of patients 31 December 1992*
Ashworth	658	624
Broadmoor	495	493
Rampton	600	540
TOTAL	1,753	1,532

Total patient numbers include 123 on trial leave.

Neo-natal Units

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing NHS expenditure on neo-natal units in cash and real terms in each year since 1979-80; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Managerial Staff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she has had with the NHS Trusts Association concerning the application of the Government's pay guidelines for the public sector to the pay of chief executives and other senior staff of new NHS trusts coming into being on 1 April; and where those chief executives and senior staff are presently in post in analogous jobs.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met the National Health Service Trust Federation on 10 December 1992 and discussed with them the application of public sector pay restraint. My right hon. Friend emphasised that the need for restraint applied to the salaries of chief executives as well as other NHS staff.

Dentistry

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has received the Bloomfield report; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am pleased to announce that Sir Kenneth Bloomfield has now submitted his report reviewing the current dental remuneration system and identifying options for change. I am today publishing his report and beginning a period of consultation on it to identify how we might improve the system. Copies have been placed in the Library.

I should like to record my thanks to Sir Kenneth for a comprehensive and valuable report. The next step is to consider the views of all the interests—profession, public, national health service—to develop a better system. I know the Health Select Committee has an enquiry into this subject. Many dentists have made clear their concern about the current remuneration system which has remained largely unchanged since 1948. Now is the time to work with us to improve it.

The Government will consider carefully all views expressed over the coming months.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the Bloomfield report on dental remuneration to be made public.

Dr. Mawhinney: Today.

Hospitals, Wolverhampton

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times Wolverhampton hospitals have been closed for admissions during the 12-month period ended 31 December 1992; and how many patients have been affected by the closures.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact to Sir Donald Wilson, chairman of West Midlands regional health authority.

NHS Charges

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which cases a loan is treated as reckonable income in determining eligibility for NHS charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) on Friday 23 October 1992 at column *395*.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the awards given to voluntary organisations under the section 64 procedure for the financial year 1991-92; what awards he plans to make in the financial year 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* Grants totalling over £15·8 million were awarded to voluntary organisations in England during 1991-92 under the section 64 general scheme. Details have been placed in the Library.

For 1992-93 grant approval letters had been issued by 13 January 1993 to various organisations. A list of them has also been placed in the Library. In addition further approval letters up to the total provision of £17·8 million will be issued during the remainder of the year where payment is dependent for example on work starting on a project in the near future. The organisations in question are aware of the position.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners

2. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next intends to meet representatives of pensioner groups to discuss the level of the state pension.

Mr. Lilley: My ministerial colleagues and I regularly meet representatives of pensioner groups.

10. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the increase in real terms in benefits for pensioners since 1989.

15. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total value of extra help which has been directed to less well off pensioners since 1989.

21. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much more than inflation benefits for less well off pensioners have been increased since 1989.

Miss Widdecombe: As a result of improvements in income-related benefits, since 1989 expenditure for the year beginning April 1993 will be £1 billion higher.

14. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the average pensioner's income comes from occupational pensions, savings and earnings.

Miss Widdecombe: Of pensioners' gross average income 23 per cent. from occupational pensions, 17 per cent. from savings income and 8 per cent. from earnings.

Pensions

26. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many officially retired persons were in receipt of an occupational pension for the latest date for which figures are available, and on 1 April 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We estimate that between 1979 and 1988, the most recent year for which information is available, the number of people over state pension age in receipt of income from an occupational pension rose from around 3 million to around 4·5 million. These estimates are based upon data from the 1979 and 1988 family expenditure surveys, and the 1979 and 1987 surveys of occupational pension schemes carried out by the Government Actuary.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish such comparable figures as he has available on provision for old age pensions in the United Kingdom and other EC countries, including health costs.

Miss Widdecombe: Direct comparison of pension rates is not possible because most EC states unlike the United Kingdom, have wholly earnings-related pension schemes. Meaningful comparisons can only be made when comparing whole benefit packages available to pensioners.

The Department recently completed a comparative exercise of six member states using data supplied by an independent firm of actuaries. The exercise indicated, that when factors such as safety net provision and health care are taken into account, British pensioners who previously had been on low earnings are better off than those in Germany, France, Italy and Spain, and only just behind those in the Netherlands.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the income of pensioners.

Miss Widdecombe: The total average income of pensioners has increased by about one third since 1979. This is over five times as fast as it increased between 1974 and 1979.

Family Credit

16. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the range of net income over which families are eligible for family credit.

Mr. Burt: There is no minimum qualifying level of income for family credit. The upper limit will vary with the number and age of the children. A family with one child under 11 can get family credit if their net weekly income is less than £139 a week. A family with four children aged three, eight 11 and 16 could be eligible with a net income of £209 a week.

Fraud

17. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra investment his Department is making in anti-fraud work.

Miss Widdecombe: An extra £10 million has been allocated for each of the next three financial years to help the Benefits Agency step up the fight against fraud and abuse. Financial incentives are also being introduced to encourage local authorities to combat housing benefit and council tax benefit fraud.

Child Support Agency

18. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement as to what progress he has made in setting up the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: I am pleased to report excellent progress has been made. The Child Support Agency will begin operations on 5 April as planned. Operating within the framework of the Child Support Act the agency will provide a clear focus for the assessment, collection and enforcement of maintenance payments, and ensure that many more parents meet their responsibility to maintain their children.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

19. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the level of co-operation between social security officers and local citizens advice bureaux.

Mr. Burt: There is a high level of co-operation. Locally staff in many of our district offices regularly meet bureaux staff who have been involved in service planning exercises. Visits to local citizens advice bureaux also take place in many parts of the country. Nationally, the Department enjoys good relations with the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux which is for example, involved in several research projects.

Lone Parents

20. **Mr. Coe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest available figures for the proportion of lone parents who receive maintenance.

Mr. Burt: The latest available estimates show that only 29 per cent. of lone parents receive regular maintenance payments. The corresponding figure for lone parents receiving income support is 22 per cent.

Disability Allowances

22. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to clear up the backlog of claims for disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Claim levels for disability living allowance have stabilised and work on hand has now reduced to normal levels.

I have expressed my regret for the delays which occurred following the introduction of disability living allowance, which was a massive task, resulting in over one million claims to disability living allowance and attendence allowance within a period of 10 months.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many staff have been allocated to the home visiting service; and how many home visits by Benefits Agency staff in connection with disability living allowance and attendance allowance have been made to date since February 1992 in total and by disability benefit centre;

(2) how many claims to date for the disability living allowance have been completed *(a)* with the assistance of telephone calls and *(b)* with the assistance of visits made by the forms completion service staff in the disability benefits centre.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 15 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security.

You asked about the number of staff allocated to the home visiting service, and how many home visits by Benefits Agency staff in connection with Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) have been made to date since February 1992 in total and by Disability Benefit Centre. You also asked how many claims have been completed with the assistance of telephone calls and with the assistance of visits made by the forms completion staff in the Disability Benefit Centres (DBCs).

The staff in the Customer Service Sections of the DBCs are involved in general duties to help customers, including forms completion work for both benefits. This may involve telephoning the customer to help in completing a claim form or it may involve a visit. There are around 200 Customer Service staff in the DBCs whose duties would include home visits. Since February 1992 to the end of December, over 2,500 home visits have been made to assist in the completion of claim forms. Over 63,000 DLA and AA claims have been completed with the assistance of telephone calls. The number of visits made by each DBC is shown below.

	Number
Midlands	394
Leeds	609
Wembley	181
Bristol	9
Manchester	38
Edinburgh	50
Newcastle	75
Cardiff	37
Bootle	729
Sutton	390

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Benefits Agency

23. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the system of handling answers to parliamentary questions referred to the chief executive of the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Burt: When Members ask written parliamentary questions which concern day-to-day operational matters delegated to the Benefits Agency, my right hon. Friend and his Ministers will normally arrange for the chief executive to write to the Member, and will reply to that effect. The aim is to provide as full and helpful a response as possible on a timescale similar to that for a ministerial response to a parliamentary question. As the Lord President of the Council announced on 20 October *Official Report*, column *288* all such letters from chief executives arising from written questions, except for those concerning personal or confidential matters, are now printed in the *Official Report*. My right hon. Friend remains fully accountable to Parliament for the work of the Department of Social Security, including its executive agencies and we will continue to answer all oral questions.

25. **Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes there have been in the service provided to claimants since the Benefits Agency came into operation in 1991.

Mr. Burt: Overall the Benefits Agency is providing a more efficient service to the public. Performance in most key service delivery areas has improved significantly since 1991. Significant progress has been made towards making the service more accessible, accountable and responsible to customer needs and expectations. The aims in the citizens charter have been expanded and are clearly laid out in the agency's own customer charter. In consultation with their customer's local units are setting up and publicising their own customer service standards.

Housing Benefit

24. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the introduction of a universal housing benefit scheme covering both rent and mortgage interest payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: We have considered carefully the proposals that have been made for such a scheme. We have yet to be convinced that they would represent good value for the taxpayer, given the substantial extra cost.

Invalid Care Allowance

27. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many more people receive invalid care allowance currently than in 1979.

Mr. Scott: The number of people receiving invalid care allowance increased from 5,000 in December 1979 to 180,000 in September 1992.

Social Fund

28. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to review the social fund provision.

Mr. Scott: The level of social fund provision is kept under constant review. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 12 November, the gross budget for social fund discretionary payments for 1993-94 will be around £340 million. That is a 50 per cent. increase in two years—a clear indication of our commitment to ensuring that adequate help is provided. As far as this year is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin), earlier today.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was, for each social security office in the United Kingdom, the total amount of money applied for in cases in the current financial year where an application for a social fund loan met the criteria but the loan was refused because of budgetary constraints;

(2) what was, for each social security office in the United Kingdom, the total amount of money applied for in cases during the current financial year where an application for a community care grant met the criteria but the grant was refused because of budgetary constraints.

Mr. Scott: Information on the amount of money in cases where an application was refused on grounds of priority is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was, for each social security office in the United Kingdom, the amount of money allocated to the social fund for *(a)* loans and *(b)* grants for the current financial year and the amount so far unspent in each category at the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: Details of social fund allocations for the current financial year and outstanding allocations at the latest available date, by Benefit Agency district are in the Library.

Mortgage Interest

29. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households are having their mortgage interest payments met by his Department; and what the cost will be of these payments in 1992-93.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information indicates a total of 411,000 income support recipients receiving help with mortgage interest payments at a cost of £949 million. This is derived from the May 1991 income support annual statistical enquiry, a copy of which is in the Library. Estimates on the cost to the Department of these payments in 1992-93 are not yet available.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what criteria are used by the Benefits Agency to decide whether to call an invalidity benefit claimant for a medical examination.

Mr. Scott: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 15 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what criteria are used by the Benefits Agency to decide whether to call an Invalidity Benefit claimant for a medical examination.

All claims for Invalidity Benefit are subject to scrutiny which may take the form of a reference to the Benefits Agency Medical Services to obtain a second opinion on incapacity for work. The selection of customers for reference is made impartially on the basis of standing instructions. The main considerations are the diagnosis or disorder causing incapacity for work and the length of time the person has been away from work as a result.

Cases received by Medical Services are scrutinised by a doctor who decides whether or not to call a customer for a medical examination. That decision is based on the doctor's experience of the likely effects of the particular medical condition on a person's capacity for work, information that has been provided by the doctor who has signed the statement of incapacity and any information from previous references that is relevant.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, how many applications for income support were made by 16 and 17 year-olds in south Somerset during 1992; how many of these applications were refused; and on what grounds.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paddy Ashdown, dated 15 January 1993

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many applications for Income Support were made by 16 and 17 year olds in South Somerset during 1992; how many of these applications were refused; and on what grounds.

The complete range of information you requested is not fully available except at disproportionate cost. This is because the reasons for refusal of benefit are not routinely collected and could be obtained only by examining individually each claim where benefit was refused.

The information I have outlined below is for offices in Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater which make up the Benefits Agency Somerset District. The total applications received will include some made under the severe hardship provisions.

Applications from 16 and 17 year olds January—December 1992

Total received	*Awarded*	*Refused*
1,179	991	188

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend social security regulations so that the lower rate of incomes support is only applicable to those aged 18 to 24 years who live with their parents.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost of increasing the level of income support personal allowances for claimants under the age of 25 years to the rate of allowances currently paid to claimants over the age of 25 years.

Mr. Burt: The estimated cost of increasing the rate of income support for single claimants under 25 years to that payable to those aged 25 and over is £460 million in a full year. This figure includes the consequential increases in housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Notes:

1. The figure is rounded to the nearest £10 million.
2. Modelled at 1992-93 prices and benefit levels using data drawn from the 1987-88-89 Family Expenditure Surveys, the 1991 Annual Statistical Enquiry, the 1991 Labour Force Survey and the May 1991 estimate of the Youth Training caseload.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the current levels of personal allowances payable to income supportclaimants under the age of 25 years.

Mr. Burt: Income-related benefits are under continuous review. We have no plans to amend the under 25 rate of income support.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make a statement on the reason for freezing the income support payments for the terminally ill in residential homes for the financial year 1993-94;

(2) if he will list *(a)* the value of income support payments payable to the terminally ill in residential homes at the date when it was first introduced, *(b)* the current value and *(c)* the value recently fixed for 1993, at constant 1992 prices, together with the equivalent figures valorised to take account of rises in the retail price index since the year the terminally ill payment was introduced;

(3) if he will estimate the annual additional money it would cost to uprate the terminally ill income support grant in 1993 by the same amount as the retail prices index.

Mr. Burt: The terminal illness limit was intended to meet the costs of the extra care provided to people who are terminally ill. However, the limit can also be paid where an adjudication officer is satisfied that a home is able to provide this type of care and the claimant is receiving it regardless of the nature of their condition. As a consequence the limit is often helping those who are not terminally ill within the accepted definition of this term.

The real values of the maximum payments to people claiming the terminal illness limit in nursing homes under the supplementary benefit and income support schemes, in constant April 1992 prices, are:

(a) at the time the system of national limits was introduced in April 1985, £291;

(b) at the last uprating in April 1992, £280.

Corresponding figures for the value in April 1993 cannot be calculated until the RPI for April 1993 becomes available.

Had the terminally ill limit been uprated by the same amount as the retail price index, it is estimated that would have cost of the order of £15 million to £20 million in 1993-94. This estimate is subject to considerable uncertainly because of difficulties in projecting reliably the number of people claiming the terminally ill limit, following the introduction of the new arrangements for those entering homes from April 1993.

We considered that an increase to this limit was not the best use of resources which could be better directed at the other income support limits. It was the policy intention to remove the differential between this limit and the basic elderly limit.

From April 1993 responsibility for all patients in hospices falls to the national health service. Funds have been transferred to the national health service as part of the community care package for this new responsibility. In addition £1 million has been transferred from the Social Security budget to the Department of Health for 1993-94 to ensure additional funds are directed specifically to those who are terminally ill. This is an addition to the £1 million transferred for each of the three survey years that was announced the previous year.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will commission research to investigate the adequacy of income support available to claimants under the age of 25 years.

Mr. Burt: There is already a wide range of published information which bears on this issue. We have no plans to commission any further research.

Water Charges

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received from income support claimants regarding direct payments to water companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: In the year ending 31 December 1992 we have received three letters from income support beneficiaries concerning direct payments for water charges.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans there are to introduce a benefit to help with water charges.

Mr. Burt: There are no such plans.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to amend paragraph 7 of schedule 9 of the Claims and Payments Regulations 1987 to allow more people to claim direct water payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 14 December 1992 at column *72*.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications under paragraph 7 of schedule 9 of the Claims and Payments Regulations 1987 for direct payments to water companies have been made to each regional DSS office; how many have been turned down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 14 December at columns *71-72*.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next expects to meet the chairmen of the regional water companies to discuss direct payments by DSS offices to the water companies.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to meet the chairman of the regional water companies and have received no requests to do so. Departmental officials hold regular meetings with representatives of the water companies, and have done so recently.

Cohabitation Rule

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claimants in *(a)* North Yorkshire and *(b)* England had a benefit withdrawn because they were thought to be living together with another person in each quarter for the last two years; and what proportion of these claimants subsequently had their benefit reinstated;

(2) how many York claimants had a benefit withdrawn *(a)* by the York Benefits Agency office and *(b)* by the agency's area fraud office because they were thought to be living together with another person in each quarter for the last two years; and what proportion of these claimants subsequently had their benefit reinstated.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that the information is not available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Ex-service Men

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the amount of benefits payable *(a)* weekly and *(b)* on any other basis to limbless ex-service

men specifically because they have had (i) one, (ii) two, (iii) three and (iv) four limbs amputated; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The amount of war disablement pension payable in respect of disablement due to service varies according to the degree of disablement which is assessed on a percentage basis, 100 per cent. being the maximum. For amputees the assessment is determined by the site of the amputation. Details are given in the table together with the corresponding weekly and yearly pension rates for privates/non-commissioned officers, and officers respectively.

For multiple amputations, other than those mentioned in the table, a composite assessment of the degree of disablement is made, by reference to the combined effects of such injuries (subject to the maximum of 100 per cent.)

Additional allowances may be awarded in respect of, for instance, unemployability and need for attendance. Mobility supplement (currently £33·70 a week, £1,757 a year) is also available; amputation of both legs at levels which are either through or above the ankle results in automatic entitlement.

	Percentage assessment	*Weekly rate* £	*Yearly rate* £
Amputation of upper limbs			
Loss of both hands or amputation at higher sites	100	89·00	4,685
Forequarter amputation	100	89·00	4,685
Amputation through shoulder joint	90	80·10	4,217
Amputation below shoulder with stump less than 20·5 centimetres from tip of the acromium	80	71·20	3,748
Amputation from 20·5 centimetres from tip of the acromium to less than 11·5 centimetres below tip of olecranon	70	62·30	3,280
Amputation from 11·5 centimetres below tip of olecranon	60	53·40	2,811
Loss of four fingers	50	44·50	2,343
Loss of thumb and its metacarpel bone	40	35·60	1,874
Loss of thumb	30	26·70	1,406
Loss of three fingers	30	26·70	1,406
Loss of two fingers	20	17·80	937
Loss of terminal phalanx of thumb	20	17·80	937
Amputation of lower limbs			
Double amputation through thigh, or through thigh on one side and loss of other foot, or double amputation below thigh to 13 centimetres below knee	100	89·00	4,685
Double amputation through leg lower than 13 centimetres below knee	100	89·00	4,685
Hindquarter amputation	100	89·00	4,685
Amputation of one leg lower than 13 centimetres below knee and loss of other foot	100	89·00	4,685
Amputation through hip joint	90	80·10	4,217
Amputation of both feet resulting in end bearing stumps	90	80·10	4,217
Amputation through both feet proximal to the metatarso-phalangeal joint	80	71·20	3,748
Amputation below hip with stump not exceeding 13 centimetres in length measured from tip of great trochanter	80	71·20	3,748
Amputation below hip and above knee with stump exceeding 13 centimetres in length measured from tip of great trochanter, or at knee not resulting in end-bearing stump	70	62·30	3,280
Amputation at knee resulting in end-bearing stump, or below knee with stump not exceeding 9 centimetres	60	53·40	2,811
Amputation below knee with stump exceeding 9 centimetres but not exceeding 13 centimetres	50	44·50	2,343
Amputation below knee with stump exceeding 13 centimetres	40	35·60	1,874
Loss of all toes of both feet through the metatarso-phalangeal joint	40	35·60	1,874

	Percentage assessment	Weekly rate £	Yearly rate £
Loss of all toes of both feet proximal to the proximal interphalangeal joint	30	26·70	1,406
Amputation of one foot resulting in end bearing stump	30	26·70	1,406
Amputation through one foot proximal to the metatarso-phalangeal joint	30	26·70	1,406
Loss of all toes of one foot proximal to the proximal interphalangeal joint, including amputations through the metatarso-phalangeal joint	20	17·80	937
Loss of all toes of both feet distal to the proximal interphalangeal joint	20	17·80	937
Amputation of upper and lower limbs			
Loss of a hand and a foot	100	89·00	4,685

Maternity Pay

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what pay will be provided for employees by central Government during the 14 weeks of maternity leave laid down under section 20 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill;

(2) what will the employer's financial responsibility be for maternity pay for the 14 weeks of maternity leave laid down under section 20 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Mr. Scott: Section 20 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill implements the maternity leave provisions of the EC directive on the protection of pregnant women at work. We are considering the directive's implications for maternity benefits and will make an announcement in due course.

Grants and Loans

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many grants and how many loans were made by his Department in Doncaster in 1991-92; how many applications were refused; and what were the total sums involved.

Mr. Scott: Information on the number of grants and loans awarded and refused, by each Benefit Agency district, is in the Library. Information on the amount of grant and loan awards is also in the Library. Information on the amount of grant and loan refusals is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Unemployed People (Benefits)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount of money paid to people who were unemployed and their dependants during 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available. The estimated total benefit paid to people and their dependants on account of unemployment for the financial year 1991-92 is £7,360 million.

Note:

Benefits for unemployed people include unemployment benefit, income support, housing benefit, community charge benefit and payments from the social fund to unemployed people and their families.

The figure does not include child benefit, one parent benefit, maternity benefits, widows' benefits or any of the sickness or disability benefits to which unemployed people may also be entitled.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness, Walsall

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the average cost per unit of accommodation in *(a)* bed-and-breakfast accommodation and *(b)* hostel accommodation in the west midlands and Walsall;

(2) what was the cost to Walsall metropolitan borough council of providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation for those families officially registered as homeless for each year since 1987.

Mr. Baldry: Walsall has provided no information to the Department on the cost of bed-and-breakfast and hostel accommodation although it does make use of such accommodation to temporarily house homeless households.

Corresponding information for the other authorities in the west midlands is also incomplete and my Department has no estimates.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* families and *(b)* single people were accepted by Walsall metropolitan borough authority as homeless in the last year for which figures were available; and what is the estimate for the end of 1992.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities report, in part E of their quarterly P1 return, the number of households for whom they accept responsibility to secure permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act.

Information for Walsall for the year ending September 1992 is as follows:

	Total households accepted	of which Families and pregnant women	of which Young single people
Walsall	1,956	1,381	90

The Department has no estimates for the end of 1992.

Tarmac Construction

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the risk-sharing scheme agreed with Tarmac Construction as part of the sale of PSA Projects;

(2) how much Tarmac Construction was paid as part of a risk-sharing scheme in addition to the £54·9 million paid as negative liability.

Mr. Redwood: No risk-sharing scheme was agreed with Tarmac Construction as part of the sale of PSA Projects. The full details of the financial aspects of the sale were set out in the answer given to the member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 25 November 1992.

Caravan Sites

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of grant aid is available for capital works projects for caravan site provision for the traditional travelling community and for on-site units.

Mr. Baldry: For the current financial year £12·5 million has been allocated in England for capital works by local authorities to provide new gipsy caravan sites and to improve existing sites.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the traditional travelling people in England will be provided for by *(a)* existing caravan sites, *(b)* those planned and *(c)* those under construction for those people.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not hold information in the form requested. In January 1992, English local authorities counted a total of 12,777 gipsy caravans: 43 per cent. of these were parked on authorised council sites; a further 23 per cent. were on authorised private caravan sites; the remainder were on unauthorised sites.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the locations or addresses of designated gipsy sites in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) on 23 November 1992 at column *536*.

Housing Subsidies

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total amount of housing revenue account subsidy payable to local housing authorities in England in each of the years for 1990-91 to 1992-93, and his estimate for 1993-94, indicating separately the housing and the housing benefit components, and showing the difference between the actual subsidy payable and the amount which would have been payable if housing benefit expenditure on rent rebates had qualified in full for subsidy.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is shown in the table. The estimated figures for 1993-94 reflect the guideline rents and management and maintenance allowances determined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 17 December 1992.

Apportionment of housing revenue account subsidy between housing and rent rebates

£ million

	1990-91 outturn	*1991-92 outturn*	*1992-93 [1] outturn*	*1993-94 [2] outturn*
Housing element				
Positive entitlements	1,356	1,156	1,027	922
Negative entitlements	−200	−283	−495	−792
Gross rent rebates	2,505	2,877	3,477	3,760
Total HRA subsidy	3,661	3,750	4,009	3,890
Sum of positve housing element and gross rebates	3,861	4,033	4,504	4,682

[1] Estimated outturn.
[2] Forecast outturn.

Housing Associations

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received a copy of the report prepared by Hambros for the Housing Corporation on the private financing of housing associations; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: Hambros presented its report to the Department on 31 January 1992. It contains commercially sensitive information and we have no plans to publish it.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he was informed of the proposals being considered by the Housing Corporation for a new approach to the allocation of housing association grant to developing housing associations; when he received a copy of the white paper "Revised Housing Association Funding Regime"; and if he will place a copy in the Library;

(2) if he will list the housing associations which would qualify for housing association grant under the criteria being considered by the Housing Corporation in the paper "Revised Housing Association Funding Regime", indicating *(a)* the size of each association, *(b)* any black and ethnic minority associations, *(c)* co-operatives and *(d)* associations which have taken over local authority housing under large-scale voluntary transfer procedures.

Mr. Baldry: I understand that the document to which the hon. Gentleman refers was a draft of a working paper being prepared by officials at the Housing Corporation. Ministers were informed of the existence of the paper when it was referred to in the press. Should there be any change in the corporation's policy towards the funding of housing associations, the corporation will no doubt make appropriate information available.

PSA Building Management

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many non-industrial and industrial staff work for each PSA Building Management division; and in what parliamentary constituencies they work.

Mr. Robin Squire: At 30 November 1992, 8,137 staff were employed in PSA Building Management (BM) as follows:

	Number	
BMHQ	48	non-industrials
BM Scotland	536	non-industrials
	464	industrials
	1,000	Total
BM South East	1,351	non-industrials
	520	industrials
	1,871	Total
BM Noreast	1,092	non-industrials
	390	industrials
	1,482	Total
BM Manchester	1,117	non-industrials
	677	industrials
	1,794	Total
BM South and West	1,248	non-industrials
	694	industrials
	1,942	Total

These staff work in the following parliamentary constituencies:

BMHQ
- Croydon, Central

BM Scotland
- Edinburgh, Central
- Edinburgh, Pentlands
- Midlothian
- Glasgow, Central
- Orkney and Shetland
- Caithness and Sutherland
- Moray
- Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber
- Banff and Buchan
- Aberdeen, South
- Angus, East
- Perth and Kinross
- Fife, North-East
- Dunfermline, West
- Dumbarton
- Stirling
- Western Isles
- Argyll and Bute
- Galloway and Upper Nithsdale
- Ayr
- Cunninghame, North
- Greenock and Port Glasgow

BM South East
- Chelsea
- Brighton, Kemptown
- Windsor and Maidenhead
- City of London
- Twickenham
- Woolwich
- Maidstone
- Folkestone
- Canterbury
- Ashford
- Woking
- Thanet, North
- Guildford
- Crawley
- Portsmouth, North
- Havant
- Fareham
- Isle of Wight
- Chichester
- Hampshire, East
- Ealing, North
- Kensington
- Brentford and Isleworth
- Croydon, Central
- Hastings and Rye
- Gillingham
- Dover and Deal
- Surbiton
- Hendon, North
- Portsmouth, South
- Gosport
- Southwark and Bermondsey
- Greenwich

BM Noreast
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North
- Leeds, North West
- Ryedale
- Richmond (Yorks)
- Gainsborough and Horncastle
- Brigg and Cleethorpe
- York
- Huntingdon
- Colchester, South and Malden
- Norfolk, North
- Bedfordshire, Mid
- Bedfordshire, North
- Bedfordshire, South West
- Bury St. Edmonds
- Norfolk, South West
- Norfolk, Mid
- Norfolk, North West
- Cambridgeshire, South West
- Suffolk, Coastal
- Saffron Walden
- Chelmsford
- Ipswich
- Watford
- Bridlington
- Harrogate
- Skipton and Ripon
- Sheffield, Central
- Bassetlaw
- Beverley
- Don Valley
- Lindsey, East
- Broxtowe
- Rutland and Melton
- Norwich, North
- Suffolk, South
- Peterborough
- Hexham
- Berwick-upon-Tweed
- Southend, East
- Rochford
- Grantham
- Cambridge
- Stockton, South
- Cambridgeshire, South East
- Northampton, South

BM Manchester
- Penrith and The Border
- Ceredigion and Pembroke, North
- Stretford
- Crosby
- Monmouth
- Rugby and Kenilworth
- Pembroke
- Warrington, North
- High Peak
- Cardiff, North
- Staffordshire Moorlands
- Chester, City of
- Broxtowe
- Leicestershire, North West
- Clwyd, North West
- Rutland and Melton
- Hereford
- Derby, North
- Wrekin
- Barrow and Furness
- Birmingham, Ladywood
- Stratford-on-Avon
- Leicester, South
- Meirionnydd Nant Conwy

Worcestershire, South
Rushcliffe
Lincoln
Wyre
Preston
Nottingham, South
Newport, East
Grantham
Hexham
Ynys Môn
Fylde
Warwickshire, North
Newark
Vale of Glamorgan
Swansea, East

BM South & West

Aldershot
Aylesbury
Banbury
Bath
Berkshire, East
Bournemouth, East
Bristol, North-West
Cheltenham
Christchurch
Cirencester & Tewkesbury
Cornwall, North
Devon, North
Dorset, South
Dorset, West
Exeter
Gloucester
Hampshire, North West
Oxford West & Abingdon
Plymouth, Devonport
Plymouth, Drake
Plymouth, Sutton
Reading, West
Salisbury
South Hams
Southampton-Test
St. Ives
Stroud
Surrey, North-West
Swindon
Taunton
Teignbridge
Westbury
Weston-Super-Mare
Wiltshire, North
Winchester
Witney
Wokingham
Wycombe
Yeovil

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the calculations behind his Department's forecast of the amount to be made available for local authorities arising from the proposed partial release of receipts of council house sales and other capital assets.

Mr. Baldry: As a result of the temporary relaxation of the regulations on the use of capital receipts announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn statement, it is estimated that local authorities in England will have some £1¼ billion of extra usable capital receipts. This estimate was based largely on authorities' own forecasts of their receipts in 1992-93. It was assumed that, had there been no relaxation in the rules, receipts would have continued at broadly the same rate. As a result of the relaxation, authorities will be able to use 100 per cent. of virtually all receipts obtained during the period 13 November 1992 to 31 December 1993. This implies extra usable receipts of about £1¼ billion. It was also assumed that the relaxation would itself stimulate extra disposals, and hence extra receipts, which would not otherwise have arisen in that period. This accounts for the balance of the estimate.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the revenue raised by local authorities *(a)* by the sale of capital assets other than council houses and *(b)* by the sale of council houses, in each financial year since 1979, including information on the current financial year.

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

Local Authority sales of fixed assets: England

£ million

	Housing dwellings[1]	*Housing land etc.*	*Other services*
1979-80	473	38	[2]
1980-81	656	96	[2]
1981-82	1,241	99	351
1982-83	1,769	135	425
1983-84	1,325	124	435
1984-85	1,129	147	520
1985-86	1,092	137	608
1986-87	1,274	142	656
1987-88	1,715	149	1,032
1988-89	2,772	245	1,791
1989-90	2,820	216	1,500
1990-91	2,026	142	756
[3]1991-92	1,180	156	622
[4]1992-93	1,385	120	460

[1] Capital value of local authority dwellings sold, including large scale transfers of stock to housing associations and discount repayments.
[2] Figures not available on a comparable basis.
[3] Provisional.
[4] Estimated.
Source: Local authority returns.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities which are currently debt free.

Mr. Robin Squire: Returns to the Department indicate that the following authorities were debt free at 31 March 1992:

Bedford
Bracknell
Chiltern
Christchurch
City of London
Dorset
Lincolnshire
Mid Sussex
Ryedale
St. Edmondsbury
Sevenoaks
South Bucks
Suffolk
Swale
West Sussex

Other authorities may have become debt free as result of the commutation of grants for debt charges which took place on 1 October 1992. These are likely to include the following:

Broadland
Bromley
East Cambridgeshire
Hove
Mid Bedfordshire
North Shropshire
South Northamptonshire
South Wight
Tandridge
Torbay
Wansdyke

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his proposals for the appropriate level of aggregate local authority spending in 1993-94 and the level of central support for that spending.

Mr. Redwood: *[pursuant to the reply, 12 November 1993, col. 962]:* I am today placing in the Library a table of illustrative relevant notional amounts for each local authority.

Air Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the reasons for the air pollution alert issued on 30 December 1992; and how many callers took advantage of the departmental 0800-freephone public information line.

Mr. Maclean: Poor air quality was reported in bulletins on 30 December 1992 for London on the basis of nitrogen dioxide levels, derived from vehicle exhaust emissions and for Belfast and Sunderland on the basis of sulphur dioxide levels derived from domestic coal burning. Cold, still weather conditions hampered disperal of the pollutants.

The number of calls registered on the FREEphone number was 191 on 30 December. This increased to 330 on 31 December.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance has been afforded to project Silesia in Poland to mitigate air pollution from industry under *(a)* the PHARE scheme and *(b)* European bank for reconstruction and development programmes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply. Assistance to the environmental sector in Poland under the PHARE programme includes a regional programme in upper Silesia (around £12 million) which encompasses a project on abatement of low-level air pollution emission directed particularly at heating systems. Environmental programmes funded through the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development do not at present include specific assistance to Silesia.

Air Quality Monitoring Station

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the location within Greenwich of the air quality monitoring station operated by Warren Spring Laboratory, referred to in his answer of 9 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *154*.

Mr. Maclean: The study of nitrogen dioxide levels in 1991 referred to in the earlier answer of 9 June 1992 contained two sites in the Greenwich area. These are located at :

West Greenwich Branch Library, Greenwich High Road, London SE10.

Shrewsbury House, Bushmoor Crescent, Plumstead, London SE18.

Black smoke is also measured annually at these sites.

Community Charge

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the level of collection of the community charge in Essex in each year in which the charge has been in force.

Mr. Robin Squire: The latest information available to the Department on the level of collection of the community charge for the local authorities in the county of Essex is as follows:

Authority	*Receipts of 1991-91 charges in 1990-91 as a percentage of budgeted yield*	*Receipts of 1991-92 charges in 1991-92 as a percentage of budgeted yield*	[1] *Receipts of 1992-93 charges in 1992-93 as a percentage of budgeted yield*
Basildon	90·6	86·7	44·5
Braintree	101·6	89·5	48·3
Brentwood	97·3	102·2	65·0
Castle Point	83·0	96·5	52·0
Chelmsford	96·6	93·1	55·8
Colchester	87·0	90·7	45·8
Epping Forest	89·8	95·5	53·2
Harlow	90·0	80·6	40·0
Maldon	104·7	101·9	55·3
Rochford	102·0	102·3	54·8
Southend-on-Sea	90·0	92·2	53·4
Tendring	91·5	94·3	59·7
Thurrock	97·1	82·1	50·1
Uttlesford	89·8	89·9	44·9
Total for Essex	93·2	91·4	51·1

[1] Figures for April-September 1992 only.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further information has subsequently become available on pollution attributable to vehicle emissions in the Greenwich area, in particular from the monitoring of nitrogen oxide and black smoke emissions, since his answer of 9 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *154*.

Mr. Maclean: Since the earlier answer of 9 June 1992 no further data are available on nitrogen oxides. For black smoke, a further year's data have been obtained from the national monitoring network, for two sites in the Greenwich area. The annual average black smoke concentrations (in microgrammes per cubic metre) for the last five years are as follows:

	Site 1	*Site 2*
1987-88	11	9
1988-89	14	11
1989-90	18	9
1990-91	20	11
1991-92	12	9

Site 1 is at West Greenwich branch library, Greenwich High road, London SE10; site 2 is at Shrewsbury house, Bushmoor crescent, Plumstead, London SE18.

Council Tax

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he is making of the percentage levels of collection by local authorities of the council tax in its first year.

Mr. Robin Squire: The council tax should be significantly easier to collect than the community charge, though community charge collection levels have improved in 1992-93 with authorities collecting on average 50 per cent. of their budgeted yield by the end of September. We shall be monitoring collection of the council tax in 1993-94.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what circumstances tenants under the age of 18 years in council properties and living alone are required to pay council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: Where all the people living in a council property are under 18, the local authority will be liable for the council tax, subject to a discount of 50 per cent.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many A band council tax valued properties have been identified for each local authority in England.

Mr. Robin Squire: I am arranging for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Rented Properties

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total number of homes for renting by housing associations which have been approved by the Housing Corporation under its approved development programme in each of the years for 1987-88 to 1992-93, and his estimate of approvals in financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: The total number of homes for renting approved under the Housing Corporation's approved development programme since 1987-88, and the Housing Corporation's estimates for 1992-93 and 1993-94, are as follows:

	Number
1987-88	16,518
1988-89	19,959
1989-90	16,198
1990-91	13,751
1991-92	43,583
1992-93	40,600
1993-94	27,600

The reduction in approvals in 1993-94 is partly the result of the corporation's response to requests from housing associations for a higher proportion of cash-backing for projects in the year in which they are approved.

In addition to the provision of new homes for rent, the corporation also funds tenants incentive (TIS) grants and do-it-yourself home ownership (DIYSO) schemes which release existing rental accommodation for reletting to the homeless. All of TIS and 60 per cent. of DIYSO is targeted in this way. The figures for TIS and DIYSO are as follows:

	TIS	*DIYSO*
1990-91	1,654	—
1991-92	3,241	116
1992-93	3,400	3,800
1993-94	5,400	4,400

In addition to the above figures, the housing market package announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement is expected to produce over 17,000 homes for rent and up to 2,000 TIS grants.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the Housing Corporation's rented housing programme by London borough for each year since 1964 in actual prices and in 1993 prices.

Mr. Baldry: This information cannot be provided other than at disproportionate cost.

Victoria Street Premises

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 27 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *539-40*, what has been the total cost incurred, including rent, insurance, maintenance and security, on the former DTI premises in Victoria street, between the date they were vacated in September 1991 and the present; when he expects the building contract on these premises to commence; and what is his estimate of the costs to be met for the duration of the building contract.

Mr. Baldry: In my answer of 27 October last at column *539-40*, I advised that the property was vacated in September 1991 and that the weekly cost of holding it vacant is £40,000. It is a relatively simple calculation to determine that this totals £2·6 million to the end of 1992.

Negotiations have still to be finalised and it is not possible to say when the building contract will commence or what the costs will be during the programme of 24 months for the refurbishment.

Rates

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the percentage level of collection of general rates in Essex in the last three years before the community charge system was introduced.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not available.

Poll Tax Debts

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to allow councils to write off poll tax debts after April 1992 for people in hardship and where the cost of recovery exceeds the money owing or likely to be collected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. It is for local authorities to decide their own policies on write-offs in line with good financial practice and with the approval of their external auditor.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those planning decisions relating to opencast mining applications in Northumberland and Durham which have been called in by his Department in each of the last five years for the Secretary of State's ruling, indicating in each case whether premission was given or refused.

Mr. Baldry: No opencast coal mining applications in Northumberland and Durham have been called in by my Department in the last five years.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless families are currently living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for each housing authority together with the average cost per week per family for each housing authority area.

Mr. Baldry: Information on homeless households who were being dealt with under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985 and who were placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation can be found in "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act. England. Results for the third quarter of 1992. Supplementary Table", a copy of which is in the Library.

Annual costs for bed-and-breakfast accommodation used, together with the related numbers of household days provided, for authorities which provided the information to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), are published by CIPFA in its "Homelessness Statistics 1990-91 Actuals", a copy of which is also in the Library.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the change in the number of families housed by local authority housing departments in bed-and-breakfast accommodation over the next 12 months.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not make such estimates.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reduce the number of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Government encourage local authorities to seek alternatives to bed-and-breakfast hotels wherever possible when they place homeless families in temporary accommodation. At 30 September 1992 the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England was 23 per cent. lower than a year earlier. New concessions on the arrangements for financing short-term leasing announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 21 December will extend the stock of temporary accommodation available for housing homeless families.

Residential Homes

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 29 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *850*, if he is now in a position to announce if residential homes will be totally exempt from the council tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have considered representations from care homes about council tax and considered the arguments put forward by the Joint Care Committee. We believe it is right that care homes should contribute towards the many local services from which they benefit. However, as I explained in my answer to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) 30 November 1992 at column 13, council tax bills for care homes will generally be modest.

Urban Programme

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many urban programme funded economic development projects will end in each of the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; what is the financial value of these projects in each year; and what are the figures in each case for *(a)* those targeted at ethnic minority communities and *(b)* those run by voluntary organisations.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many urban programme projects are scheduled to end in the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; what is the financial value of these projects in each year; and what are the figures in each case for *(a)* those targeted at ethnic minority communities and *(b)* those run by voluntary organisations;

(2) how many urban programme funded environmental projects will end in each of the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; what is the financial value of these projects in each year; and what are the figures in each case for *(a)* those targeted at ethnic minority communities and *(b)* those run by voluntary organisations.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has made of the effect of changes in urban programme funding on urban wildlife projects.

Mr. Robin Squire: Urban wildlife and other projects already approved for three or four years will continue to be funded as urban programme commitments. There are a number of other sources of funding for urban wildlife projects.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table of the names of consultants employed by local authorities in making proposals to the Local Government Commission, the authority that employs them and the cost to the local authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is a matter for individual local authorities.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total cost to the Exchequer in 1992-93 of the Local Government Commission; what estimates he has for future costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost of the Local Government Commission for 1992-93 is estimated at £2·630 million, and at £3·259 million, £3·300 million and £3·439 million for the three following years.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are employed by the Local Government Commission; what is the cost to the Exchequer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Commission currently has 28 staff in post and estimates its annual expenditure on pay and related costs will be of the order of £0·9 million for 1993-94.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what opinion polling has been conducted by the Local Government Commission to ascertain the popularity of proposed boundaries; what is the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is a matter for the Local Government Commission and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the expenditure by the Housing Corporation on administration and accommodation in each year since 1964;

(2) how many staff were employed by the Housing Corporation in each year since 1964.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is as follows:

Year ending 31 March	*Accommodation costs*	*Administration costs*	*Number of staff*
1965	4·9	16·0	—
1966	14·9	101·1	—
1967	45·5	155·8	—
1968	40·0	211·2	—
1969	60·7	267·1	—
1970	61·0	262·2	—
1971	62·8	314·6	—
1972	71·1	421·9	—
1973	100·8	553·0	—
1974	139·6	791·3	180
1975	163·0	1,216·5	240
1976	307·6	1,919·8	363
1977	600·7	2,760·1	401
1978	873·7	3,405·1	452
1979	1,019·0	4,344·0	550
1980	1,457·0	6,413·0	649
1981	1,879·0	9,096·0	780
1982	2,522·0	9,014·0	639
1983	2,500·0	9,790·0	663
1984	2,700·0	10,336·0	715
1985	2,781·0	10,955·0	713
1986	2,924·0	11,657·0	714
1987	2,929·0	12,354·0	728
1988	3,100·0	13,400·0	720
1989	3,500·0	16,700·0	787
1990	3,300·0	16,600·0	745
1991	4,100·0	18,400·0	745
1992	4,500·0	20,700·0	734

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the proposed percentage change in the Housing Corporation's annual development programme for rented housing for 1993-94 compared with the approval development programme for 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: The figures are as follows:

	£ million	*Percentage change*
1992-93	1,584	
1993-94	1,558	−1·64

In addition to the annual development programme for 1992-93, £577 million was allocated to the Housing Corporation in the Chancellor's autumn statement to enable housing associations to purchase new, empty and repossessed properties by 31 March 1993, providing around 17,000 extra units of social housing.

Under this housing market package, £20 million has also been provided to the corporation this year for additional tenants' incentive scheme grants to housing association tenants. This will enable up to 2,000 new first-time buyers to enter the housing market, releasing the same number of units of social housing for reletting.

Land Designation

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much land nationally, and in London, is designated for office development, for industrial development and for housing development.

Mr. Baldry: In 1990-91 local planning authorities reported having 33,600 hectares of land with outstanding planning permission for private housing development. This information is contained in the Department's publication "Development Control Statistics: England, 1990-91", which is available in the Library.

The Department does not collect information on land designated for public housing, for office development or for industrial development.

Local Authority Accommodation

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families were living in local authority accommodation in each year since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: The available estimates for numbers of families living in local authority accommodation in England are:

Year	*Million*
1981	3·57
1984	2·99
1988	2·58
1991	2·30

The figures are from labour force survey housing trailers and families are defined as couple households with or without children, and lone parent households. The labour force survey is a sample survey and so the estimates are subject to sampling error.

Homelessness

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for how many households local authorities accepted responsibility for securing permanent accommodation under the homeless provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 in each year since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: The information for local authorities in England is as follows:

Year	Households accepted
1979	55,530
1980	60,400
1981	66,990
1982	71,620
1983	75,470
1984	80,500
1985	91,010
1986	100,490
1987	109,170
1988	113,770
1989	122,180
1990	140,350
1991	144,530

A new reporting system was introduced for non-metropolitan districts from the fourth quarter of 1980 and for the other authorities from the third quarter of 1982. As a result, figures for 1979 to 1982 are not strictly comparable with those for later periods.

From the second quarter of 1991 the definition of acceptances was altered to exclude intentionally homeless and all the figures have been adjusted to the new basis.

Empty Properties

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to allow local authorities to use money from accumulated capital receipts from sale of council properties for purchase and renovation of empty properties.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his autumn statement a significant relaxation of the rules governing the use of local authorities of capital receipts. Authorities are thus able to spend 100 per cent. of almost all capital receipts received between 13 November 1992 and 31 December 1993. This represents a substantial increase in authorities' spending power.

The Government have no plans to allow authorities to spend accumulated receipts. These receipts are available to redeem debt and thus to reduce the cost of that debt. Also, many authorities have used these resources in this way, rather than accumulating the receipts, and they should not be disadvantaged for having followed Government policy.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many empty privately-owned properties there were in each year since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of empty private dwellings reported by English local authorities in their annual housing investment programme (HIP1) returns are as follows:

Year	Empty private properties (thousands)
1979	485
1980	504
1981	503
1982	539
1983	541
1984	548
1985	545
1986	552
1987	570
1988	580
1989	589
1990	587
1991	638
1992	706

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority properties were sold in each year since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: Details of sales and transfers of local authority dwellings in England in the years 1979 to 1991 are given in the table.

	To owner occupiers	To housing associations[1]	Other sales and transfers[1]
1979	40,533	—	—
1980	79,641	—	—
1981	94,237	—	—
1982	186,746	—	—
1983	129,568	—	3,045
1984	97,684	—	—
1985	86,858	—	—
1986	82,775	272	297
1987	93,086	678	5,658
1988	137,596	8,176	123
1989	148,039	13,765	247
1990	99,176	30,420	8,029
1991[2]	54,959	20,120	3

[1] Includes block transfers to housing associations and the private sector. Transfers to housing action trusts are excluded.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of housing associations he expects to be engaged on grant-aided development programmes in 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Baldry: These are matters which will be determined by the nature of bids put forward by housing associations themselves and by the detailed criteria applied by the Housing Corporation in assessing those bids. The corporation's decisions on allocations for 1994-95 will not be finalised until the early part of 1994.

Councillors

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider introducing legislation to prohibit qualification for local election candidacy for those whose principal or only work in the relevant district is as sitting councillors.

Mr. Robin Squire: We are currently considering the position in the light of the recent Court of Appeal judgment.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the social affairs and social housing budget of the London Docklands development corporation for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The London Docklands development corporation's actual expenditure on these two items

is given in the table. In 1992-93, the corporation has budgeted £6 million for social housing and £3 million for social affairs.

LDDC expenditure

£ million

	Social affairs	*Social housing*[1]
1983-84	4	2
1984-85	5	—
1985-86	4	—
1986-87	4	—
1987-88	5	—
1988-89	9	45
1989-90	11	67
1990-91	21	32
1991-92	11	4
1992-93	3	6

[1] The years 1988-91 include expenditure of £105 million in support of the Limehouse Link relocation programme.

Fulmer Main Drainage

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 30 October, *Official Report*, column *864*, when he now expects to make a decision on Fulmer main drainage.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 December 1992]:* I have written to my hon. Friend.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the low-level radioactive waste destined for the planned Nirex depository will originate from the reprocessing of imported foreign nuclear fuel.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* I understand that the proportion of low-level radioactive waste (LLW) originating from the reprocessing of foreign spent fuel, during the period 2007-2018, is predicted to be 5 per cent. of the total United Kingdom LLW arisings in that period. This waste could be returned to the country of origin or, if BNFL's request to substitute equivalent waste is accepted, disposed of either to the existing Drigg LLW disposal site or in the Nirex deep disposal facility.

Departmental Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the total number of residential properties owned by his Department, *(b)* the number of such properties which are empty and *(c)*, *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* Property Holdings, part of the Department of the Environment, owns and manages 93 residential properties, as distinct from those held and managed by other Departments as part of their departmental estate. Of this total, 17 (18·3 per cent.) are empty.

Government Car Service

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Government have to privatise or franchise the administration of the Government car service, wholly or in part.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 13 January 1993]:* The Government car service is planning to market test its accounts support and office cleaning services in 1993.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what scope exists for his intervention, other than on appeal from an applicant, to consider important environmental issues raised by an individual application for a waste disposal licence, such as those arising from the Gale Common stage II ash disposal application, details of which have been referred to him.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The Control of Pollution Act 1974 provides that waste disposal operations may be carried out only in accordance with a licence issued by a waste regulation authority. Before a licence is issued, an authority must consult the National Rivers Authority. In the event of disagreement between the regulation authority and the National Rivers Authority, either party may refer the matter to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State may also become involved in a licensing issue if the matter is referred to him by an applicant for a licence, or the holder of a licence, on appeal.

These arrangements will continue when the present provisions in the 1974 Act are replaced by the licensing provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 on 1 April this year. A waste regulation authority will have to be satisfied that any applicant for a waste management licence is a fit and proper person. Grounds for rejecting a licence have been widened to include the prevention of pollution of the environment and serious detriment to the amenities of the locality. In addition, the 1990 Act provides that the Secretary of State may direct a waste regulation authority as to the terms and conditions to be included in a licence for which an application has been made to an authority.

The Secretary of State is aware of local concerns about the Gale Common stage II site and has asked the waste regulation authority to consider them before any licence is issued.

Nitrogen Dioxide Levels

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times in 1992 nitrogen dioxide levels in London exceeded the safety limits; and how many testing sites currently operate in Greater London.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The limit value in the EC directive on nitrogen dioxide (85/203/EEC) was not exceeded at any of the sites in London in 1992. There are currently two sites monitoring for compliance with the EC directive at Bridge place, Victoria and in Warwick road, Earl's Court. Two other sites also measure nitrogen dioxide in London. These are at Russell square, Bloomsbury, which forms part of the recently established enhanced monitoring network, and at Cromwell road, Kensington, a kerbside site on a busy road.

The EC directive contains two non-mandatory guide values and in 1992, on the basis of provisional data, both were exceeded at three sites, with only one of the guide values exceeded at the Warwick road (Earl's Court) site.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The staff in post for the information directorate since 1 April 1989 are as follows:

	Number
1 April 1989	47
1 April 1990	43
1 April 1991	45
1 April 1992	43

Before 1989, the information directorate of this Department was part of the common services of DOE and Department of Transport and separate figures for the resources for each Department are not available. Global information for this period is published each year in the form of a management information system for Ministers (MINIS) dating back to 1979 and is available in the House of Commons Library.

Street Lighting

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies his Department has carried out into the effectiveness at crime prevention of the new white street lights relative to conventional sodium yellow lights; and if he will publish the results.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The most recent Home Office research on the relationship between street lighting and crime and the fear of crime was published in August 1991 (Crime Prevention Unit Paper, 28, "The Influence of the Street Lighting on Crime and Fear of Crime" and CPU Paper, 29, "The Effect of Better Street Lighting on Crime and Fear: a Review"). Copies of both are in the Library of the House. These studies did not specifically examine the differential effects on crime of white and yellow street lights.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 19 January 1993

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Children's Play

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what effect he expects his decision to withdraw central support for the children's play and recreation unit to have on research currently being undertaken in Nottingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Sports Council will be taking over direct responsibility for a number of the play unit's functions after 31 March 1993. I am not aware that this will effect any research currently being undertaken in Nottingham.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the representations he has received concerning future funding for the children's play and recreation unit.

Mr. Brooke: Between 3 December 1992, when I made my announcement about future funding for the national children's play and recreation unit (*Official Report*, column *325*) and 15 January 1993, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I have received 21 letters from hon. Members, 20 from local authorities, 24 from voluntary sector play organisations, eight from other organisations and nine from members of the public.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what money will be available from grant aid through the Sports Council in 1993-94 for children's play.

Mr. Brooke: The Sports Council has agreed to allocate £220,000 to children's play in 1993-94. Further discussions are now taking place between my Department and the council on this basis.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had to ensure that there is a national strategy for children's play.

Mr. Brooke: None. Decisions on play provision are best taken at local level.

National Lottery

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to commission research on a national lottery in addition to the GAH consultants' report.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans at the present time to commission further research.

Weight Training

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what advice he has sought about the risks to the health of persons under the age of 18 years of *(a)* weight lifting and *(b)* weight training;

(2) if he will discuss with the chairman of the Sports Council the risks to the health of persons under the age of 18 years of *(a)* weight lifting and *(b)* weight training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I meet the chairman of the Sports Council from time to time to discuss issues of mutual interest and look to the council for advice on all sports-related issues. The council's advice is that both weight lifting and weight training are acceptable for those under 18 provided that they are carried out in a controlled environment under the supervision of suitably qualified coaches.

Coalfield Areas

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *539*, what discussions he has had with the English tourist board and the East Midlands tourist board to ensure there are sufficient reserves available to bring economic regeneration to coalfield areas.

Mr. Key: Discussions are currently in progress between my Department and the English tourist board on the criteria for the allocation of funds to the regional tourist boards.

Works of Art

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the allocations made to public institutions in the United Kingdom during the half year ended 31 December 1992 of individual works of art and museum objects pre-eminent for national, scientific, historic or artistic interest which have been accepted in satisfaction of inheritance tax, together with information, where applicable, as to conditions or wishes expressed in the matter of allocation by testators or executors; if he will list the works of art and museum objects which are still awaiting allocation with the respective dates of their acceptance in satisfaction of inheritance tax; and if a press notice will be issued by his Department in the event of any information being given in his reply which has not been previously announced.

Mr. Brooke: The information that the hon. Member requests is as follows;

Item	*To whom allocated*	*Conditions/wishes expressed*
Hambledon cricket club minute and account books	Hampshire record office	Unconditional
Sculpture by Henry Moore	Leeds city art gallery	Conditional
Collection of eight contemporary paintings consisting of: "Bomb Store" by David Bomberg	Tate gallery	Wish

Item	To whom allocated	Conditions/wishes expressed
"Man Hosing Metal Fishboxes" by Prunella Clough	Tate gallery	Wish
"Self Portrait, Recto and Verso" by David Bomberg	Wakefield art gallery	Wish
"Ghetto Theatre" by David Bomberg	Wakefield art gallery	Wish
"Woman and Goat" by Robert Colquhoun	Wakefield art gallery	Wish
"Two Figures Monotype" by Robert Colquhoun	Wakefield art gallery	Wish
"Pears" by William Scott	Wakefield art gallery	Wish
Untitled work by Roger Hilton	Wakefield art gallery	Wish
Vintage motorcar and two motorcycles	National motor museum (motorcar) Bradford industrial museum (Scott motorcycle) Tank museum (Brough motorcycle)	Unconditional
Rembrandt etching and 31 illuminated manuscripts	National art collections fund	Conditional

Items awaiting allocation	Date of acceptance
Portrait by Beechey	20 April 1990
Beccafumi paintings	20 November 1991

Press notices have already been issued announcing the allocations that have been made to date.

Museums and Galleries (Attendance)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what were the attendance figures for 1992 reported by the national museums and galleries in England for which he is responsible, broken down into the individual institutions, but including their outstations, with the figures in each case of the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1991.

Mr. Key: The estimated number of visitors during 1992 to the 11 national museums and galleries for which I am responsible are as follows:

	Estimated attendance in 1992	Percentage change from 1991 estimated attendance
British museum	6,725,192	+24·0
Imperial war museum	1,140,883	+9·2
National gallery	4,300,000	No change
National maritime museum	530,000	−8·5
National museums and galleries on Merseyside	1,207,000	−2·9
National portrait gallery	796,000	−8·2
Natural history museum	1,267,000	−15·5
Science museum	2,579,000	+2·1
Tate gallery	2,150,711	−11·7
Victoria and Albert museum	1,526,199	+9·9
Wallace collection	200,000	+42·7
Total	22,421,985	+4·6

National Lottery

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the organisations who have expressed an interest in tendering for the franchise to run the national lottery to date.

Mr. Brooke: This information is commercially confidential.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what tender criteria will be used to award the licence to run the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: The licence to run the national lottery will be awarded by the director general of the national lottery. The director general, once appointed, will decide the criteria for awarding the licence, in line with his overriding duties under the legislation.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which are the three legal aid area boards with the highest and lowest grant rates in percentage terms in respect of legal aid applications made to magistrates courts by defendants charged with *(a)* causing actual bodily harm, *(b)* shoplifting, *(c)* drink-driving, *(d)* criminal damage and *(e)* possession of an offensive weapon; and what was the percentage in each case.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available in the form requested. Between April 1991 and March 1992, the area committees of the Legal Aid Board with the highest approval rates in respect of criminal legal aid were: East Midlands (91·7 per cent.), South Western (82·1 per cent.) and North Western (70·7 per cent.). The three area committees with the lowest approval rates were: Northern (46·5 per cent.), Merseyside (47 per cent.) and West Midlands (49·4 per cent.). Renewed applications may also be made to the courts. The area committees deal only with applications which have previously been rejected by the courts. Statistics reflecting the nature of the offence are not kept.

Law Students

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many complaints the Lord Chancellor has received from students who have been failed on the Bar vocational course; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As of 11 January 1992 the Lord Chancellor had received four representations from students.

The Lord Chancellor takes a keen interest in legal education and equality of opportunity in the profession. However, the independence of the legal profession precludes him from intervening in the administration of the Bar vocational examination by the Council for Legal Education. The Commission for Racial Equality is shortly to conduct an investigation into the results, with which the Council for Legal Education will be co-operating fully. In addition, the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct, which is a statutory body independent of the Lord Chancellor's Department, has received 17 representations and will be addressing this question as part of its review of legal education.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what review the Lord Chancellor has undertaken of the number of complaints from students dissatisfied with the way the Council of Legal Education has been conducting the course and its assessment procedures.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The legal profession is independent of Government and it would therefore not be appropriate for the Lord Chancellor to conduct any such review.

The Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct, which was established by the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 as an independent body, has a duty to assist in the maintenance and development of standards in legal education, and has to have regard to the desirability of equality of opportunity when doing so. The committee is obliged under the Act to keep legal education and training under review; it launched a major review on 25 November 1992, which will address this question among others. However, the statutory independence of the committee precludes the Lord Chancellor from directing how it should discharge its duties.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Office Staff

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all the staff of his Office and their grades.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Principal private secretary (Grade 3)
Private secretary—overseas affairs (Grade 3)
Chief press secretary (Grade 3)
8 Special advisers
Deputy chief press secretary (Grade 5)
Secretary for appointments (Grade 5)
Private secretary—economic affairs (Grade 5)
2 Private secretaries—Parliamentary affairs and home affairs (Grade 7)
4 Senior information officers
2 Senior executive officers
5 Higher executive officers
2 Assistants
10 Executive officers
22 Senior personal secretaries
4 Personal secretaries
11 Administrative officers
4 Typists
1 House manager
1 Door keeper
13 Support grade band 2
10 Support grade band 1
1 Support manager 3
1 Senior cook

In addition there are 10 custody guards, nine telephonists and four drivers who are not employed by my Office.

Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received on the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations since the Bill was published on 5 November.

The Bill will increase the rights of trade union members, enhance the rights of individual employees, provide new protection for the community against the effects of unlawful industrial action, and improve the operation of the labour market.

Electrical Engineering

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will make a statement on Government support for electrical engineering;

(2) what steps the Government have taken to reward excellence in the field of electrical engineering.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has set up sectoral divisions, including electrical engineering, leading to a closer dialogue to promote the recognition and importance of electrical engineering within the United Kingdom economy. The Government acknowledge the importance of electrical engineering and fully support the industry through a range of assistance that includes overseas trade, research and development, regional support and promoting awareness.

Excellence in the industry is acknowledged through the Queen's awards including those for technology and exports, where electrical engineering is well represented. Additionally there are, of course, a number of people of eminence in the field of electrical engineering whose achievements have been recognised in the usual ways.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Visits

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what checks are make by the prison service on identity, name and address of people visiting convicted prisoners; how it establishes the purpose of each visit; and how it records this information.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The procedures in respect of visits to convicted prisoners are laid down in prison service standing order 5, a copy of which is in the Library.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was spent on advertising electoral registration in North Tyneside, Wansbeck and Blyth Valley in each year since 1990, and how much will be spent in the current year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The amount spent by the Government on electoral registration advertising in England and Wales in each year since 1990 was as follows. Figures are rounded to the nearest £1,000.

Electoral registration advertising

Year	*£'000*
1990	923,000
1991	627,000
1992	617,000

The proportion of this total spent in each individual district council area is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The 1993 budget figure is not yet available.

Arms Amnesty

Mr. James Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will sanction a further arms amnesty in Hampshire on the lines of the one held in 1988 to cover firearms, knives and other weapons.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Firearms amnesties require the agreement of the Attorney-General not to bring prosecutions for certain offences. They are, therefore, exceptional events which are held only on a national basis.

No such agreement is required in respect of knives and other offensive weapons. It is, therefore, open to individual police forces to hold a campaign for the surrender of such items at any time.

Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now reply to the letter sent to his Minister of State on 9 November 1992 by the hon. Member for Gower regarding a constituent residing in Gorseinon, Swansea.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I wrote to the hon. Member on 12 January.

Electoral Systems

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received the decision of the European Parliamentary Commission on electoral systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have received no such decision.

Police Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police authority the approved establishment and budget for 1992-93 and for 1993-94.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table. Information on 1993-94 budgets is not available.

Force	*1992-93 Budget £ million*[1]	*1992-93 Establishment*[2]	*1993-94 Establishment*[3]
Avon and Somerset	123·553	3,087	3,087
Bedfordshire	43·516	1,178	1,178
Cambridgeshire	51·376	1,241	1,241
Cheshire	73·382	1,920	1,920
City of London	46·947	798	798
Cleveland	60·198	1,502	1,502
Cumbria	47·500	1,187	1,187
Derbyshire	73·728	1,850	1,850
Devon and Cornwall	131·068	2,928	2,928
Dorset	56·191	1,302	1,302
Durham	52·995	1,389	1,389
Dyfed Powys	39·814	969	969
Essex	126·716	2,950	2,950
Gloucestershire	48·794	1,184	1,184
Greater Manchester	291·000	7,077	7,077
Gwent	38·580	1,010	1,010
Hampshire	129·300	3,269	3,269
Hertfordshire	69·516	1,684	1,684
Humberside	84·500	2,034	2,034
Kent	136·394	3,096	[4]3,136
Lancashire	128·200	3,229	3,229
Leicestershire	73·000	1,853	1,853
Lincolnshire	48·312	1,206	1,206
Merseyside	188·595	4,706	4,706
Metropolitan	1,488·974	28,260	[5]28,293
Norfolk	59·668	1,446	1,446
Northamptonshire	52·009	1,190	1,190
Northumbria	148·250	3,613	3,613
North Wales	55·943	1,369	1,369
North Yorkshire	58·572	1,418	1,418
Nottinghamshire	91·045	2,344	2,344
South Wales	129·381	3,168	3,168
South Yorkshire	120·500	3,031	3,031
Staffordshire	87·549	2,215	2,215
Suffolk	51·114	1,233	1,233
Surrey	71·055	1,673	1,673
Sussex	118·674	3,014	3,014
Thames Valley	168·930	3,812	3,812
Warwickshire	42·000	1,020	1,020
West Mercia	84·687	2,053	2,053
West Midlands	284·917	6,977	6,977
West Yorkshire	218·326	5,295	5,295
Wiltshire	50·313	1,181	1,181

[1] Estimated revenue budget for 1992-93.
[2] Approved establishment at 31 October 1992.
[3] Approved establishment at 1 April 1993.
[4] The 1993-94 approved establishment for the Kent constabulary includes 40 reimbursed posts for the channel tunnel which came into effect on 1 January 1993.
[5] The 1993-94 approved establishment for the Metropolitan police includes additional posts resulting from planning in the 1991 public expenditure survey.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: KPMG Management Consultants have been awarded one contract by my Department over the past 12 months—it is a contract to review the work and organisation of the Police National Computer Organisation.

Prison Transfers

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of those entitled to apply for temporary transfers from prisons in Britain to Northern Ireland have actually applied, distinguishing between *(a)* loyalist prisoners, *(b)* republican prisoners, *(c)* men and *(d)* women;

(2) how many applications have been received for transfers from prisons in Britain to Northern Ireland, from *(a)* loyalist prisoners, *(b)* republican prisoners, *(c)* men and *(d)* women; and how many of each have been accepted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Revised criteria governing transfers between United Kingdom jurisdictions were announced on 23 November 1992. It is open to any prisoner to make a request for such a transfer; 39 male and two female prisoners who were previously known to have expressed an interest in transferring to Northern Ireland have been specifically invited to submit requests for transfer under these criteria.

Of these, 15 male prisoners and two female prisoners have submitted requests for permanent or extended temporary transfer which are under consideration. Two male prisoners have requested permanent transfers only.

Statistics on the political background of prisoners seeking transfers to Northern Ireland are not kept.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many payments were made to individuals by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for each year since 1979;

(2) what was the total sum paid to victims of crime by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for each year since 1979 *(a)* in current prices and *(b)* in 1979 prices.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is given in the table. It has been taken from CICB's published annual reports, copies of which are held in the Library of the House. Revaluation of the compensation paid in year to current and to 1979 prices has been made using the GDP deflator.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Financial year	*Awards made*	*Compensation paid (at actual prices) (£ million)*	*GDP deflator*	*Compensation paid (at 1979-80 prices) (£ million)*	*Compensation paid (at 1992-93 prices) (£ million)*
1979-80	17,460	15·737	43·174	15·737	37·999
1980-81	20,198	21·462	51·089	18·137	43·794
1981-82	17,350	21·977	56·022	16·937	40·896
1982-83	19,733	29·445	60·013	21·183	51·150
1983-84	21,133	32·821	62·791	22·567	54·492
1984-85	19,771	35·293	65·976	23·095	55·767
1985-86	22,534	41·560	69·577	25·789	62·271
1986-87	21,925	48·242	71,816	29·002	70·029
1987-88	20,991	52·043	75·763	29·657	71·611
1988-89	27,752	69·381	81·279	36·854	88·989
1989-90	27,926	72·722	86·622	36·246	87·521
1990-91	35,190	109·330	93·537	50·464	121·852
1991-92	39,249	143·660	100	62·024	149·766
1992-93			104·250		
TOTALS	311,152	693·673		387·691	936·138

Firearms

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress on transferring responsibility for firearms and shotgun licensing to a national firearms control board.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend is in the process of consulting Ministerial colleagues about this and will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Prisoners (Mental Health)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of persons currently residing in prisons in England and Wales are considered to have mental health problems.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. However, the psychiatric profile study of the sentenced population carried out by Professor John Gunn and published in October 1992 estimated the prevalence of psychiatric disorders as 38·8 per cent. of which substance dependency or abuse accounted for 19·6 per cent.

Press (Unauthorised Disclosures)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what disciplinary action has been taken against officials in his Department *(a)* generally and *(b)* in the press office for unauthorised disclosures to the press in the last 12 months.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No Home Office official, either generally or in the press office, has been subject to disciplinary action for unauthorised disclosures to the press in the last 12 months.

Citizenship Applications

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 9 December to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), *Official Report*, column *662-64*, if he will make a statement on his review of the procedure for handling inquiries on individual citizenship applications.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) on 14 January at columns *793-94*, to which I have nothing to add.

Betting Offices

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend the evening opening hours of licensed betting offices.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In October 1991, the Government issued a consultation document inviting the views of all interested parties on whether licensed betting offices should be open in the evening and, if so, at what times. Over 800 representations and a number of petitions have since been received. The views expressed fully reflected the arguments for and against evening opening. In the light of that consultation process, I have decided that evening opening should be allowed until 10 pm on Mondays to Saturdays between April and August inclusive.

Government policy on gambling is that there should be adequate properly regulated facilities available for those who wish to gamble. It is clear that the growth in the number of evening horseraces has created increased consumer demand for evening opening of licensed betting offices during the summer months. In those circumstances, the Government believe that there are no public interest or policy reasons to object to evening opening.

I know that many bookmakers, their staff and the greyhound racing industry are concerned about the effect which evening opening may have on them. I have taken account of those concerns and I believe that the approach now proposed achieves a sensible and reasonable balance between the various interests.

My decision is broadly in line with the recommendations of the Home Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons following its inquiries into the funding of horseracing and greyhound racing. However, as some horseraces are run after 9 pm and to allow time for payment of any winnings, I propose that the latest closing time should be 10 pm rather than the 9 pm recommended by the Committee. This will be a standard latest closing time throughout April to August. A variable closing time, perhaps linked to the last horserace, would have created enforcement difficulties.

The Government are committed to removing unnecessary regulations on business and extending consumer choice where possible. Evening opening represents a further important measure of deregulation and will give bookmakers greater freedom to adjust their opening hours to suit the needs of their customers.

The opening hours of licensed betting offices are prescribed by regulation, subject to the negative resolution procedure. I have today laid an order before parliament which will permit evening opening with effect from 1 April 1993. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will lay a similar order to permit the same evening opening hours in Scotland.

Prevention of Terrorism

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how observations from interested persons or organisations should be submitted for consideration by Lord Colville in his report on the operation in 1992 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Written observations should be submitted to Lord Colville c/o Room 647, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT no later than Friday 5 February 1993.

Metropolitan Police Property

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *601*, if he will list the total number of residential properties owned by the Metropolitan police and the number and percentage of the total of these which are empty.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The information requested is contained in the table:

Type of property	*Number in MPS estate*	*Vacant*	*Percentage*	*Available for disposal*	*Percentage*
Houses	1,271	68	5·3	45	3·5
Flats	1,215	196	16·0	151	12·4
Section houses	26	3	11·5	1	3·8
Bed spaces in section houses	2,981	714	23·9	373	12·5

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

The Queen (Income)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what income Her Majesty the Queen receives in right of her Duchy of Lancaster; whether it is liable to income tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Payments are made to the Keeper of the Privy Purse from revenues of the Duchy of Lancaster for Her Majesty's use. The sovereign is entitled to these revenues in right of her Duchy of Lancaster.

Payments to the privy purse are detailed in the Duchy accounts which are placed in the Library of the House. In the year to 29 September 1991 the sum of £3,100,000 was paid to the privy purse. Duchy accounts for 1992 will be in the Library by mid-February.

Duchy revenues are not subject to income tax. On the tax question I have nothing to add to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 26 November 1992, at column 982.

Sir Charles Powell

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps were taken under the rules relating to business appointments for former civil servants in connection with the appointment of Sir Charles Powell as a director of Jardine Matheson.

Mr. Jackson: Staff at Sir Charles Powell's grade are required to seek approval for any paid outside appointment they wish to accept within two years of

leaving the civil service. Applications are referred to the head of the home civil service, who advises the appropriate departmental Minister whether any conditions should be applied. Individual applications are treated in confidence.

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Insurance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated full-year revenue effect in 1992-93 and 1993-94 of *(a)* abolishing the upper earnings limit for employee's national insurance contributions; *(b)* allowing personal allowances against such contributions and *(c)* both *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated effects in a full year are shown in the table. For (b) and (c) it has been assumed that the levels of earnings used to calculate National Insurance contributions are gross earnings less the personal allowance. For the 1993-94 calculations, personal allowances have been increased by the autumn statement assumption of 3·25 per cent. over 1992-93 levels. No account has been taken of possible behavioural changes which might result from the measures.

	Cost(—)/Yield(+) *1992-93* *£ million*	*1993-94* *£ million*
(a) Abolishing the upper earnings limit for employees national insurance contributions	2,700	2,900
(b) Allowing personal allowances against employees' national insurance contributions	−5,100	−5,300
(c) Part b with upper earnings limit for employee's national insurance contribution abolished	−3,500	−3,500

Whisky

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the consumption and the revenue elasticities of duty on whisky and whiskey.

Sir John Cope: We do not have details of elasticities for individual spirits products. We estimate that the price elasticity of demand for spirits consumption is −1·1. The impact of changes in the duty rate on consumption, and hence revenue, will depend on the duty content of the retail price.

ECOFIN Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he plans to put forward at the ECOFIN Council in Brussels on 18 January.

Mr. Nelson: The Council will discuss the economic situation in the Community as part of its regular exercises in multilateral surveillance and the package of measures to promote economic recovery which was agreed at the European Council in Edinburgh. I have no plans to put forward other proposals.

Income Tax

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are employed by his Departments specifically to investigate avoidance of income tax.

Mr. Dorrell: In excess of 1,000 staff in the Inland Revenue are involved in the investigation of errors, differences of legal interpretation and avoidance which they discover in the tax returns and accounts of individuals and trusts. Information is not available about the proportion of their time which is spent specifically investigating avoidance of income tax. The figure given excludes those investigating tax evasion.

Trading Expenses

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's present policy with regard to the setting of pre-production expenses against tax liability as they are incurred; and what proposals he has to allow this in all areas of economic activity.

Mr. Dorrell: When calculating trading profits for tax purposes, revenue expenditure incurred in the five years before a trade commences is treated as if incurred when the trade starts, provided the expenditure would have qualified as a deduction had the trade commenced. Qualifying capital expenditure which is incurred for the purposes of a trade prior to its commencement is also deemed to have been incurred on the first day of trade.

These are general rules which apply to all trades.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the total amount invested in the business expansion scheme for each year since the scheme's inception, *(b)* the amount invested in private rented housing, for each year since the scheme was extended to housing, *(c)* the total cost of tax relief for each year and *(d)* the amount of tax relief in respect of investment in private rented housing, for each year from 1988-89 to 1992-93.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates for years up to 1991-92 were given in my reply on 21 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *313-14*. Estimates for 1992-93 are not yet available.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement indicating the nature of the over-provision in respect of Wales indicated in footnote 2 to table 2B.3 and footnote 2 to table 2B.4 in the 1992 "Autumn Statement".

Mr. Portillo: The sums relate to the correction of a miscalculation of housing revenue account subsidy for Wales in the 1991 public expenditure survey.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government intend to tax invalidity benefits.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 19 October 1992, *Official Report*, col. *190*.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated yield from taxing invalidity benefits.

Mr. Dorrell: Available information is given in my reply to the hon. Members for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 27 October 1992, at column *572*.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average value of the pound sterling in European currency units in each year since 1987.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The average annual value of the pound sterling in European currency units since 1987 is as follows:

	ECU/£ [1]
1987	1·4200
1988	1·5060
1989	1·4886
1990	1·4000
1991	1·4284
1992	1·3620

[1] Based on market exchange rates.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff were employed by his Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The number of press and public relations staff employed in my Department was as follows:

	Staff
1986-87	10
1987-88	10
1988-89	10
1989-90	10
1990-91	10
1991-92	9

Information for the years 1979-85 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been spent up to 31 December 1992 on preparation for privatisation of parts and the whole of the Inland Revenue's operation.

Mr. Dorrell: In the present financial year, the costs to date of market testing activities in the Inland Revenue are around £1·3 million. Estimates of the costs for earlier years are not readily available, but would be much smaller.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining Her Majesty's Government's detailed plans for reform of the Inland Revenue and the time scale over which any changes are expected to occur.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The Revenue's change programme was first announced by the Chancellor in his statement of 6 March 1992 *Official Report*, column *323-25*, and further details appeared in the Board of Inland Revenue's report for the year ending 31 March 1992 (Cm. 2086) and the first report of the citizens charter (Cm. 2101). The Revenue's management plan, due for publication in the spring, will set out the Department's main aims and objectives over the period to 1996-97.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate Her Majesty's Government have made of the reduction in the number of smaller and more rural Inland Revenue offices in the event of changes being made in the way the Inland Revenue conducts its duties.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The Inland Revenue is reviewing the organisation and structure of its local offices with the aim of increasing the quality of service to taxpayers and the efficiency of the operations. Any changes would take place over a number of years, following consultation with staff, and no estimate has yet been made of the number of smaller and more rural offices needed.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration has been given to the need to maintain the guarantee of confidentiality in the course of any changes in the way the work of the Inland Revenue is conducted.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* We recognise the importance of this issue. If work is contracted out, there are two safeguards. The first is that all relevant contracts contain provisions obliging contractors to make all necessary arrangements to protect the privacy of personal information. The second is that contractors and their employees are subject, in the same way as Revenue employees, to the criminal sanctions—a fine, or imprisonment, or both—provided by section 182 of the Finance Act 1989, for unauthorised disclosure of personal tax information.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he has received on the Government's intention to subject the work currently undertaken by the Inland Revenue to market testing;

(2) what consultations he has had with interested parties regarding plans to introduce market testing to the work currently undertaken by the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* We have received a number of representations about the market testing of services in the Inland Revenue; officials have held discussions with trade unions representing staff in the Department and with other interested parties.

Value Added Tax

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining the discretionary powers available to local Customs and Excise officers; and what steps he takes to monitor the differences in enforcement and interpretation of VAT rules from one part of the country to another.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Local VAT officers have certain limited discretionary powers in relation to tax control, compliance and debt management. These are contained primarily in the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, the VAT Act 1983 and the Finance Act 1985.

The care and maintenance of VAT is the statutory responsibility of the Commissioners of Customs and Excise. This includes ensuring consistency of treatment for all taxpayers and is achieved by giving local VAT officers specialist training and written guidance from headquarters. The application of this guidance is carefully monitored both locally and centrally. Departmental systems and procedures are also subject to overview by Customs and Excise's own internal auditors and by the National Audit Office.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on the annual retail prices index of a standard rate of VAT imposed on *(a)* newspapers, books and periodicals, *(b)* children's clothes, *(c)* domestic fuel and *(d)* public transport.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The table gives our current estimate of the impact on the RPI of applying the standard rate of VAT to the categories outlined.

Category	*Percentage increase in RPI*
Newspapers, books and magazines	0·3
Children's clothes	0·2
Domestic fuel	0·8
Public transport	0·2

Petroleum Revenue Tax

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he expects petroleum revenue tax to produce for the Exchequer in the current and each of the next three financial years; and if he will make it his policy to reduce it in cases where companies invest in refurbishment of existing offshore gas and oil installations in order to help the fabrication industry; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The revenue raised by petroleum revenue tax in 1992-93 was estimated at £100 million in the autumn statement. It has been the practice to include outturn estimates, and a coming year petroleum revenue tax forecast, in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" issued on Budget day.

The costs of refurbishing offshore installations in oil and gas fields would normally already qualify for immediate relief in full against petroleum revenue tax, where the field is within the charge to that tax.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* In common with other Departments, the Treasury has arrangements under which it can make interest free advances of salary of up to £100 to assist staff with the purchase of a bicycle for home-to-office travel. Advances are repayable over one year.

It was announced on 16 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *285-86*, that responsibility for determining the conditions on which such advances can be made has been delegated to Departments. The Treasury will be reviewing its arrangements in the light of that delegation.

Trade Sales and Management Buy-outs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's guidance note on trade sales and management buy-outs within the public services.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* No. The written guidance referred to is intended for internal use by Departments and vendor units engaged in, or considering, privatisation by trade sale.

Personal Taxation

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average tax charge in the United Kingdom on a married man with two children with earnings in each of the decile groups in each financial year since 1986-87.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Information is available only for income tax. With the introduction of independent taxation in 1990-91, comparable figures are available for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92. Information for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In calculating decile groups it is appropriate to take account of the tax liability on total income for income tax purposes, not just earnings. Income tax liability is not affected by the number of children so the figures below include all married men who pay income tax.

Decile groups of taxpaying married men *Per cent.*	*Average income tax liability (£ per year)* *1990-91*	*1991-92*
Bottom 10	120	130
10 - 20	400	420
20 - 30	680	730
30 - 40	980	1,000
40 - 50	1,300	1,400
50 - 60	1,600	1,700
60 - 70	2,000	2,200
70 - 80	2,600	2,800
80 - 90	3,600	3,900
Top 10	10,400	11,200
Average	3,200	3,500

EDUCATION

Education Spending

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the link between education standard spending assessments and academic attainment.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has made no such assessment, since standard spending assessments are primarily a mechanism for distributing grant and local education authorities have discretion to order their spending priorities as they wish.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what level of funding, based on secondary education standard spending assessment, an 11 to 15, 1,000-pupil school would receive in *(a)* Wakefield, *(b)* Bradford, *(c)* Wandsworth and *(d)* Westminster.

Mr. Forth: Standard spending assessments are designed to reflect the varying costs, in different areas, of providing a standard level of service, taking account of different local circumstances. They are essentially a mechanism for distributing grant: decisions on spending priorities between education and other services and within education are for individual local authorities. The funding that a school receives thus largely depends on local decisions about priorities and also on the local authority's scheme for local management of schools. Moreover, the education elements of SSAs relate to all LEA functions, including central services and the maintenance of special schools. There is no separately identifiable element relating to the funding of ordinary schools.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the standard spending assessment per post-16 education student for each metropolitan authority in 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: From 1993-94 the education of most post-16 students will be the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council. LEAs will continue to be responsible for pupils over 16 in schools and for certain kinds of further education for adults. There is no separately identifiable element in 1993-94 SSAs for further education for adults. The post-16 element of SSAs relates to 16-plus pupils in schools, including special schools and related central services and support functions such as home-to-school transport.

Hearing Impairment

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research has been undertaken to date by his Department to evaluate the effect of the introduction of the local management of schools regime upon specialist educational provision for hearing-impaired children.

Mr. Forth: None. The purpose of local management of schools is to ensure that funds are allocated to schools on an objective basis, taking account of local circumstances. LMS does not qualify in any way the duties of LEAs or schools regarding pupils with special educational needs, including the hearing impaired.

Nursery Education

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many three and four-year-olds were in nursery education for each local education authority at the latest available date.

Mr. Forth: The number of three and four-year-olds attending maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in maintained primary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1992 is shown in the following table.

Pupils aged 3 and 4 in maintained nursery schools and classes in England—January 1992

LEA	*Pupils*
City	29
Camden	1,012
Greenwich	3,103
Hackney	2,212
Hammersmith	1,509
Islington	1,797
Kensington and Chelsea	826
Lambeth	2,294
Lewisham	2,569
Southwark	2,707
Tower Hamlets	2,687
Wandsworth	2,211
Westminster	1,049
Barking	1,750
Barnet	2,351
Bexley	1,127
Brent	2,390
Bromley	154
Croydon	1,159
Ealing	3,246
Enfield	1,484
Haringey	2,546
Harrow	958
Havering	247
Hillingdon	3,150
Hounslow	2,469
Kingston upon Thames	1,173
Merton	2,593
Newham	4,445
Redbridge	987
Richmond upon Thames	706
Sutton	1,684
Waltham Forest	2,502
Birmingham	10,342
Coventry	2,196
Dudley	2,881
Sandwell	4,640
Solihull	1,728
Walsall	4,223
Wolverhampton	3,936
Knowsley	2,477
Liverpool	6,350
St Helens	1,632
Sefton	2,470
Wirral	2,314
Bolton	3,057
Bury	1,446
Manchester	7,324
Oldham	2,386
Rochdale	2,018
Salford	3,315
Stockport	1,731
Tameside	2,504
Trafford	1,820
Wigan	2,125
Barnsley	2,951
Doncaster	3,326
Rotherham	2,974
Sheffield	5,720
Bradford	6,025
Calderdale	1,799
Kirklees	4,445
Leeds	8,276
Wakefield	4,322
Gateshead	1,798
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,995
North Tyneside	2,648
South Tyneside	2,225
Sunderland	3,137
Isles of Scilly	0
Avon	4,923
Bedfordshire	5,135
Berkshire	5,780
Buckinghamshire	2,694
Cambridgeshire	2,196
Cheshire	5,481
Cleveland	9,422
Cornwall	1,611
Cumbria	3,002
Derbyshire	8,950
Devon	2,743

LEA	Pupils
Dorset	805
Durham	6,856
East Sussex	1,460
Essex	2,446
Gloucestershire	0
Hampshire	1,993
Hereford and Worcester	1,274
Hertfordshire	8,422
Humberside	8,756
Isle of Wight	186
Kent	1,984
Lancashire	6,857
Leicestershire	5,372
Lincolnshire	1,349
Norfolk	855
North Yorkshire	3,505
Northamptonshire	2,915
Northumberland	2,833
Nottinghamshire	13,293
Oxfordshire	2,574
Shropshire	1,343
Somerset	239
Staffordshire	6,566
Suffolk	2,952
Surrey	2,857
Warwickshire	2,123
West Sussex	602
Wiltshire	561
England	329,597

Under-sevens

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest available figures for the expenditure per child under seven years by each education authority and grant-maintained schools in England.

Mr. Forth: Available expenditure data cover nursery and primary schools as a whole and cannot be disaggregated between particular age ranges. The table indicates each local education authority's average school-based funding per pupil in nursery and primary schools in 1990-91, the latest year for which information on actual expenditure by LEAs is available. There were no primary grant-maintained schools in 1990-91.

LEA	Net institutional funding per pupil (£)
City	1,950
Camden	1,710
Greenwich	1,720
Hackney	1,900
Hammersmith	1,970
Islington	1,770
Kensington	2,060
Lambeth	1,840
Lewisham	1,710
Southwark	1,850
Tower Hamlets	1,940
Wandsworth	1,820
Westminster	2,110
Barking	1,460
Barnet	1,550
Bexley	1,260
Brent	1,670
Bromley	1,410
Croydon	1,440
Ealing	1,690
Enfield	1,430
Haringey	1,840
Harrow	1,480
Havering	1,290
Hillingdon	1,540
Hounslow	1,510
Kingston-upon Thames	1,430
Merton	1,750
Newham	1,490
Redbridge	1,350
Richmond-upon Thames	1,530
Sutton	1,360
Waltham Forest	1,570
Birmingham	1,260
Coventry	1,300
Dudley	1,230
Sandwell	1,450
Solihull	1,240
Walsall	1,510
Wolverhampton	1,390
Knowsley	1,390
Liverpool	1,290
St. Helens	1,210
Sefton	1,260
Wirral	1,280
Bolton	1,220
Bury	1,190
Manchester	1,320
Oldham	1,370
Rochdale	1,200
Salford	1,270
Stockport	1,260
Tameside	1,320
Trafford	1,170
Wigan	1,140
Barnsley	1,260
Doncaster	1,250
Rotherham	1,340
Sheffield	1,390
Bradford	1,500
Calderdale	1,440
Kirklees	1,300
Leeds	1,430
Wakefield	1,340
Gateshead	1,390
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,520
North Tyneside	1,310
South Tyneside	1,290
Sunderland	1,280
Avon	1,320
Bedfordshire	1,380
Berkshire	1,340
Buckinghamshire	1,320
Cambridgeshire	1,260
Cheshire	1,260
Cleveland	1,230
Cornwall	1,190
Cumbria	1,340
Derbyshire	1,370
Devon	1,310
Dorset	1,290
Durham	1,370
East Sussex	1,240
Essex	1,240
Gloucestershire	1,200
Hampshire	1,260
Herefordshire	1,360
Hertfordshire	1,340
Humberside	1,280
Isle of Wight	1,250
Kent	1,120
Lancashire	1,310
Leicestershire	1,290
Lincolnshire	1,210
Norfolk	1,280
North Yorkshire	1,230
Northamptonshire	1,230
Northumberland	1,320
Nottinghamshire	1,390

LEA	Net institutional funding per pupil (£)
Oxfordshire	1,570
Shropshire	1,350
Somerset	1,230
Staffordshire	1,270
Suffolk	1,310
Surrey	1,340
Warwickshire	1,220
West Sussex	1,240
Wiltshire	1,260

Note: Figures are derived from LEAs' returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department for Education. They include school-based spending on salaries and wages, recurrent premises costs, books, equipment and other supplies and services, and unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management schemes. They exclude spending on home to school transport, school meals, LEAs' central administration and financing costs of capital expenditure.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy that all education authorities should receive funding for the education of under-sevens at the same level as Westminister education authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: No. Standard spending assessments, which determine the distribution of grant between authorities, are designed to reflect the varying costs, in different areas, of providing a standard level of service, taking account of different local circumstances.

Independent Residential Colleges

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how new students at independent residential colleges are to be funded as from April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: In April responsibility for funding the long-term residential colleges in England, including the cost of student maintenance, will pass to the Further Education Funding Council for England and responsibility for funding Coleg Harlech in Wales will pass to the Further Education Funding Council for Wales. It will be for the councils to decide on the most appropriate system of funding student maintenance.

A-level Music

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which London boroughs provide A-level music courses for sixth form pupils.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not held centrally. It is for schools and colleges to decide which A-level courses to provide.

Education Assets Board

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many recommendations from the Education Assets Board are awaiting a decision by his Department; and if he will list these and the time they have been with his Department.

Mr. Forth: There are 12 cases awaiting final determination by my right hon. Friend. These are:

Institution	Date received
Grant maintained schools	
Dartford Grammar School for Girls, Kent	December 1992
Great Barr School, Birmingham	August 1992
Hendon School and Queen Elizabeth School for Boys, Barnet	June 1992
Kingsley Park School, Northamptonshire	September 1992
Pate's Grammar School, Gloucestershire	November 1991
Rickmansworth School, Hertfordshire	June 1992
Stratford School, London	May 1992
Wymondham College, Norfolk	December 1992
Higher education institutions	
University of East London	May 1991
Falmouth College of Art and Design	September 1991
University of Greenwich	September 1991
University of West of England; Bath College of Higher Education	November 1991

Higher Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those higher education institutions which receive public funds from his Department by way of fees for each undergraduate above those set from time to time in the three bands of tuition fees.

Mr. Boswell: Fees, other than the tuition fees payable to universities, are paid by local education authorities for students at the constituent colleges of the universities of Cambridge, Durham, Kent, Lancaster, Oxford and York in recognition of their collegiate structure. The recurrent grant paid to these universities by the Universities Funding Council is abated in recognition of these college fee payments.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Computer Services

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee if he will make a statement on the range and type of *(a)* general and *(b)* computer services which may be accessed from the Library by the constituency offices of hon. Members; what advice and assistance is available in establishing links between constituency offices and the House; what plans he has to enhance such services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waller: All services of the Library are available to the constituency offices of hon. Members by telephone, fax and post. In addition, Members can request direct access to POLIS, the Parliamentary on-line information service managed by the Library, from their constituency if they have the necessary personal computer and modem. The Library provides an information sheet on establishing a telecommunications link to POLIS and will provide such support as it can, given the wide range of equipment used by Members.

A pilot project for a parliamentary data and video network is at present being undertaken in 7 Millbank. Members and staff in 7 Millbank have direct cabling to the network, but access from elsewhere is via modem. Services from the Library available now, or shortly on the system, include POLIS and the HMSO CD-ROM disks of *Hansard*. Other services such as CD-ROMS of national

newspapers will also become available. The pilot project of the network will be reviewed by the Information Committee in the next few months.

Any plans to enhance the network services beyond those necessary for the pilot project must depend upon the Information Committee's report and the House's reaction to it.

The computer officer and his staff are available to provide advice and assistance to Members on information technology matters; a list, approved by the Information Committee, of appropriate IT equipment; and training for Members, their staff and constituency offices to access and use the pilot network.

Bicycles

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will ensure provision for more bicycles within the Palace of Westminster precincts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ray Powell: I will make sure this matter is included on the agenda of the Committee for consideration at a future meeting.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

International Development Association

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Agreement was reached on the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association at a meeting in Berne of representatives of donor Governments on 15 December. Donors pledged to provide a total of SDR13 billion, approximately $18 billion. It will enable the World Bank to offer concessional aid over the period 1993-96. Subject to parliamentary approval, the United Kingdom will contribute £620 million, a share of 6·15 per cent.

The replenishment agreement provides for greater emphasis on poverty reduction and performance by borrowers, to ensure resources are allocated to those countries where they are needed most and can be most effectively used. There will also be a stronger focus on sustainable development, in line with the agreements reached at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio last June. Donors also endorsed a series of measures designed to improve project quality and implementation.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress his Department has made to secure the return of pension moneys paid to the Saudi Government by British workers once employed in Saudi Arabia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British embassy in Riyadh has assisted British claimants to secure refunds of personal contributions from the Saudi Arabian general social insurance scheme (GOSI). It has persuaded the Saudi authorities to ensure that the terms for obtaining a refund are clearly and widely publicised. It has continued to urge GOSI to deal with requests quickly. The embassy has followed up the cases of individuals who have experienced difficulty in obtaining their entitlement.

Gibraltar

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the future of Gibraltar.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) on 6 December 1990 at col. *188*.

Iran

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken by Her Majesty's Government in relation to violations of human rights by the Iranian Government against the Baha'i community; how many cases of confiscation of Baha'i property, in Yazd, Teheran and Isfahan, by the members of the Imam Khomeini Foundation, have been reported to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made representations on a number of occasions to the Iranian authorities about the persecution of Baha'is in Iran, both bilaterally and together with our EC partners. We made representations in Tehran on 25 October, on behalf of all EC member states, about death sentences passed on two Baha'is following summary trials and the reports of 24 cases of confiscations of the homes and property of Baha'is. We and our EC partners co-sponsored an UNGA resolution reflecting international concern at the human rights situation in Iran. It was adopted on 18 December by a large majority. It specifically referred to the treatment of the Baha'i community.

Iraq

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent visit to the United Kingdom of Iraqi negotiators dealing with GEC.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We understand that eight Iraqi businessmen recently visited the United Kingdom to discuss with GPT, a partly owned subsidiary of GEC, the possibility of business once the sanctions regime is lifted. We agreed to the issue of visas—fewer than the Iraqis wanted—against the background that there is no reason why British firms should not hold such discussions with the Iraqis. But we made clear to GEC that, since Iraq is in breach of the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 setting out the terms of the formal ceasefire at the end of the Gulf war, there is no immediate prospect of sanctions being lifted and therefore no prospect of GPT being in a position to fulfil any contract with the Iraqis. We also told it that we were not therefore ready to put an application to the United Nations Sanctions Committee.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visas have been issued to Iraqis to visit the United Kingdom on business in the last 12 months.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Statistics according to nationality and purpose of visit are not centrally recorded and could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of the British Government on the matter of those British subjects held by the Iraqi regime; and if he will inform the Iraqi Government that any use of these people as a human shield will result in retaliation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made many representations to the Iraqi Government on behalf of Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright, and have taken every opportunity to press for their release. We have no reason to believe the prisoners will be used as human shields.

Mansoor Hussain Qureshi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the explanatory statement concerning the refusal by the United Kingdom to grant entry clearance to Mansoor Hussain Qureshi—Ref: K051037—sent by the post to London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The explanatory statement is in the course of preparation. On completion, it will be sent to the Independent Appellate Authority. A copy will also be sent to Mr. Qureshi or his authorised representative.

UN Commission on Sustainable Development

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which will be the lead Government Department for the newly created UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At present, the FCO leads within Whitehall on institutional aspects of the follow up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including the establishment of the Sustainable Development Commission.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he is proposing to hold with British non-governmental organisations on the creation of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and other changes currently taking place in the UN system as a result of the UN Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department of Environment attended a meeting with non-governmental organisations on 15 September, chaired by the International Institute for Environment and Development. Representatives of non-governmental organisations subsequently participated in the United Kingdom delegation at the UN General Assembly discussions on Rio follow-up. The United Kingdom will host an international non-governmental organisation conference "Implementing the Rio Agenda: Partnerships for Change", in Manchester in September.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account he has made of whether the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development will be adequately funded under financial arrangements recently agreed in New York.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: UN General Assembly resolution 47/191 called for the Sustainable Development Commission to be

"funded from the UN regular budget and depend to the maximum extent possible upon existing budgetary resources."

We await the Secretary General's detailed proposals.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Chemical Weapons Convention

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how the proposed United Kingdom national authority will undertake its role of demonstrating to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that the United Kingdom Government are fulfilling its obligations as set out in the forthcoming chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Heseltine: The United Kingdom national authority will act as a channel of communications with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which will include transmitting declarations from United Kingdom sites. The verification regime operated by the OPCW inspectorate will ensure that the United Kingdom meets its obligations under the convention.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he plans to publish annual reports about the work of, and information collected by, the national authority under the proposed chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Heseltine: No decision has been taken yet about whether the National Authority will publish an annual report. This will be the subject of consultation with interested bodies. The information received by the authority will be subject to the terms of the annex to the convention dealing with the protection of confidential information.

Uranium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when current supplies of stockpiled depleted uranium will be depleted from re-use.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the owners of the material.

Military Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on 4 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *443*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* his letter to the hon. Member.

Mr. Heseltine: A copy of my letter of 7 January to the hon. Member has been placed in the Library. I see no need to publish the letter in the *Official Report* as well.

Dounreay

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the environmental benefits of the Silver II toxic waste solvent destruction rig developed by the Atomic Energy Authority research establishment at Dounreay.

Mr. Eggar: Evaluation, including consideration of the environmental implications, has been carried out by the AEA.

Colliery Pumping Operations

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the possible pollution of waterways resulting from ceasing pumping operations at Vane Tempest and Easington collieries.

Mr. Eggar: This is an operational matter for British Coal. I understand that there is regular liaison between British Coal and the National Rivers Authority at local and regional levels on all issues relevant to the National Rivers Authority's responsibilities for regulating water pollution.

Mortgages (Payment Protection Schemes)

Mr. Conway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received to amend the provisions to the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977 with regard to exemptions for insurance companies in the provision of payment protection schemes for residential mortgages.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have received representations including some from the trading standards department of Shropshire county council on the subject of the Unfair Contract Terms Act and insurance. Insurance contracts will be subject to the provisions of the Unfair Contract Terms Directive which is currently being negotiated.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he now expects to make an announcement on the review of assisted area status.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our intention is to announce the results of the assisted areas map review as early as possible, taking account of the outcome of the coal review and after the necessary clearance of the European Commission.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Trimble: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many jobs in manufacturing industry have been created in the United Kingdom in 1992 as a result of foreign investment.

Mr. Sainsbury: The most recent figures available are for the 1991-92 financial year. In this period 42,767 jobs were associated with foreign direct investment in the manufacturing sector; 17,615 of these jobs were newly created.

These figures are based on information provided by companies at the time of the announcement of the decision to invest. There is no requirement to notify the Department and so the figures include only those projects where the Invest in Britain Bureau and its regional partners were involved or which have come to their notice. They take no account of subsequent developments.

Beer Orders

Mr. Page: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will review the operation of the Beer Orders.

Mr. Heseltine: The Beer Orders came fully into force only on 1 November last year. The Director General of Fair Trading will be keeping them under review to ensure that the national brewers comply fully with their requirements. However, I have been giving further consideration to the merits of an early full scale review of the orders. The period since the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's 1989 report on the supply of beer has seen many significant changes taken place in the brewing industry, partly due to the Beer Orders but also in response to commercial pressures. The full effect of these changes will only gradually become apparent. Moreover, it is highly desirable that both brewers and tenants alike should now have a period of stability to plan ahead within the new framework that has been created by the orders. A full-scale review later this year of the effects of the orders would further prolong uncertainty within the industry. While the director general will continue to monitor the market and will investigate fully any evidence of anti-competitive behaviour in line with his statutory duties, we have concluded that it would be wrong to ask him to carry out a further full-scale review of the market.

Pit Closures

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the steps taken to ensure the fabric of the mines at all the collieries which he announced were to be closed have been satisfactorily maintained; and what assessment of this has been made by Her Majesty's inspectors of mines.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* British Coal, whose responsibility this is, has given frequent assurances that it is preserving the fabric of the 10 pits so that if, at the end of the period of consultation, it is decided to keep any or all of them open, that will be possible. My right hon. Friend has asked Boyds to report on whether the fabric of the 10 pits is being preserved in accordance with those assurances.

The HSE, through Her Majesty's inspectors of mines, continues to inspect these pits in accordance with its plan of work to ensure the health and safety of those working there.

Single Market

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the directives, regulations, statutory instruments and Acts of Parliament required to create the single market, distinguishing between *(a)* those which have been made effective to 31 December 1992 and *(b)* those which remain to be implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Information about single market measures and their implementation in the United Kingdom is provided in the "Spearhead" computer database produced by my Department. The database is publicly available, and can by accessed by the Library.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the cost *(a)* directly to the Exchequer, *(b)* to local authorities and *(c)* to businesses of implementing all the directives, regulations, statutory instruments and Acts of Parliament to create the single market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* When both negotiating and subsequently implementing domestically all European Community measures, Departments do attempt to assess, and minimise unnecessary, costs to both public and private sector interests. Our objective throughout the single market programme has been to secure agreement on measures which will provide positive benefits to United Kingdom businesses and consumers.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the chemical weapons production facilities in the United Kingdom designed, constructed or used since 1946 that will require destruction following the ratification of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Chemical weapons have not been made in the United Kingdom for almost 40 years. It is not thought that any facilities which might have been used before that date still remain but investigations are under way to confirm this.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the value of United Kingdom *(a)* imports, *(b)* exports and *(c)* trade balance for manufactured goods with each member state of the European Community in 1970, 1979 and the latest available year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Information for 1970 can be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information for 1979 and 1991 is given in my answer to the hon. Member on 14 January 1993, *Official Report*, col. *782*.

Bankruptcy

Mr. Simpson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of monies retrieved by trustees in bankruptcy proceedings during the last year have gone to trade creditors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 1 December 1992]:* This information is not held centrally by the Department in the form requested, and could not be easily obtained.

ENVIRONMENT

Grant Allocations

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that metropolitan councils are not disadvantaged in grant allocation as a result of the basis on which population estimates take into account unenumerated people.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have considered the population figures produced by the registrar general based on 1991 census results most carefully in relation to their implications for standard spending assessments and revenue support grant. We are satisfied that the methods he has employed to produce these estimates, particularly in relation to census underenumeration, are the most appropriate in the circumstances and do not therefore disadvantage metropolitan or any other class of authorities.

Building Regulations

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has *(a)* to revise part L of the Building Regulations to achieve significant improvements in the energy efficiency of new buildings and *(b)* to extend the regulations to cover rehabilitation work on older houses.

Mr. Baldry: I intend to issue a consultation paper shortly setting out proposals to amend part L of the Building Regulations 1991 strengthening the existing provisions for energy conservation in new buildings. These will include measures for use in older houses when undertaking alteration or conversion work covered by the regulations.

Office Accommodation

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost per square foot of the rental or lease of office accommodation in *(a)* London and *(b)* elsewhere for which his Department is responsible for providing to his own and other Government Departments and agencies.

Mr. Howard: The current average cost per square foot for the rental or lease of office accommodation provided by my Department is estimated to be as follows:

	£
(a) London	15·23
(b) Elsewhere	7·22

The figures relate to the 63 per cent. of office accommodation which is leased and excludes freeholds.

Housing (Self-build)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what further plans the Government have to encourage self-build as a housing option in the United Kingdom;

(2) what grant funding is specifically available to self-build projects to build homes in the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation has a revolving fund of £3 million in the current financial year and the next, from which loans are advanced to self-build projects for outright ownership. Grant from the corporation is also available to self-build groups, channelled through registered housing associations, where they cannot afford the cost of full owner-occupation.

We have no further plans to encourage the development of self-build groups.

The information is for England only and similar information on Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are matters for the respective Secretaries of State.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many self-build housing units have been completed in the United Kingdom for each year since 1987; and what comparable figures he has for other European countries.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not collected by this Department.

Noise

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will respond to the report of the noise review working party, the Batho report.

Mr. Maclean: Over half of the recommendations of the noise review working party have now been acted upon. The speech by the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Noise Council seminar on 15 May 1991 and that of my predecessor to the Institution of Environmental Health Officers on 10 September 1991 summarised progress to date on the Government's response to the report of the noise review working party, the Batho report. Since then, the Government have issued consultation documents on the control of aircraft noise and on proposals to extend noise nuisance to the streets. A complete draft of the planning policy guidance note "Planning and noise" was issued for consultation at the beginning of 1992. Guidance on the control of noisy parties was issued to local authorities and the police on 4 September 1992. My speech to Euronoise '92 on 14 September included a further update of the Government's progress in responding to the Batho report.

Tenant's Death

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he issues to local authorities concerning rent payments, where the lawful tenant has died and there is no succession to the tenancy, during the period immediately following death when the deceased's affairs are being dealt with.

Mr. Baldry: None. However, a secure tenancy does not cease on a tenant's death. Normally, the tenant's executors would be responsible for paying the rent until they and the authority terminate the tenancy. If the tenant did not leave a will, and there are no letters of administration, the tenancy vests in the president of the family division of the High Court.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to reduce the need for landfill waste disposal and to make recycling of waste more financially attractive than disposing of waste in landfill sites.

Mr. Maclean: We have introduced, through the Environmental Protection Act 1990, tough new environmental standards for waste disposal which we expect to result in higher disposal costs. The same Act requires waste disposal authorities to divest themselves of their operations, ensuring that the full economic costs of waste disposal are reflected in prices. We have also introduced recycling credits so that the effect of higher landfill prices feeds through to those involved in recycling household waste.

We have recently published a report on "Economic Instruments and Recovery of Resources from Waste", a copy of which is in the House Library. In the light of that report, we are considering whether any further changes to the economic framework for solid waste would be justified.

Green Ministers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to send information to central and eastern European nations on the Green Ministers structure whereby each Department has a Minister responsible for environmental policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's approach to environmental policy, including the concept of Green Ministers, was set out in the 1990 White Paper "This Common Inheritance". We have sent that document and the two subsequent annual reports which also refer to the concept to countries in central and eastern Europe and have discussed it with the Environment Ministers of several of them.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the research relating to the health implications of living in proximity to opencast sites that he has considered in reviewing the opencast planning guidelines.

Mr. Baldry: Research into environmental health issues is carried out by the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Government's main agency for biomedical research, which is funded by the Office of Science and Technology. I am however aware that the Department of Health's medical staff have discussed with Drs Temple and Skyes their recent research on the subject of asthma and opencast mining and I understand that the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants is also being asked for advice on this matter. I am also aware of a recent epidemiological study carried out by the Institute of Occupational Medicine on behalf of British Coal into the respiratory health of opencast coal workers, the main conclusion of which was that neither asthma nor chronic bronchitis among them was related to exposure to airborne dust.

My Department will take account of all material considerations in its review of the opencast coal planning guidelines.

Housing Investment, Lambeth

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the annual housing investment programme for Lambeth for each of the last 15 years expressed in current values.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is given in the table. The figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are not directly comparable with those for earlier years because of the revisions to the capital finance system introduced in April 1990.

Housing investment programme (HIP) allocations by Lambeth borough council and capital expenditure, 1978-79 to 1992-93

£ thousand

	HIP allocations[1]		Housing capital expenditure	
	Cash	1992-93 prices[2]	Cash	1992-93 prices[2]
1978-79	42,956	121,018	n/a	n/a
1979-80	56,334	136,027	n/a	n/a
1980-81	54,915	112,057	n/a	n/a
1981-82	41,530	77,282	n/a	n/a
1982-83	43,314	75,242	32,185	55,909
1983-84	42,333	70,284	46,812	77,721
1984-85	40,185	63,497	45,201	71,423
1985-86	34,372	51,501	44,112	66,095
1986-87	35,587	51,659	56,201	81,583
1987-88	33,969	46,741	56,582	77,857
1988-89	30,683	39,355	37,064	47,539
1989-90	23,450	28,222	68,346	82,254
New capital finance system[3]				
1990-91	30,329	33,803	46,755	52,110
1991-92	33,248	34,661	[4]32,351	[4]33,726
1992-93	32,354	32,354	[5]41,287	[5]41,287

[1] Allocations for the years up to and including 1989-90 are final allocations, ie the initial allocation plus any increases to the initial allocation made in-year. The allocations figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are the HIP allocations (housing annual capital guidelines plus specified capital grants) issued prior to the start of the financial year. These figures do not include any supplementary credit approvals issued during the year.

[2] Cash figures have been converted to 1992-93 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP market prices deflator.

[3] From 1990-91, under the new capital finance system, the HIP allocation is an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure rather than a direct borrowing approval. Borrowing approval is now conveyed by the single, all service, basic credit approval.

[4] Provisional.

[5] Estimated.

One-bedroom Flats

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many one-bedroom flats have been built in county Durham since 1979; and how many are attributed to each local housing authority in the county in total.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is shown in the table.

Housebuilding: One-bedroom flats completed[1]: County Durham by local authority

Number

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Chester Le Street	0	0	34	0	0	0	20
Darlington	76	114	88	51	205	142	142
Derwentside	0	0	76	21	12	0	48
Durham	0	4	0	0	6	0	0
Easington	81	38	33	40	89	0	0
Sedgefield	1	48	8	0	18	41	25
Teesdale	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Wear Valley	0	20	24	19	12	0	0
County Durham	158	224	264	131	342	183	235

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	[2]1992
Chester Le Street	20	42	0	0	46	12	0
Darlington	40	106	35	108	41	33	10
Derwentside	24	0	9	6	8	0	6
Durham	5	20	0	23	0	28	13
Easington	0	0	34	0	0	0	0
Sedgefield	0	40	28	23	21	53	13
Teesdale	0	0	0	6	3	20	3
Wear Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
County Durham	89	208	106	166	119	146	45

Notes:

[1] The table shows total housebuilding activity by private enterprise, housing associations and local authorities in the respective local authority areas.

[2] The 1992 figures cover January to November only.

Housing Association Homes

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the Government are making in fulfilling its pledges in respect of provision of housing association homes.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's election manifesto promised 153,000 housing association homes over the period 1992-93 to 1994-95. The Housing Corporation now estimates that it will be able to provide around 170,000 new homes in that period.

This includes more than 17,000 homes which the corporation expects housing associations will be able to buy with the £580 million provided for the purchase of new, empty and repossessed homes as part of the housing market package announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement. It also includes the release of up to 2,000 existing housing association homes with the additional £20 million provided by the package for grants under the tenants' incentive scheme.

Repair Grants

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applicants are waiting for mandatory repair grants in *(a)* Stockport and *(b)* the north-west.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not collected by the Department. Once a valid grant application has been received, an authority must approve or refuse it within six months of the date it is made.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the grant-related expenditure assessment base to standard spending assessment introduction has affected efficient distribution of resources; and how this has been investigated.

Mr. Robin Squire: The SSA system is under constant review. Each year the SSA formulae and their implications for authorities are approved by Parliament. This follows a process of extensive discussion with local authority representatives. It was the intention in moving to SSAs that they should be easier to understand but no less fair than GREAs. It would be difficult for any investigation to establish whether this has led to a change in the efficiency with which resources are distributed—none has been carried out with this aim in view. The Audit Commission is at present carrying out a study of SSAs. As soon as its report is available we will consider it carefully.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment from what date the 1991 census results will be used for all standard spending assessments; and what transitional arrangements will be introduced for authorities with major changes.

Mr. Robin Squire: The detailed results of the 1991 census will be incorporated, as appropriate, into the calculation of the standard spending assessments for 1994-95. The need for transitional arrangements will be considered when these assessments become available in the autumn.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total level of capital receipts received by each local authority in England in the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities provide returns to the Department giving the capital receipts they received in 1991-92 and the receipts they are forecasting to receive in 1992-93. I have arranged for this information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake an independent analysis of standard spending assessments for the purpose of identifying local authority spending requirements.

Mr. Robin Squire: Standard spending assessments already reflect detailed research evidence from a wide range of sources, both within and outside Government, as well as extensive discussions with local authority representatives over a number of years. They are updated and refined to take on board new data and evidence every year. The Audit Commission is currently engaged in a special study of standard spending assessments. We shall study carefully its findings and recommendations once these are available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the lowest shire county standard spending assessment as a proportion of the highest shire county SSA; and what is the lowest metropolitan authority SSA as a proportion of the highest metropolitan authority SSA.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is as follows:

1993-94 provisional standard spending assessments:

		£ million
Shire counties		
Highest SSA	Kent	963·077
Lowest SSA	Isle of Wight	77·498
Lowest as proportion of highest		0·080
Metropolitan districts		
Highest SSA	Birmingham	879·076
Lowest SSA	Bury	104·766
Lowest as proportion of highest		0·119

A major factor affecting all standard spending assessments is the underlying population of the authority concerned.

Land Reclamation

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether land reclamation that has already received support from regional offices of his Department will continue to be supported by the urban regeneration agency when it is formed.

Mr. Redwood: Where the Department has approved derelict land grants, support will continue on the present basis. Once the urban regeneration agency has been established it will receive applications for further support. The Housing and Urban Development Bill makes provision for a new unified grant regime for the agency which will replace derelict land grant and the other grants to be transferred to it. The agency will determine its own priorities in the light of guidance the Department issues to

it. The Government will take account of the current priorities for existing grants, including derelict land grant, when preparing this guidance and constructing the new unified grant regime.

Abandoned Coal Mines

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet placed a contract for research into problems associated with methane and other gas discharges from abandoned coal mines; and when it is planned that the study will report.

Mr. Baldry: Following a tender competition, an offer of a contract to investigate the appropriate response of the planning system to methane and other gas emissions from disused coal mines has been made to Wardell Armstrong. The details of the contract are being negotiated and it is expected that work will commence in March. The results will be reported in the spring of 1995.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average length of time taken to deal with complaints under the staff grievance procedure of Property Services Agency Building Maintenance south-east; what proposals he has for reducing the time taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: PSA Services introduced a revised procedure for dealing with complaints and grievances in April 1992. This procedure recognises that many informal cases are settled quickly and amicably between individuals and their line managers. The recommended time limit for dealing with formal complaints is four weeks, but this can vary according to the nature and seriousness of the complaint.

The only formal grievance raised in BM South East took much longer than four weeks to resolve. As a result all directors are being reminded of the need to adhere more closely to the recommended time limit.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date the list of names of PSA Projects staff not chosen for secondment was finalised; on what date PSA Projects was sold to Tarmac; on what date a complete ethnic breakdown of those staff not chosen for secondment was produced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: PSA Projects was sold to Tarmac Construction on 1 December 1992.

The Projects staff choice exercise was completed on 13 November 1992 and the full list of those staff not chosen for secondment was passed to the PSA Services equal opportunities unit on 17 November 1992. The unit carried out a detailed analysis to establish whether there had been any discrimination in the selection process. None was identified.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the proportion of ethnic minority PSA Projects staff *(a)* in general and *(b)* of those not picked for secondment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The proportions of ethnic minority staff in Projects are;

(a) 8·2 per cent. of the total staff in post at 20 November 1992

(b) 8·5 per cent. of those not picked for secondment

Although the difference in percentage terms is not statistically significant the PSA's equal opportunities unit examined each case individually and concluded that there had been no discrimination in the selection process.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Association of District Councils and other local authority organisations about compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department has received representations from a number of local authority organisations, including the Association of District Councils, on the operation of the current CCT regime, the planned regulations and guidance clarifying the existing statutory framework and on the proposals to extend competition to local authorities' construction related and corporate services. Copies of these representations are available through the Library of the House.

Minerals (Planning Guidance)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the new draft minerals planning guidance note 3 will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: We hope to issue draft revised guidelines for public consultation as soon as possible after the outcome of the coal review.

Superquarries

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what geological evidence he has considered relating to the potential for development of superquarries for aggregate mining; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Geological evidence about coastal superquarries was provided to my Department by consultants who were commissioned to investigate the potential of such quarries to supply aggregates to the south-east of England. A copy of the published report "Coastal Superquarries to Supply South-East England Aggregate Requirements" is in the House of Commons Library. The work undertaken by the consultants consisted primarily of a desk study of geological maps and other published material. Their resource assessment concluded that North West Europe—particularly Norway and Scotland offered a number of good opportunities for developing coastal superquarries.

My Department has taken the views of the consultants into account in preparing revised mineral planning guidance for aggregates on the provision in England and Wales (MPG6). Public consultation on the draft revised guidelines is currently taking place and a copy of this has been placed in the House of Commons Library. I have sent a copy to the hon. Member.

The Government consider that coastal superquarries could provide an increasing contribution to aggregates supplies in the next century and is currently seeking views on the practical levels which could be expected. The Government recognise that individual applications will

need very careful assessment both in respect of the proposed extraction and where the material would be landed.

Noise

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what work the Building Research Establishment has done on behalf of his Department in studying the proposals arising from the noise review working party.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The Building Research Establishment has provided my Department with technical advice on a number of the recommendations of the noise review working party, including the current draft of the Planning Policy Guidance note on planning and noise which will replace circular 10/73 and proposals to increase controls on noise from audible intruder alarms. They have represented my Department on BSI committees responsible for the revision of BS4142 (industrial noise) and the replacement of BS4737 (alarms) by a European standard. They have also completed initial research into the use of noise abatement zones by local authorities.

Paper Recycling

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken or proposes to take to encourage the recycling of newspapers and magazines within the United Kingdom; what proportion of Her Majesty's Government's target of the recycling of 25 per cent. of household waste by the year 2000 will be comprised of waste paper; what is the estimated tonnage of that proportion; and what outlets he expects there to be in place in the year 2000 to utilise this waste paper by recycling.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* We are setting an economic and legislative framework which encourages an environmentally justified level of recycling. This will affect newspapers and magazines as well as other recyclable materials. We have also agreed with the newspaper publishers and newsprint producers that they will aim to increase the proportion of recycled fibre in newsprint used in Britain to at least 40 per cent. by the year 2000. Subject to parliamentary approval, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade proposes to offer a £20 million grant to the papermaking company SCA to invest in a major newsprint mill at Aylesford in Kent, which will produce newsprint made entirely from waste paper.

The Government have not forecast the proportion of waste paper from household sources which will be recycled in the year 2000, nor the outlets which will be available to recycle this paper.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Income Support

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for each office of the Social Security Agency the number of *(a)* female and *(b)* male single persons who are in receipt of income support; and of these how many in each area and category are single parents.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alex Wylie. However, I understand that the information is not available in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Intensive Therapy Units

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number and location of intensive therapy units in the Province; and how many donors have arisen in each in the past 12 months.

Mr. Hanley: There are eight intensive therapy units in Northern Ireland, which are listed below, together with the number of donors in each in the past 12 months.

Donating hospital	*Number of cadaveric solid organ donors*
Belfast City Hospital	4
Altnagelvin Hospital, Londonderry	3
Ulster Hospital, Dundonald	2
Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast	18
Mater Infirmorum Hospital, Belfast	1
Craigavon Area Hospital	4
Mid Ulster Hospital, Magherafelt	2
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	1
TOTAL	35

Housing Benefit

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for each Housing Executive district in the western region the number of *(a)* female and *(b)* male single persons who are in receipt of housing benefit; and of these how many in each category are single parents with (i) one dependent child, (ii) two dependent children, (iii) three dependent children and (iv) more than three dependent children, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Training Centres

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the future of the training centre network and the measures which he proposes to introduce.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J S Crozier to Mr. Andrew Hunter, dated 15 January 1993:

You have asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of the Training Centre network and the measures he proposes to introduce.

The development, management and administration of the Training Centre network, lies within the responsibility

of the Training and Employment Agency (T&EA). As Chief Executive of the Agency I have been asked by the Secretary of State to reply on his behalf.

Training Centres are an important source of craft level training in Northern Ireland. I envisage a continuing need for the services they provide in the foreseeable future.

The Agency has been conducting an internal review of the Training Centres to identify what action should be taken to ensure they are managed efficiently and cost effectively. We are currently conducting a feasibility study on the market testing of Centres. I expect that study to be complete by April 1993 with a view to a market test being initiated shortly afterwards. Proposals concerning the future of Training Centres will be formulated when these exercises are complete.

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of strip searches made on female prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry monthly since July 1992; what was the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; what prison contraband, smuggled items or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for each search.

Mr. Mates: The information requested is as follows:

	1992					
	July	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*
Number of searches						
Total number of searches carried out	29	41	44	32	38	42
Total number of inmates searched	22	27	32	19	25	20
Number of prisoners searched once	17	19	22	12	12	2
Number of prisoners searched twice	4	7	8	5	13	15
Number of prisoners searched more than twice	1	1	2	2	0	3
Reason for search						
First admission on remand/ awaiting trial	8	7	14	2	10	1
First admission on sentence/ final discharge	8	10	10	9	7	7
Attending trial	0	0	1	0	0	0
Inter prison visit	4	3	4	3	2	7
Pre-release home leave	9	18	11	16	12	25
Compassionate home leave	0	2	2	2	4	0
Visits to outside hospital	0	0	2	0	0	0
Attendance at court for bail	0	0	0	0	1	2
Bail granted	0	1	0	0	2	0

No prohibited articles were found during these searches and no prisoners refused to be searched.

Prison Transfers

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners for scheduled offences have been transferred from prisons in Northern Ireland to Britain for each of the last 10 years; what was the length of their original sentence; what sentence those now released actually served; and what length of sentence those still in prison still have to serve.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: When a prisoner is transferred to Great Britain from Northern Ireland all records concerning the prisoner are passed to the receiving jurisdiction. The information requested is consequently unavailable in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications have been received for transfers from prisons in Northern Ireland to Britain from prisoners serving sentences for scheduled offences.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Between 1982 and 1992 13 prisoners convicted of scheduled offences in Northern Ireland, made a total of 18 applications for permanent transfer to Great Britain but were unsuccessful in securing transfer. A further 10 prisoners transferred to Great Britain in the same period but as their records are now held in the receiving jurisdiction it is not known if they were convicted of scheduled offences. In addition, 20 prisoners convicted of scheduled offences applied for temporary transfer and of these 14 were transferred, normally for periods of between two and six weeks.

Ulster Museum

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the attendance figures for 1992 reported by the Ulster museum, including its outstations; and what was the percentage change compared with the attendance figures for 1991.

Mr. Hanley: In 1992 a total of 450,800 people visited the Ulster museum and the Armagh county museum—an increase of 41·9 per cent. on the attendance figures for 1991.

Civil Service

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to introduce goals and timetables for the professional and technical grades of the Northern Ireland civil service.

Mr. Mates: The professional and technical grades of the Northern Ireland civil service comprise a wide range of occupations many of which require particular skills and specific qualifications. It is not practicable therefore to consider a single goal and timetable in respect of this group of staff as a whole. Nevertheless, the appropriateness and practicability of goals and timetables as an affirmative action measure in respect of the various disciplines which comprise the professional and technical grades of the NICS are presently under consideration and will be the subject of further discussion with the Fair Employment Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Northern Ireland civil service trade unions.

Building Regulations

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultation has taken place on proposals for amendment to parts E and EE of the Building Regulations (NI) 1990; what responses have been received to the consultation document; and when the revised regulations will be promulgated.

Mr. Atkins: A consultation paper setting out proposals for amendments to parts E and EE of the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1990 was issued for consideration, on 31 December 1991, to a total of 115 public and private sector bodies. These proposals are based on similar requirements which have since been incorporated in the Building Regulations 1991 which apply in England and Wales.

Twenty-three responses to the consultation paper were received.

It is likely that the statutory rule amending the regulations will be made in late 1993, following consideration by the European Commission, and will come into operation in 1994.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Salary advances are available to home civil service staff to assist with the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel, but no requests have been received since the introduction of this facility in August 1991. The advance would be required to be repaid over 12 months and the bicycle used for travel to work. Proof of purchase would be required. No changes are planned to these conditions.

There is no facility available within the departments or agencies of the Northern Ireland civil service to permit civil servants to be granted salary advances to enable the purchases of bicycles for home to office travel. There are no plans to introduce such a facility.

TRANSPORT

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will establish a target date by which time motorway service areas will be located at an average distance of 30 miles apart throughout the United Kingdom motorway network.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. Under a new policy on the provision of motorway service areas announced on 6 August, it is now for the private sector rather than the Government to identify where there is a need for further motorway services and to secure their development.

Damaged Car Tyres

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he will take to prevent the sale of structurally damaged car tyres from accident write-off cars at car boot sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I propose to go out to public consultation later this year on proposed safety regulations to be made under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 which will supplement that Act by making it an offence to sell or otherwise supply in the course of business any used car, motorcycle or retread tyre that is defective.

Car Ownership

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of households in each local authority area do not possess a car.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Information on households car ownership for individual local authorities is provided by population censuses. The local authority area results from the 1991 census will be published soon.

Roads (Porous Ashphalt)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to secure the widespread use of porous asphalt on motorways and trunk roads in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is the Department's policy to use porous asphalt where it can be shown to be the most suitable and cost effective surfacing. A specification and advice note on porous asphalt are to be published shortly by the Department of Transport jointly with the Welsh Office, Scottish Office and Department of Environment (Northern Ireland). These documents will set out those situations where porous asphalt is likely to be suitable.

Railway Track, Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the length of railway track open to traffic in Wales in 1979; what is the length at the most recent available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: In 1979 British Rail had 984 route miles of track open. The figure for 1991 was 927. Other than the technical closure of the Vale of Rheidol line on its transfer to the private sector, no passenger lines were closed during this period.

Rolling Stock

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much rolling stock was in use on the railways in 1979; how much is currently in use; and what is the average age of rolling stock currently in use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: The information for British Rail is given in the table. However, it is not possible to give a meaningful indication of the average age of all vehicles. Such a figure would vary widely according to the type of rolling stock.

	1979	*1991-92*
Locomotives		
Diesel	3,261	1,634
Electric	310	262
Sub-total locomotives	3,571	1,896
High speed trains		
Power units	136	197
Coaches	533	728
Advanced passenger trains		
Power units	5	—
Coaches	15	—
Diesel Multiple Units	3,284	2,074
Electric Multiple Units	7,458	6,909
Loco-hauled passenger coaches	5,885	2,114
Non-passenger coaches	4,336	1,100
Sub-total Coaching Vehicles (Excluding power units)	21,511	12,925
Sub-total power units	141	197
Freight vehicles (excluding brake vans)		
Covered	11,439	1,679
Open	14,415	13,500
Others	111,735	4,698
Sub-total Freight Vehicles	137,589	19,877
Total all vehicles	162,812	34,895

Notes:

1. Figures for 1991-92 exclude 13,166 freight vehicles and 11 locomotives privately owned. 1979 figures not known, but are broadly the same for wagons, with no locomotives.
2. Reduction in locomotives follows replacement by multiple units, notably by Regional Railways, and withdrawal of lower powered units. This has also had an impact on loco-hauled coaches.
3. Reduction in diesel multiple units caused by electrification schemes, and replacement in certain cases by vehicles of higher capacity, and use of shorter train formations.
4. Reduction in number of freight vehicles and non-passenger coaches largely caused by withdrawal from certain categories of traffic, notably in the wagon load type of business.
5. In 1979 4,228 railway cars were in use on London Underground. The equivalent figure for 1991-92 was 4,146 cars.

Over the 10 London Underground lines, most of the rolling stock is aged between 20 and 30 years. The rolling stock currently in use on each line is as follows:

Bakerloo	1972 stock. Currently being refurbished.
Central	1962 stock. Currently being replaced with brand new stock as part of modernisation programme—first new train in passenger service expected spring 1993.
Circle and Hammersmith and City	1969 and 1977 stock. Currently being refurbished.
District	1969 and 1977 stock.
East London	1962 stock.
Jubilee	1983 stock.
Metropolitan	1962 stock.
Northern	1959 and 1972 stock. Currently being refurbished.
Piccadilly	1973 stock.
Victoria	1967 stock. Currently being refurbished.

Speed Control

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made with the final report from the village speed control working group; and when he expects the final report to be published.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Measures have already been implemented at most of the trial sites in the working group's study. They are being monitored and the results will be analysed by the Transport Research Laboratory. The working group's final report is expected to be published in the summer.

Tanker Routes

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the crude oil-carrying tanker Aegean Sea passed through the Minch.

Mr. Norris: My Department does not hold information on the route taken by the Aegean Sea.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to renegotiate the provision of the 1958 international convention on the territorial sea and contiguous zone to change the designation of the Minch as an international strait with a right of innocent passage.

Mr. Norris: This is a matter which falls within the terms of Lord Donaldson's inquiry announced by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now place an exclusion order on the passage of oil tankers using *(a)* the Minch, *(b)* the Little Minch and *(c)* the sea off the Hebrides, and instruct oil tanker masters to use the deep-water route westward of the Outer Hebrides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The deep water route west of the Hebrides is the recommended route, agreed by the International Maritime Organisation for all laden tankers over 10,000 grt. My Department, with the support of the industry, takes every opportunity to encourage vessels to use this route. The waters of the Minch, although within territorial limits, have been accepted by Parliament as an international strait to which the right of innocent passage applies. Thus the deep water route is recommended and not mandatory. In poor weather the risk of an accident may be greater if a tanker goes into the open Atlantic rather than using the comparatively sheltered waters of the Minch where anchorages are available. The Department's view has been that masters must retain this option in adverse weather.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward proposals to set up an oil tanker exclusion zone around the sensitive coastal and marine areas around the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: This is a matter which falls within the terms of reference of Lord Donaldson's inquiry announced by my right hon. Friend. An exclusion zone for tankers in international waters would require international agreement. In the meantime, we are exploring the possibility and feasibility of introducing interim measures for tanker operations around the United Kingdom.

Seat Belts

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a requirement for motor manufacturers to fit alternative fitting points for backward facing seats for pre-school children in all new cars.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department has been working with manufacturers and various international organisations to find better and more convenient ways of fitting child seats to vehicles. It is intended that this work will eventually result in European legislation requiring all cars to be fitted with anchorage points suitable for securing forward or rearward-facing restraints for children of all ages.

Unadopted Roads

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to legislate on the subject of unadopted roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Private street works law was reviewed in 1983. Subsequently it was decided that there should be no change either in the arrangements for the adoption of unadopted roads or the principle of frontager liability for the expense of making up such roads. Some minor amendments to private street works law may be brought forward if a suitable opportunity arises.

Motorways

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway in England are currently being widened.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A total of 30·4 miles.

A259 (Bypass)

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the exhibition of plans for the A259 Icklesham bypass will take place.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A public consultation exhibition of proposals for the Guestling Thorn and Icklesham bypass is expected to be held this spring. I will announce the detailed arrangements as soon as possible.

Road Expenditure

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the proposed level of expenditure in England in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 on *(a)* new road construction and improvement, *(b)* structural maintenance and *(c)* current maintenance on trunk roads.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: An announcement about national roads expenditure for 1993-94 will be made shortly. Provisional figures for the following years will appear in the 1993 departmental report, which will be published next month.

Train Driver Instruction

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to allow the private sector to establish train driver instruction schools.

Mr. Freeman: We have accepted all the Health and Safety Commission's recommendations in their report, "Ensuring Safety on Britain's Railways" which was published on 12 January. These included the recommendation that the Health and Safety Commission should be empowered to accredit other bodies including private training organisations, to carry out driver training and certification following assessment against clear standards.

English Channel

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many collisions occurred in the English channel in the last five years; and what reasons were established for them.

Mr. Norris: To establish the number of accidents in any sea area would entail a great deal of research. To add to that the task of manually listing each accident and the reason for it would entail staff time and resources at disproportionate cost.

Data for 1991 onwards is being input into a recently installed, computerised accident database in the marine accident investigation branch. This will allow information as requested to be provided for accidents which occurred during and after 1991.

Vehicle Engines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to limit the time that vehicle engines are left running while the vehicle is at a standstill.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Regulation 98 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (SI 1986 No. 1078) already provides that the driver of a vehicle shall, when the vehicle is stationary other than due to the necessities of traffic, stop the action of any machinery attached to or forming part of the vehicle so far as may be necessary for the prevention of noise.

Oil Tankers

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make it his policy fully to inspect all non-EC registered oil tankers over 10 years old calling at United Kingdom ports;

(2) if he will make it his policy to scrutinise fully the qualifications of officers and crew on all non-EC registered oil tankers calling at United Kingdom ports.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The criteria for inspecting ships under the memorandum of understanding on port state control (MOU) are agreed by all the signatories. They are amended from time to time in the light of experience and are continually under review.

It would not necessarily be the best use of resources to inspect all non-EC tankers over 10 years old calling at United Kingdom ports, or to make a full scrutiny of the qualifications of the officers and crew an automatic duty for a surveyor conducting such an inspection.

Inspections do include operational aspects which enables the surveyor to "look behind" the paper qualifications and make some assessment of the abilities of the officers and crew to respond to emergency operations and other duties assigned to them.

Responsibility for standards, both of a ship and a crew, lies primarily with the owner and the flag state, but where a port state inspection reveals deficiencies in crew qualifications the surveyor may detain the vessel until suitably qualified personnel are found.

The United Kingdom has been pursuing the necessity to improve standards of vessels worldwide and will continue to do so. We will be striving to raise crew qualification standards when the standards of training, certification and watchkeeping convention comes up for review at the International Maritime Organisation in March.

EMPLOYMENT

Microfabrication

14. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will estimate the number of people employed in that sector of the electricity industry related to microfabrication.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of employees in the microfabrication sector of the electricity industry is not separately identifiable.

Young People (Nottinghamshire)

15. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new measures she plans to help young people in north Nottinghamshire to find employment.

Mr. McLoughlin: The local employment service and North Notts training and enterprise council deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help young unemployed people in the area find the best and quickest route to employment.

Training and Enterprise Councils

16. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the budgets of training and enterprise councils in the north in the last financial year.

Mr. McLoughlin: The budgets of training and enterprise councils in the north in the last financial year amounted to £596 million.

19. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will increase Government support for the training and enterprise councils.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Training and enterprise councils' budgets for next year will be broadly in line in cash terms with the planned expenditure for this year. They will have sufficient resources to carry out the objectives agreed in their business plan.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received regarding the level of reserves held by TECs.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have received only one previous question on the matter, from my hon. Friend himself.

Working Time

17. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the effect of the working time directive on jobs and economic activity in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No directive has yet been adopted. Unnecessary and complex restrictions on working time can only damage the competitive position of British employers and undermine long-term employment prospects.

Employment Service

18. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the work of the employment service to help the unemployed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The employment service provides a wide range of services to help unemployed people find work, including placing them in jobs and referring them to training and other programmes. Over a million opportunities will be available in 1993-94. It also pays unemployment benefits to people who are entitled to them.

Check-off

20. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received on the rights of trade union members on check-off.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on the subject of check-off. Proposals in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill will protect the rights of trade union members by ensuring that check-off deductions cannot be made from their wages without their express knowledge and consent.

Acquired Rights

21. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about implementation of the EC directive on acquired rights.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The directive was implemented by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. The Government doubt whether the directive is compatible with the principles of subsidiarity and it will certainly be among those directives which the Government will continue to question as the subsidiarity exercise develops. In addition, the Government will press in any negotiations for the revision of the directive to make it absolutely clear that the directive does not cover the contracting out of services where no business is transferred.

As long as the directive remains in force, however, the Government must ensure that United Kingdom law implements it fully. Clause 26 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, now in Committee, makes some minor amendments to the regulations to ensure this. These amendments do not change the fact that the regulations apply only if an undertaking is transferred as a going concern. This has always been, and will continue to be, the test of whether or not the regulations apply.

Labour Statistics

22. **Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current unemployment figures for the north-west.

Mr. McLoughlin: In November 1992 seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment in the north west was 329,100 or 10·8 per cent. of the work force.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was *(a)* the total number of people registered as unemployed in the London borough of Wandsworth and *(b)* the total number of job vacancies registered in the London borough of Wandsworth on 11 January.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest available data relate to 12 November 1992 for claimant unemployment and 6 November 1992 for unfilled vacancies at jobcentres. On these respective dates there were 18,334 claimant unemployed in the London borough of Wandsworth, and 136 unfilled vacancies at jobcentres covering the Wandsworth area.

Simple comparisons between the unemployment figures for a local area and the equivalent vacancy figures can be misleading because the coverage of jobcentre vacancies can vary between different occupations and different areas. Within any one area there is not necessarily a match between the location and skills of the unemployed and the location and nature of the vacancies available.

Manufacturing Industry

23. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about unemployment levels in the north-west in the manufacturing sector.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is estimated from the labour force survey that in the summer of 1992, 72,000 unemployed people in the north west had last worked in manufacturing.

Weymouth and Dorchester

24. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on work being undertaken by her Department in the Weymouth and Dorchester travel-to-work area over the next five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department will continue to provide a full range of employment, training and enterprise measures to help unemployed people in the area as elsewhere.

Job Creation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new jobs have been created in the London area in the past five years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on job losses and job gains is not collected. Between September 1987 and September 1992 there was a net decrease in the civilian work force in employment in Greater London of 436,000 or 11·1 per cent.

Press Office

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff were employed by her Department's press office in each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The information requested is given in the table:

	Number
1979-80 to 1985-86	Not available
1986-87	8
1987-88	9
1988-89	9
1989-90	17
1990-91	17
1991-92	14
1992-93	14

Figures for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 are for the Department's press office only. The Department's press

office was merged with the Training Agency press office in November 1989 and the figures from 1989-90 onwards reflect this.

WALES

Teacher Training

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many entrants for initial teacher training last year undertook a period of pupilage, or other work with children, before starting their courses; what percentage of all students this was; and what contribution his Department has made to encourage this practice;

(2) how many schools, counted separately, in the primary, secondary and special education sectors, offer pupilage to prospective initial teacher training students; and what is the percentage of schools involved;

(3) how long a period of pupilage in a school lasts, on average; what are the longest and shortest periods of time; and what advice is given by his Department to encourage high quality student experience.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally. The Government have given financial support to a number of "taster courses" in Wales providing school experience for people who are interested in teaching.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the way in which initial teacher training establishments are selecting applicants on the basis of their personal qualities for effective classroom management and for relating well to children, the way in which his Department is contributing to more effective selection procedures and the number and percentage of applicants who are not accepted for initial teacher training.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses require institutions to ensure that entrants to teacher training have the necessary personal qualities for the profession, including an ability to manage and to get on well with children. No one can be accepted on to an ITT course without being interviewed.

The number of applicants not accepted on to ITT courses in England and Wales in 1992 were, for undergraduate courses, around 9,900—39 per cent. of applicants—and for postgraduate courses around 8,800 —35 per cent. of applicants.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps have been taken in the last two years to promote multicultural awareness and equal opportunities in schools and initial teacher training establishments.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In the last two years the Government have continued the phased introduction of the national curriculum, which is designed to challenge and stimulate all pupils whatever their ethnic or cultural origin. The Curriculum Council for Wales and the Schools Examination and Assessment Council, which advise my right hon. Friend on the curriculum and assessment, are required in exercising their functions to take account of the ethnic and cultural diversity of society in Wales and the importance of promoting equal opportunities for all pupils regardless of ethnic origin and gender. The Government are also proposing to strengthen religious education, which provides opportunities to study other faiths and cultures and develop greater tolerance and understanding.

The criteria for the approval of courses of initial teacher training include a requirement that they should help student teachers to develop an awareness of individual differences, including social and cultural dimensions. We have encouraged the development of ITT courses for people from ethnic minority communities.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of teacher training courses in developing group management skills; and if he considers further specific measures are needed in this regard;

(2) what assessment he has made in the last two years of the effectiveness of basic counselling skills for students in initial teacher training establishments; and how many establishments have been studied for this purpose.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The criteria for the approval of courses of initial teacher training require that students should be trained both in the effective management of groups of pupils and in the pastoral skills required to interact well with individual children. HMI, in its inspection of all ITT courses in Wales, and the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education in its scrutiny of all course proposals have collected evidence of the satisfactory compliance of the institutions with these criteria.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of those involved in the provision of teacher training in determining whether potential teachers have the ability to relate well to pupils.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Higher education institutions are required to interview all students they admit to courses of initial teacher training. Assessment of students' ability to relate well to children is done during that interview and as part of the assessment of the student's teaching practice. We have not made a specific assessment of how institutions undertake this task.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of initial teacher training establishments in introducing students to the concept of peer support and its uses.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have not made an assessment of peer support within initial teacher training courses in Wales. The use of group work is a feature of all ITT courses in institutions in Wales and teaching practice guidance includes the expectation that students should employ various strategies, including group work, in their work with pupils.

Pupil Behaviour

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales since 1990-91 how much money under the grants for education support and training scheme has been allocated to programmes dealing with the management of pupil behaviour; and what percentage of overall funding this is.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The following sums have been specifically allocated to programmes within GEST aimed at improving support services for the most difficult pupils and for training to help improve teachers' practical skills in managing pupil behaviour:

	£	Percentage of total GEST funding
1990-91	280,600	1·2
1991-92	289,200	1·2
1992-93	233,000	0·8
TOTAL	802,800	1·0

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities provide midday supervisors and other non-teaching staff with training in the management of pupils' behaviour; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of this training.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally. No assessment of such training has been undertaken by the Department.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of local education authorities in promoting better co-ordination between various local agencies dealing with pupils with behaviour or attendance problems and their families.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Effective liaison with other agencies is an essential element in dealing with pupils with behaviour or attendance problems and its importance is stressed in much of the guidance produced on the Children Act 1989. The Department issued guidance in 1991 drawing attention to the need for statutory and non-statutory bodies to collaborate in order to secure the successful implementation of the Act.

The Department has agreed to contribute financially to a cities in schools initiative that has been established in Gwent to help combat truancy and to improve the quality of life for young people in the area.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what research his Department has sponsored in the last two years on the implications for pupil behaviour of arranging pupils in groups for teaching purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. The behaviour implications of grouping pupils for teaching purposes were, however, discussed in the Elton report into discipline in schools.

Articled Teachers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have become articled teachers since the inception of the scheme; and in what sectors and subjects.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Sixteen students are currently being trained under the Clwyd local education authority articled teacher scheme. Of these 16 students, five are training to become primary teachers and the remaining 11 are being trained for the secondary phase. A breakdown of the subject specialisms of the secondary students, is as follows:

Subject	Number of Students
Mathematics	2
Chemistry	2
Biology	2
Welsh	4
English	1

The students are due to complete their training at the end of the current academic year.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of in-service training for articled teachers; and what percentage have withdrawn from the scheme since its inception.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Only one local education authority in Wales has adopted an articled teacher scheme. The students involved have yet to complete their training. OHMCI is scrutinising the scheme and will come to a conclusion on its effectiveness at the end of the period of training. Of the 17 students who started the course, one has withdrawn from the scheme.

New Teachers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of local education authority induction programmes for new teachers.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Induction programmes are assessed within inspections carried out by Her Majesty's inspector of schools, whose reports I see.

Induction training funded under the grants for education support and training programme is assessed and taken account of in the consideration of LEA applications for GEST grant. Greater priority to improving induction training was given in the 1992-93 GEST programme. In addition I am funding a research project at University college of Wales, Swansea, aimed at developing guidance on induction programmes for schools in Wales.

Intervention Powers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities have used their powers of intervention under section 28 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986; and on how many occasions.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Teacher Recruitment

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to encourage the recruitment of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds; and what success has been achieved in the last two years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government have adopted a range of measures to encourage people from ethnic minority backgrounds to consider a career in the teaching profession. They include teaching as a career, publications, advertising, participation at careers events, stimulating the development of special access courses, and supporting relevant local projects.

The Government introduced ethnic monitoring of teachers in January 1990 following recommendation by the Swann committee, but the quality of the response from

local education authorities and grant-maintained schools so far has been poor. As a result it is not yet possible to draw conclusions about the percentage of teachers in Wales who are from ethnic minorities, nor to identify improvements over the last two years.

Management Training (Senior Teachers)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of management training programmes for head teachers and other senior staff.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is for individual schools and teachers to decide which training programmes can most effectively meet their particular needs.

The Department has helped by supporting the development and assessment of a number of new management training initiatives in recent years. A survey of overall provision for school management training was commissioned in 1989 to guide and support the work of the school management task force. This work is being taken forward in Wales by Wales Officers and Advisers Development, a consortium set up by Welsh local education authorities.

The office of her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales has responsibility for inspecting the training of teachers including management training programmes.

Records of Achievement

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of of records of achievement in giving due weight to a wide range of pupil achievements and personal qualities.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The national record of achievement is an effective summary for school-leavers to take forward to further education and working life. Recent evaluation has shown that take-up of the NRA among schools has been high. I attach significant value to the continued use of the NRA. That is why regulations governing reports on pupils' achievements which are to be laid before Parliament shortly will require schools in Wales to use the NRA format to provide a specified minimum of information for school-leavers. Copies of the regulations and an explantory circular will be placed in the Library of the House.

Supply Teachers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities provide in-service training in classroom management for supply teachers.

Sir Wyn Roberts This information is not held centrally.

Teaching Skills

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of staff providing training in teaching skills have had at least one term's regular teaching experience in the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher training includes the requirement that, from the beginning of the current academic year, all staff at institutions who are concerned with training students in teaching skills must have had at least one term's experience of teaching in school in the previous five years. OHMCI monitor courses regularly to ensure that institutions comply with this requirement.

School Bullying

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps have been taken by his Department to overcome bullying and racial harassment in schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Bullying and racial harassment are serious matters and we expect schools to deal firmly with them when they arise. While there is no evidence to suggest that racial harassment is a problem in schools in Wales, I am aware of incidents of bullying. To emphasise the importance of firm action against bullying, the Department has sent copies of the information and guidance pack "Action against Bullying" and of a booklet produced by the South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education to all schools in Wales. In addition, the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales has been asked to ensure that all inspecting teams appointed under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 pay particular attention to the arrangements for securing good discipline and behaviour.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of bullying have been reported in each local education authority in the primary, secondary and special education sectors in each of the last three years; and what percentage of those cases were racially motivated.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Charcoal Dressings

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will ensure that pensioners at home suffering from cancer with fungating wounds can use charcoal dressings on prescription for use by district nurses in the community;

(2) if he will review the type and nature of dressings supplied on prescription for cancer sufferers living at home.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Additions to the GP prescribable list, such as new dressings, must be subject to the availability of resources. Dressings prescribed by a consultant for a patient discharged into the community, and not available on the GP prescribable list, are the responsibility of the provider unit; that is, directly managed unit or NHS trust.

Cancer Patients

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of people suffering from cancer receiving care in their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not available centrally.

One of the major strategic aims of the NHS in Wales is to bring health care closer to a patient's home. Our emphasis is on health gain and we wish to see an increase in the quality of life for people with cancer. I am pleased that health authorities are addressing these issues.

Difficult Pupils

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the provision that local education authorities make for their most difficult pupils; and how many local education authorities have been studied in this regard.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. As part of its detailed inquiry into discipline in schools, the Elton committe asked local education authorities about their provision for pupils whose behaviour teachers found most difficult to manage. Their report commented on both the nature and quality of the provision made and has been beneficial to local authorities in helping them to devise strategies for dealing with difficult pupils.

For the future, inspecting teams appointed under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 will pay particular attention to schools' arrangements for securing good discipline and behaviour.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest information he has concerning the number of indefinite exclusions of pupils from *(a)* local education authority schools and *(b)* grant-maintained schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Education (Serious Incident Reporting)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of local education authorities' serious incident reporting systems.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. It is for local education authorities to determine what arrangements are most appropriate to enable them to discharge their functions effectively.

River Dee Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: to ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet a deputation of councillors and officials from county and district level concerning the building of the new River Dee crossing.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes.

Discipline in Schools Report

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he has taken on recommendation *(a)* 68 and *(b)* 69.1, of the Elton report on discipline in schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have issued "Education: A Charter for Parents in Wales" which deals with parental responsibilities as well as their rights. It emphasises the need for parents to support the work of schools in the education of their children.

The Curriculum Council for Wales has issued guidance to schools on the content of family-life education, including education for parenthood, and its place in the wider curriculum.

Education Welfare Officers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many education welfare officers are employed by each local authority; what is the ratio of officers to pupils in each local education authority; and if he will make a statement about the adequacy of this provision.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally. It is for each local education authority to determine whether the number of education welfare officers employed is sufficient to enable it to meet its statutory responsibilities.

Classroom Management

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the way in which the principles of good classroom management are being implemented by teachers and their trainees; and what contribution his Department has made in this process and to the extent to which implementation has been achieved.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In February last year I launched a debate on classroom organisation and teaching methods in primary schools in Wales. Following extensive consultations with teachers in Wales, the Curriculum Council for Wales issued guidance to primary schools on these issues in November. Good classroom practice is a matter for teachers, headteachers and schools and will continue to be subject to inspection either by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools or by inspectors registered by the office of Her Majesty's chief inspectors of schools from September 1993. The criteria for the approval of courses of initial teacher training require that students should be trained in the effective management of groups of pupils.

School Buildings

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest information available to him on the money needed to bring all school buildings into a good state of repair.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The state of repair and management of the local authority estate was addressed in the efficiency initiative. Following the issue of the report of the "Quality Circle" on property review, the authorities were expected to provide reports on their estate holdings, including the education estate, but have not yet done so.

Road Construction and Maintenance

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles of motorway in Wales are currently *(a)* open, *(b)* under construction and *(c)* planned in Wales either (i) as completely new motorway or (ii) as existing motorway being widened.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The mileages are as follows:

(a) Open—74 miles.
(b) Under Construction—6 miles.
(c) Planned—19 miles (new motorway) and 8 miles (widening of existing motorway).

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a breakdown of the planned expenditure on *(a)* new construction and improvement, *(b)* structural maintenance and *(c)* current maintenance on trunk roads by his Department for each year from 1993-94 to 1995-96.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Total planned central Government net expenditure in 1993-94 on the roads and transport programme in Wales is £201·3 million. Further details will be published in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1993-94 to 1995-96: Departmental Report by the Welsh Office" in February. Planned net expenditure in 1994-95 and 1995-96 is £209·3 million and £219·7 million respectively.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the numbers and locations of (1) the *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Wales which have opted out of local education authority control; and if he will make a statement;

(2) the *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Wales which have applied to opt out of local education authority control; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Twelve schools have to date published proposals to become grant maintained. They are:

(a) PRIMARY SCHOOLS
- Cefnpennar Infants, Mid Glamorgan
- Llanerfyl, Powys
- Caergeiliog, Gwynedd
- Derwen, Clwyd
- Penybryn, Clwyd

(b) SECONDARY SCHOOLS
- Queens, Gwent
- Cwmcarn, Gwent
- Bishop Vaughan, West Glamorgan
- Brynmawr, Gwent
- Emrys ap Iwan, Clwyd
- Maelor, Clwyd
- Stanwell, South Glamorgan

Of these, the applications from Cwmcarn, Brynmawr, Bishop Vaughan, and Emrys ap Iwan schools have been approved for grant-maintained status and those from Queens and Cefnpennar have been rejected.

Proposals from the other six schools are currently before me for decision and I hope to make announcements on them soon.

River Corring (Pollution)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment has been made of the pollution caused from the spoil from the Nantewlaeth reclamation scheme discharging into the River Corring in the Aran valley following flooding.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The National Rivers Authority undertook a visual assessment following the pollution incident which affected the Rivers Corrwg and Afan on 30 November 1992. This found siltation of the river gravels and a corresponding smothering of fish spawning reeds. A survey of the effect of this incident on fish populations will be undertaken by the authority later this year.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the amount of money given under the assisted places scheme to each of the private schools of Wales in each of the years from the schemes inception up to the latest possible year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Assisted Places Scheme: Payment to Schools Financial Years 1981-82–1991-92

School	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £	1987-88 £	1988-89 £	1989-90 £	1990-91 £	1991-92 £
Christ College, Brecon	7,986	21,443	36,063	48,289	62,116	95,473	131,470	155,404	189,033	244,081	321,779
Howell's School, Denbigh	11,011	37,883	70,107	96,971	132,971	179,033	225,465	243,740	237,474	231,442	254,759
Howell's School, Llandaff	17,774	57,094	106,799	144,940	209,858	274,274	314,274	319,099	334,290	358,798	328,763
Llandovery College	3,737	9,217	19,615	31,013	38,279	454,407	55,732	75,308	92,650	140,381	203,641
Monmouth School (for Boys)	18,515	52,035	92,610	134,170	181,642	233,684	307,291	277,352	323,194	303,951	374,475
Monmouth School (for Girls)	9,644	21,677	37,072	52,598	68,760	90,225	109,297	144,422	128,010	140,618	166,552
Penrhos College	5,108	21,973	38,489	62,843	81,089	99,399	140,459	136,944	156,617	183,500	225,688
Rydal School	4,194	38,206	53,896	56,864	67,768	93,274	110,254	112,767	128,121	153,508	189,153
Lowther College*	23,709	15,244	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	101,678	274,772	454,651	627,688	842,483	1,519,769	1,394,242	1,465,036	1,589,389	1,756,279	2,064,810

* Lowther College closed in July 1982.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many economically active males there were in each district in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 1991; what percentage those numbers represented of the population of each district; and what was the percentage change in the number of economically active males in each district between 1987 and 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of economically active males and the percentage they represent of the male population of working age are given for 1986 and 1991 in the following table. Data for 1987 are not available. The percentage change between the two years is not shown as the sources used for the data are not strictly comparable.

Economically active males in Welsh districts 1986 and 1991

	1986		1991	
	Econ active males aged 16-64 (000)	*Percentage of males aged 16-64 economically active*	*Econ active males aged 16-64 (000)*	*Percentage of males aged 16-64 economically active*
Alyn & Deeside	19·1	87·2	20·8	87·2
Colwyn	10·8	83·4	12·5	81·1
Delyn	17·6	86·3	18·3	84·2
Glyndwr	10·4	86·0	11·0	84·6
Rhuddlan	11·7	81·0	12·2	79·7
Wrexham Maelor	31·0	85·6	30·0	83·3
Carmarthen	12·8	83·5	13·8	81·4
Ceredigion	15·1	80·7	15·6	80·1
Dinefwr	8·6	80·1	9·2	78·1
Llanelli	17·4	78·1	17·2	76·9
Preseli Pembrokeshire	17·8	84·7	18·2	82·5
South Pembrokeshire	9·7	82·2	10·5	81·7
Blaenau Gwent	18·8	77·6	18·4	76·9
Islwyn	16·3	81·5	16·7	79·1
Monmouth	19·6	86·6	20·5	84·7
Newport	33·0	84·0	34·2	82·9
Torfaen	23·4	83·1	23·1	81·2
Aberconwy	10·3	85·0	12·6	82·4
Arfon	13·1	84·4	13·3	80·2
Dwyfor	6·4	82·5	6·7	82·4
Meirionnydd	7·4	83·5	8·1	82·2
Ynys Mon-Isle of Anglesey	18·0	85·0	17·6	82·3
Cynon Valley	15·6	78·3	15·2	76·0
Merthyr Tydfil	13·9	75·8	13·7	75·9
Ogwr	31·9	79·1	33·2	80·4
Rhondda	18·3	72·5	17·9	74·5
Rhymney Valley	25·3	76·3	25·0	76·8
Taff-Ely	22·8	78·6	25·0	81·0
Brecknock	10·0	84·1	10·4	81·6
Montgomeryshire	13·8	89·8	14·4	86·1
Radnor	5·9	87·0	6·2	85·5
Cardiff	68·0	82·0	70·3	81·8
Vale of Glamorgan	29·0	85·9	29·4	83·5
Lliw Valley	14·9	82·1	15·3	79·3
Neath	16·2	77·0	15·8	78·1
Port Talbot	12·2	76·5	11·8	75·0
Swansea	45·7	79·5	43·8	78·7

Notes:
1. Economically active students are excluded.
2. Data for 1991 are from the 1991 Census.
3. Data for 1986 are extracted from the Welsh Inter Censal Survey are subject to sampling error, and are not strictly comparable to Census data.

Roads Department (Wildlife Protection)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures his Roads Department has taken and will take to minimise disturbance to badgers and other wildlife; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The provision of badger-proof fencing, badger crossings and gates, together with the relocation of setts are among steps that are, or may be, taken, depending on the particular circumstances. Mitigating measures for other wildlife are subject to the species involved.

The Department's highways directorate recognises the need to mitigate and minimise the effects of road construction on wildlife and will continue to pursue that objective.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the budget for the programme for environmentally sensitive areas in each year since 1985; and what the budget will be in each year for the next three years.

Mr. David Hunt: The first environmentally sensitive area in Wales—the Cambrian mountains (original)—was not designated until 1 March 1987. The Cambrian mountains (extension) and Lleyn peninsula ESAs were designated on 1 January 1988. I intend to designate four further ESAs—Anglesey, Radnor, Preseli and the Clwydian range—during 1993. Actual and estimated Welsh ESA payments to farmers are set out in the following table:

Year	[1]*£m*
1987-88	0·02 (actual)
1988-89	0·37 (actual)
1989-90	0·70 (actual)
1990-91	0·88 (actual)
1991-92	1·46 (actual)
[2]1992-93	3·74 (estimate)
[3]1993-94	5·79 (estimate)
[3]1994-95	7·61 (estimate)
[3]1995-96	7·76 (estimate)

Notes:
[1] The figures have been rounded.
[2] Actual 1992-93 expenditure will be published in the 1992 Appropriation Accounts.
[3] The 1993-94 provision will be published in the 1993-94 Main Supply Estimate Class XV Vote 2. The provision for 1994-95 and 1995-96 will also be published in the Main Supply Estimate for those years.

Special Education

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how special education will be regarded under the proposed system of unitary authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Special education will continue to be treated as a matter of high priority under the new structure of local government. The local education authority will retain responsibility for assessing, and making appropriate provision for, children with special education needs.

National Biodiversity Plan

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to develop a national biodiversity plan for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The action plan on biodiversity is being prepared on a UK-wide basis, but the Welsh Office and the Countryside Council for Wales are, of course, being closely consulted.

National Museum

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the attendance figures for 1992 reported by the national museum of Wales, including its outstations; and what was the percentage change compared with the attendance figures for 1991.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A total of 867,943 people visited the national museum of Wales during 1992, an increase of 27 per cent. over the attendance reported for 1991.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the level of farm incomes in *(a)* less favoured areas, *(b)* disadvantaged areas and *(c)* severely disadvantaged areas, in cash terms and real terms in each year since 1982.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is available in this form only since 1985-86 and is as follows:

	Less favoured areas income		*Disadvantaged areas income*		*Seriously disadvantaged areas income*	
	Current prices £	[1] *Real terms* £	*Current prices* £	[1] *Real terms* £	*Current prices* £	[1] *Real terms* £
1985-86	7,616	10,727	5,938	8,363	7,913	11,145
1986-87	7,906	10,830	3,129	4,286	9,604	13,156
1987-88	9,453	12,438	5,985	7,875	10,703	14,083
1988-89	14,250	17,813	10,353	12,941	15,721	19,651
1989-90	8,805	10,121	5,370	6,172	10,022	11,520
1990-91	7,561	7,959	1,592	1,676	9,932	10,455
1991-92	12,254	12,254	4,386	4,386	15,340	15,340

[1] Deflated by the RPI 1991-92 = 100.

Housing

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the Welsh housing budget was used to fund the tenants' cash incentive scheme in the last financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1991-92, resources amounting to £200,000 were made available for tenants' cash incentive schemes. This represents 0·038 per cent. of the total Welsh Office provision for housing amounting to £527 million for that year.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what account was taken of the legal action being taken against Dr. Roy Bichan in the United States when he appointed him deputy chairman of the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I take full account of all available information in making appointments.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much of the Welsh Development Agency's technology growth fund budget—allocated funds has been spent since being set up (i) in cash terms each year, (ii) as a percentage of the Welsh Development Agency's total budget and (iii) as a percentage of Welsh Development Agency's international budget.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the Welsh Development Agency. I have arranged for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Gentleman and for a copy of his response to be printed in the *Official Report*.

Letter from Philip J. Head to Mr. Ron Davies, dated 7 January 1993:

In response to the above question I am pleased to enclose the information you requested concerning the Agency's Technology Growth Fund.

The Agency is, of course, involved in promoting the use of technology and technology related investment through both its Business Services and Welsh Development International divisions. In the Business Services Division alone some £1·3 million of expenditure was directly related to these activities in the 1991-92 financial year.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Technology Growth Fund

Year	*Expenditure* £K	*Percentage of Agency Expenditure* Per cent.	*Percentage of WDI Expenditure* Per cent.
1988-89	80	0·07	3·18
1989-90	540	0·41	17·24
1990-91	120	0·08	3·40
1991-92	90	0·06	2·16

Cereal Crop

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of cereal crop production in Wales in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: According to the cereal production survey conducted during September 1992, the production of cereal crops in Wales for the 1992 harvest was as follows:

Wheat	80 thousand tonnes
Winter barley	90 thousand tonnes
Spring barley	80 thousand tonnes
Oats	20 thousand tonnes
Triticale	1 thousand tonnes

Roads

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when work to improve the A483 Welshpool to Shropshire borders road is due to commence; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The A483 Pant-Llanymynech bypass scheme is expected to start in the medium term, between April 1995 and March 1998.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the consultants for the Newton bypass will be appointed; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Consultants are expected to be appointed in spring 1993.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to the possibility of trunking the South Glamorgan peripheral distributor road; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am aware of no such representations.

Council Rents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average rent of council homes in Wales for each year since 1979 adjusted for rises in inflation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The average rents of council homes set by local authorities are given in the following table:

Average weekly rent of council homes in Wales

	Rents adjusted to 1992-93 prices £s
1979	15·26
1980	16·02
1981	21·27
1982	24·20
1983	24·16
1984	24·51
1985	24·77
1986	25·01
1987	24·64
1988	25·32
1989	26·90
1990	27·21
1991	28·05
1992	29·81

Source: 1979-1989 CIPFA.
1990-1992 Local authority returns.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average income of hill sheep farmers in Wales in each of the past five years; and what are the projected levels for the present and the coming financial years, taking into account any changes to the grant system.

Mr. David Hunt: Average incomes of hill and upland sheep farms for each of the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 are as follows:

	£
1987-88	9,380
1988-89	15,283
1989-90	9,468

Figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 together with income forecast for 1992-93 are at table 14 of the statistical tables prepared in connection with the 1992 autumn review of hill livestock compensatory allowances. A copy is available in the Library of the House. Forecasts are not yet available for the coming financial year but it is presently estimated that the net effect of the increase in sheep annual premium payments, including the less-favoured area supplement, as the result of green pound devaluations, together with HLCA payment reductions will represent an enhancement of about £10·0 million in total Welsh LFA sheep producer incomes.

Operation Wizard

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *771*, under what statutory powers the Operation Wizard consultancy exercise was authorised; if prior authorisation was agreed by his Department before each of the consultants was engaged; if the choice of consultants followed an open advertisement and competition relating to a published brief; if he will publish a full list of the consultancy companies and partnerships engaged; and on what date each of them started and completed their work.

Mr. David Hunt: The agency has wide-ranging powers under the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 which includes powers to commission studies in relation to the discharge of its functions. Within the guidelines set out in the financial memorandum, day-to-day management, including the use of consultants, is a matter for the agency. In awarding contracts, the agency is required to have regard to best practice and value for money.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what negotiations he has had with his counterparts in the European Commission concerning the principle of and level of European regional development fund grant for the proposed Cardiff bay barrage.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Welsh Council for Voluntary Action

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action concerning the grant aid for volunteering in the next financial year; what evaluation he has made of the consequences of grant aid settlement on the level and quality of volunteering activity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Welsh Office officials are in regular contact with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action about many matters concerning the voluntary sector, but there has been no specific consultation concerning grant-aid for volunteering in 1993-94. The WCVA has responsibility for administering the volunteering in Wales fund and were awarded £215,000 by the Department in 1992-93 for distribution to eligible projects which promote volunteering. Resources for the VIWF, along with all other applications from Welsh generalist intermediary bodies, including the WCVA itself, are being considered in the light of the total resources available for 1993-94. I expect to be in a position to make an announcement in February 1993.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions during each of the last five years the search and rescue helicopter squadron has been called out to deal with reported emergencies in and around the Ceredigion and Pembroke North constituency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply. Statistical data are not recorded in the form requested.

DEFENCE

Search and Rescue

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many offshore emergency incidents have been dealt with by the search and rescue helicopter squadron at RAF Brawdy in each of the last five years; and how many such incidents have involved the winching of firefighters to stricken vessels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The table gives the number of offshore emergency incidents dealt with by the search and rescue flight at RAF Brawdy over the past five years. Statistical data are not held on the number of incidents involving the winching of firefighters.

Year	*Callouts*	*Persons Rescued*
1988	71	53
1989	66	38
1990	62	97
1991	69	48
1992	63	15

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the bases for search and rescue helicopter squadrons within the United Kingdom which have closed during the last 10 years, indicating the average response time to coastal and offshore emergencies *(a)* within a radius of 25 miles, *(b)* 50 miles, *(c)* 75 miles, *(d)* 100 miles and *(e)* 150 miles from the base both (i) prior to and (ii) following the removal of the service from the vicinity.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No bases with search and rescue helicopters have closed in the last 10 years.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research has been undertaken by his Department to date concerning the effect of the removal of search and rescue helicopter squadrons upon localised emergency rescue arrangements.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The new basing structure for the RAF search and rescue helicopter force took into account, and will very largely meet, the established civil SAR criteria.

Western European Union

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations his Department had at the most recent part-session of the Assembly of Western European Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave an address to the Western European Union assembly on 1 December 1992, during the second part of its 38th ordinary session. Officials from my Department attended for part of the session.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the reason for withholding papers on chemical and biological weapons, and the authority of command of nuclear weapons, beyond 30 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Those Ministry of Defence papers which are not already open continue to be withheld from the public domain under the criteria of the Public Records Acts for reasons such as national security. They will be progressively released as their sensitivity lapses.

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* all measures taken by his Department in the last 12 months to prevent nuclear proliferation, *(b)* the number of personnel in his Department working to prevent nuclear proliferation and *(c)* his Department's total expenditure on control of nuclear proliferation in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is Government policy to meet all our obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and our commitments under the nuclear suppliers group regime. My Department supports fully the Government's efforts to promote effective international controls on nuclear weapon-related and nuclear dual-use exports to help prevent proliferation. A wide range of personnel within my Department work on nuclear non-proliferation-related matters; the direct costs of pursuing this policy are not separately identifiable.

AWRE Aldermaston

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what projects are currently under way at the atomic weapons research establishment, Aldermaston; what work is planned to finish within the next year; what new projects are planned for the establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We are committed to maintaining the United Kingdom's minimum nuclear deterrent. The atomic weapons establishment has a complex and continuing programme of work in fulfilment of this policy, including support for in-service weapons, the Trident programme, and preliminary work towards a possible replacement for the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Bosnia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to strengthen the rules of engagement for the British troops in Bosnia; and if he will make it his policy that they will have the means to protect themselves with all the appropriate light weapons and radar-seeking missiles being made available on HMS Ark Royal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Rules of engagement governing the use of force by the British battalion group carrying out its humanitarian role in Bosnia already provide satisfactorily for our troops to respond in self-defence,

with the means available to them, to any attacks. In his statement on 14 January, *Official Report*, columns 1057-58, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said that the forces which are being currently deployed to the Adriatic have been sent as a contingency, to be available to provide additional protection for the battalion group should that be required.

RAF Pilot Training

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to review levels of RAF pilot training; whether the future viability of RAF Chivenor is contingent upon a review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: While there are currently no plans to review RAF training, all aspects of my Department's activities are examined to see what scope exists for making savings on the defence budget. This is done through the annual process of re-costing the defence programme. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on what the results of this or subsequent years' examinations may be for individual capabilities or establishments.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the net effect on Exmoor farming incomes of changes he proposes to hill livestock compensatory allowances for the next year.

Mr. Curry: The conditions of the HLCA scheme are determined on the basis of national statistical data and it is not possible to measure the impact on different localities. I have no reason to believe conditions for farmers in Exmoor are materially different from those obtaining elsewhere in the less favoured areas in England. The HLCA reductions were taken in the light of increased incomes in the hill sheep sector and will in any case be more than offset by increases in ewe premium payments next April resulting from green pound devaluations and decisions taken at the December Agriculture Council.

Farm Income

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the level of average net farm income at constant prices for *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Curry: Provisional estimates of net farm income in 1992 will be published shortly. Estimates for 1993 and 1994 income levels are not available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the level of farm incomes in *(a)* less-favoured areas, *(b)* disadvantaged areas and *(c)* severely disadvantaged areas, in cash terms and real terms in each year since 1982.

Mr. Curry: Year by year comparisons can best be made by reference to results from a constant sample of farms. The following table shows indices of net farm income in nominal and real terms for each year from 1982-83 to 1992-93 on farms in the United Kingdom's less favoured areas and estimated income levels for the latest available constant sample. The information given takes no account of the impact of the recent green pound devaluations. Sheep farmers in the less favoured areas can expect an additional total subsidy of at least £1·80 per ewe in respect of 1992.

Average net farm income on LFA livestock farms in the United Kingdom

	Severely Disadvantaged Area			*Disadvantaged Area*[1]			*All LFA*		
	Nominal terms		*Real terms*	*Nominal terms*		*Real terms*	*Nominal terms*		*Real terms*
[2] *Year*	*£ thousands per farm*	[3] *Index*	[3] *Index*	*£ thousands per farm*	[3] *Index*	[3] *Index*	*£ thousands per farm*	[3] *Index*	[3] *Index*
1982-83	—	112	172	—	—	—	—	112	172
1983-84	—	98	143	—	412	595	—	108	159
1984-85	—	112	157	—	338	465	—	121	170
1985-86	—	107	142	—	205	266	—	112	148
1986-87	—	80	102	—	113	141	—	82	104
1987-88	—	118	145	—	218	263	—	125	153
1988-89	—	145	168	—	293	335	—	154	179
1989-90	—	103	111	—	152	161	—	106	114
1990-91	8.3	87	86	2.8	58	56	7.1	85	83
1991-92	10.4	110	103	4.3	91	83	9.1	109	102
1992-93	12.2	128	116	4.9	102	90	10.6	127	114

[1] The disadvantaged area was designated only in 1984.
[2] Accounting years end on average in February.
[3] 1989-90—1991-92 = 100. Indices in real terms have been derived by deflating the nominal indices by the Retail Price Index.

Advisory Committees

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the organisations represented on each of his Department's advisory committees.

Mr. Gummer: The following table lists the organisations which have formal representation on each advisory body given in the annual "Public Bodies" publication, the latest edition of which relates to 1991 and is available from the Library of the House.

However for the majority of the bodies' members are appointed on the basis of their personal expertise rather than because of the organisation by which they are employed.

Advisory body	*Organisations represented formally*
Advisory Committee on Pesticides	—
Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committees	(i) National Farmers Union (NFU) (ii) Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) (Rural Agricultural and Allied Workers Trade Group)
Agricultural Statistics Consultative Committee	(i) NFU (ii) Country Landowners Association (CLA) (iii) T&GWU (Agriculture and Allied Workers National Trade Group)
Banana Trade Advisory Committee	(i) Geest Industries Ltd. plc (ii) Fyffe Group Ltd. (iii) Jamaica Producers Marketing Co. Ltd. (iv) Windward Islands Banana Growers Association (WINBAN) (v) Jamaica Marketing Co. Ltd. (JAMCA)
Committee of Agricultural Valuation	—
Consultative Panel on Badgers and Tuberculosis	(i) NFU (ii) CLA (iii) RSPCA (iv) Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (v) Joint Nature Conservation Committee (vi) Royal Society for Nature Conservation (vii) Flora and Fauna Preservation Society (viii) T&GWU (ix) British Veterinary Association (x) Mammal Society (xi) National Federation of Badger Groups
Consumers' Committee for England and Wales under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958	—
Consumers' Committee for Great Britain under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958	—
Farm Animal Welfare Council	—
Food Advisory Committee	—
Hill Farming Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern ireland	—
National Food Survey Committee	—
Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food	—
Regional Panels for the Farming Industry	—
Salmon Advisory Committee	—
Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee	—
Steering Group on Chemical Aspects of Food Surveillance	—
Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee	(i) NFU (ii) British Sugar plc
Veterinary Products Committee	—

Wild-caught Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce limits on consignment size for the importation of wild-caught birds to fewer than 100 birds into the United Kingdom; and if he will press for this limit to be applied in the new EC transport directive.

Mr. Soames: We are pursuing proposals for limiting the size of consignments of wild birds with the International Air Transport Association, whose Live Animal Regulations are now mandatory under Community law. We are also pressing the European Commission to introduce proposals for further specific measures on wild birds under the directive on the protection of animals during transport.

Fisheries Inspectors

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what access British fisheries inspectors have to all ships registered in Britain; and when they last inspected the British-registered fishing fleet based in La Coruna in northern Spain.

Mr. Curry: British sea fisheries officers have powers to inspect all United Kingdom and foreign-registered fishing vessels in British ports and at sea within British fishery limits.

United Kingdom-registered ships that are over 10 m in length and land less than 50 per cent. of their catch in the United Kingdom are required to make at least four pre-notified visits to British ports in each six month period (January-June and July-December). Subject to other priority work, British sea fisheries officers check such vessels on these visits. In addition, they are subject to inspections at sea by the United Kingdom fisheries protection service.

Milk Quotas

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions exist in the market in milk quotas across the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: Under the EC milk quota regulations the permanent transfer of quota is linked to land transactions. Detailed rules governing the transfer of quota are contained in the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1991. Under these regulations wholesale quota which accounts for about 97 per cent. of milk produced in the United Kingdom is managed on a regional basis in the United Kingdom. This means that it may be transferred only within each of the eight regions which are defined under the regulations. England and Wales and the Scilly Isles are defined as one region; so too is Northern Ireland; and there are six regions in Scotland. Direct sales quota is required by EC rules to be managed on a national basis, so transfers are not subject to similar regional restrictions.

New EC regulations will govern milk quota administration from 1 April 1993. We will be revising the United Kingdom DPQR once the new EC detailed rules have been agreed.

Poultry Meat Inspection Charges

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether poultry meat inspection charges are levied at the same rate across the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: The Fresh Meat and Poultry Meat (Hygiene, Inspection and Examinations for Residues) (Charges) Regulations 1990 (SI 1990 No. 2494) require local authorities to charge for health inspection at poultry meat plants. Subject to compliance with the detailed provisions of the regulations, local authorities are entitled to recover the real costs incurred in carrying out the inspection.

The Department carried out a detailed review of meat inspection charges in early 1992 which revealed that inspection charges varied considerably across the country. My right hon. Friend the Minister placed summary statistics collected during this review in the Library of the House in June 1992. (*Hansard* cols. *16-17*, 8 June 1992.)

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what scientific evidence he has concerning the spread of bovine TB from badgers to cattle.

Mr. Soames: Experimental control areas in Dorset and Gloucestershire, set up in 1975, provided evidence of the causal link between infection in badgers and cattle herds. Two independent reports, by Lord Zuckerman in 1980 and Professor Dunnet in 1986, concluded from the evidence obtained under laboratory conditions at the central veterinary laboratory and from the field that badgers can and do harbour bovine tuberculosis and represent a potential threat to cattle. All cattle tuberculosis breakdowns are the subject of detailed epidemiological investigation by MAFF veterinary staff. These show that badgers are implicated in at least three-quarters of cattle herd tuberculosis breakdowns in the south-west of England.

Farm Support

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers are in receipt of support in the less favoured areas, split into those in the severely disadvantaged areas and those in the disadvantaged areas; and what is the average amount of support which each receive under each form of support from public funds.

Mr. Curry: The information requested in respect of livestock subsidies in the United Kingdom is as follows:

Type of support	*Number of claimants (thousands)*		*Average payment at 1992 rates*	
	SDA	*DA*	*SDA*	*DA*
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances Scheme	51	16	£2,250	£690
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme		51		£5,900
Suckler Cow Premium Scheme		35		£2,600

The number of claimants does not equate precisely with the number of farmers receiving support because some claims are submitted by groups of farmers. For the sheep annual premium scheme and the suckler cow premium scheme information is available only for the less favoured areas: it is not possible to distinguish between payments made in relation to the severely disadvantaged areas and the disadvantaged areas.

Myxomatosis

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the availability of vaccine against myxomatosis in pet and commercially farmed rabbits.

Mr. Soames: In April 1992 the only United Kingdom product licence for a myxomatosis vaccine was surrendered by its holder. As a result no further supplies of vaccine were available once existing stocks held by veterinary practitioners were used up. Following informal discussions between the veterinary medicines directorate and vaccine manufacturers, and representations by rabbit keepers to the pharmaceutical industry, an application has

recently been received from Intervet (UK) Ltd to licence a replacement vaccine. The data supporting the application are being assessed as rapidly as possible against the standard Medicines Act criteria of safety, quality and efficacy.

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect of the abolition of monetary compensatory amounts on inflation in British food prices; and what consideration has been given to phasing in the subsequent green pound devaluation.

Mr. Curry: The 7 per cent. devaluation of the green pound agreed at the Agriculture Council in November and three smaller automatic devaluations resulting from realignments within the exchange rate mechanism (ERM) were followed by a 4·4 per cent. devaluation of the United Kingdom green rate on 1 January 1993, to take it within two points of the prevailing market exchange rate in line with the rules of the new agrimonetary system. These green rate changes effectively phased in the adjustment to the new arrangements under which monetary compensatory amounts (MCAs) were abolished. It is estimated that these green pound devaluations may increase food prices by about 2 per cent. once the effects of the increases in common agricultural policy support prices have worked through.

Under the rules of the new system, green rate devaluations (and revaluations) will take place automatically in order to keep green rates closely aligned with market rates. The market exchange rates of the currencies outside the narrow band of the ERM (currently the pound sterling, the lira, the peseta, the escudo and the drachma) will be monitored during three 10-day reference periods each month. A member state's green rate will be adjusted whenever there is a gap of more than two percentage points between green and market rates during the final reference period in a month. There will also be adjustments when the difference between the monetary gaps for any two currencies exceeds four points in any of the three reference periods in a month. Finally, more frequent adjustments can be made to green rates when exchange rates are very volatile.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Agriculture Council held on 18 and 19 January.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this quiet meeting of the Council which followed that in December under the United Kingdom presidency when decisions were taken on most outstanding issues.

Discussion concentrated on detailed issues. It was agreed that officials would conduct a technical appraisal of the compatibility of common agriculture policy reform with the draft Uruguay round agreement.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the level of the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions as a percentage of average earnings in 1978-79, 1992-93 and his projection for 1993-94, *(b)* the number of additional people with earnings above the national insurance contribution ceiling in 1992-93 and 1993-94 as a result of increases in the upper earnings limit by the level of prices rather than average earnings since 1978-79 and *(c)* the effect on national insurance revenues in 1992-93 and 1993-94 of increases in the upper earnings limit by the level of prices rather than average earnings since 1978-79.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

	Average weekly earnings (adults)[1] *£*	*Weekly upper earnings limit (UEL)*	*UEL as a percentage of average earnings Per cent.*	*Number of people*[3] *Million*	*Estimated effect on NI revenues*[4] *£billion*
April					
1978	78·60	120·00	152·7	—	—
1992	304·60	405·00	133·0	1·7	+ 0·5
1993	[2]320·00	420·00	131·3	1·8	+ 0·7

Notes

[1] Average weekly full time earnings of all adults. *Source:* New Earnings Survey.

[2] Assumes a rise in average earnings of 5 per cent. rounded to the nearest £.

[3] The estimated number of people with earnings above the UEL but below the level which would have applied had the UEL been increased in line with average earnings since 1978-79.

[4] The estimated effect on NI revenue had the increases in the UEL since 1978-79 been by the level of earnings rather than prices. Includes effects on both employers' and employees' NICs.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the level of the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions as a percentage of average earnings in 1978-79, 1992-93 and his projection for 1993-94, *(b)* the number of additional people who will pay national insurance contributions in 1992-93 and 1993-94 as a result of increases in the lower earnings limit by the level of prices rather than average earnings since 1978-79 and *(c)* the effect on national insurance revenues in 1992-93 and 1993-94 of increases in the lower earnings limit by the level of prices rather than average earnings since 1978-79.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

	[1] Average weekly earnings (adults)	Weekly lower earnings limit (LEL)	Lower earnings limit (LEL) as a percentage of average earnings	[3] Estimated number of additional contributors	[4] Estimated effect on National Insurance revenues
	£	£	Per cent.	Million	£ billion
April 1978	78·60	17·50	22·3	—	—
1992	304·60	54·00	17·7	0·6	+0·5
1993	[2]320·00	56·00	17·5	0·6	+0·7

[1] Average weekly full-time earnings of all adults. *Source:* New Earnings Survey.
[2] The estimated additional number of people who pay National Insurance contributions and gain potential entitlement to contributory benefits as a result of increases in the lower earnings limit since 1978-79 by the level of prices rather than earnings.
[3] The estimated effect on National Insurance revenue as a result of increases in the lower earnings limit since 1978-79 by the level of prices rather than earnings. Includes effects on both employers' and employees' National Insurance contributions, but does not take account of the extra costs of contributory benefits which people are obtaining for as little as £1·12 a week.
[4] Assumes a rise in earnings of 5 per cent., rounded to the nearest £.

War Pensions

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reconsider his decision to stop awards of war pension for noise-induced hearing loss resulting in under 20 per cent. disablement; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: No, as announced in the reply to the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), 17 December at columns *369-70*, full and careful consideration was given to all representations before the decision was taken to proceed with the package of changes which included the introduction of a minimum level of disablement for noise-induced hearing loss.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the time taken by local authorities to process housing benefit applications from council and privately renting tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Regulations provide that authorities should process claims to housing benefit within 14 days of all the necessary information becoming available. If authorities are unable to do this they should make interim payments. Many authorities achieve the target in full. Nationally, in 1991-92, 71 per cent. of new claims from council tenants and 70 per cent. of claims from private tenants were processed within 14 days. For repeat claims the percentages were 83 per cent. and 73 per cent. respectively. All figures are an improvement on the overall figure of two thirds of claims processed within 14 days achieved in 1990-91.

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the level of housing benefit to the private sector in *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92 and *(c)* to date in the current year; and what was the average level of benefit in (i) the private sector, (ii) the council sector and (iii) the housing association sector.

Mr. Burt: The available information is set out in the table:

	Amount of rent allowance paid or estimated (£ thousand)	Rent allowance	Average amount (£/week) of rent rebate
1990-91	1,757,071	25·45	19·80
1991-92	2,353,942	32·57	22·76
1992-93	2,883,389	39·02	26·73
	—[1]		—[2]

Notes: Separate information in respect of Housing Associations is not available.

Rent allowance is Housing Benefit paid to the private sector and includes that paid to the housing association sector.
Rent rebate is Housing Benefit paid to the council sector.

Source:
(1) Local Authority Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit subsidy claim forms.
(2) 1990 and 1991, the Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System statistics annual 1 per cent sample, taken in May of each year, for 1992 the quarterly caseload enquiry, as at August 1992.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will announce how housing benefit transitional payments will be treated in April.

Mr. Burt: We have always made it clear that housing benefit transitional payments which were introduced in 1988 will be reduced as increases in other benefits make them less necessary. We have, therefore, decided on a flat rate reduction of £1·50 per week in these payments for the year from April 1993. As a result, the vast majority of recipients will still gain overall in cash terms from the April uprating of other social security benefits.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines have been issued to deal with applicants suffering from myalgic encephalomyelitis applying for disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The disability handbook, which helps adjudicating authorities to assess medical evidence, provides information on the likely effects of myalgic encephalomyelitis on a person's care and/or mobility needs.

Income Support

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by date for the last 12 months, the number of times his Benefit Agency's income support computer has malfunctioned.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 18 January 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if he will list by date for the last 12 months, the number of times his Benefits Agency's Income Support Computer system has malfunctioned.

I am pleased to advise you that the time lost through computer malfunction is minimal. The Income Support Computer Service is available for 122,400 hours a year. Only 0·72 per cent. of computer time was lost in the year ended December 1992. This was a total of 882 hours and 57 minutes.

I have appended, in chronological order, information on the incidents where there has been a loss of the Income Support computer service. The time lost on any date shown is a cumulative total for the number of incidents shown and may represent one or more offices.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Date	Incidents raised	Time lost Hours	Minutes
3 January 1992	1	—	33
7 July 1992	1	1	35
15 January 1992	2	5	54
16 January 1992	2	3	44
18 January 1992	7	7	06
19 January 1992	3	10	56
24 January 1992	1	1	15
26 January 1992	2	1	16
27 January 1992	3	2	57
28 January 1992	2	2	02
29 January 1992	9	27	56
2 February 1992	2	1	18
4 February 1992	2	2	29
6 February 1992	1	—	16
9 February 1992	2	3	00
17 February 1992	4	7	35
18 February 1992	2	—	34
1 March 1992	2	1	20
2 March 1992	2	3	46
3 March 1992	1	1	05
5 March 1992	2	4	39
8 March 1992	2	6	06
9 March 1992	4	6	44
12 March 1992	1	—	03
13 March 1992	2	2	36
18 March 1992	2	4	31
19 March 1992	5	12	37
23 March 1992	2	1	16
7 April 1992	2	4	38
8 April 1992	1	—	40
10 April 1992	1	—	13
15 April 1992	2	2	20
24 April 1992	2	—	40
28 April 1992	2	1	28
29 April 1992	33	28	21
30 April 1992	5	17	43
1 May 1992	1	—	28
6 May 1992	4	7	32
14 May 1992	2	2	16
26 May 1992	1	1	00
29 May 1992	2	4	13
7 June 1992	1	3	20
9 June 1992	4	2	01
10 June 1992	1	—	41
11 June 1992	1	—	50
17 June 1992	1	—	14
21 June 1992	1	1	06
23 June 1992	4	8	22
25 June 1992	2	4	00
26 June 1992	2	—	20
27 June 1992	3	2	45
1 July 1992	5	1	05
6 July 1992	2	2	59
7 July 1992	4	8	43
10 July 1992	1	—	59
13 July 1992	2	3	15
17 July 1992	2	1	45
18 July 1992	2	2	00
20 July 1992	4	2	47
22 July 1992	2	2	04
23 July 1992	1	—	05
24 July 1992	12	11	45
27 July 1992	3	3	04
28 July 1992	2	—	55
3 August 1992	2	1	30
4 August 1992	4	3	55
5 August 1992	5	9	54
6 August 1992	1	1	00
7 August 1992	1	—	48
13 August 1992	1	—	50
18 August 1992	1	—	32
20 August 1992	1	—	47
22 August 1992	6	6	22
23 August 1992	2	8	34
31 August 1992	7	22	18
1 September 1992	10	12	40
2 September 1992	1	3	10
9 September 1992	8	6	48
10 September 1992	2	1	54
11 September 1992	1	2	27
12 September 1992	1	1	09
14 September 1992	5	6	41
15 September 1992	1	—	22
18 September 1992	4	2	10
22 September 1992	1	—	27
26 September 1992	3	3	56
1 October 1992	3	—	59
2 October 1992	1	—	39
6 October 1992	2	2	54
7 October 1992	2	5	11
8 October 1992	2	—	40
13 October 1992	2	3	35
14 October 1992	2	3	17
19 October 1992	32	160	00
20 October 1992	29	37	26
21 October 1992	23	35	52
22 October 1992	8	8	56
24 October 1992	14	10	08
25 October 1992	2	—	56
29 October 1992	2	2	077
2 November 1992	2	2	45
4 November 1992	1	—	23
8 November 1992	2	1	29
10 November 1992	2	2	37
12 November 1992	2	3	26
18 November 1992	1	—	31
19 November 1992	2	1	25
30 November 1992	1	4	20
1 December 1992	40	82	09
2 December 1992	8	5	07
3 December 1992	6	11	34
4 December 1992	5	4	06
8 December 1992	1	—	32
10 December 1992	21	34	28
11 December 1992	1	2	00

Date	Incidents raised	Time lost Hours	Minutes
21 December 1992	13	19	21
13 December 1992	1	1	00
17 December 1992	2	4	04
20 December 1992	3	4	40
23 December 1992	2	1	13
29 December 1992	1	2	22
31 December 1992	1	—	32
Totals	352	822	57

Social Fund

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was, for each social security office in the United Kingdom, the number of cases in the current financial year where an application for a community care grant met the criteria but the grant was refused because of budgetary constraints;

(2) what was, for each social security office in the United Kingdom, the number of cases in the current financial year where an application for a social fund loan met the criteria but the loan was refused because of budgetary constraints.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Dennis Canavan, dated 18 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund applications refused on grounds of budgetary constraints.

Details of loans and grants refused on grounds of insufficient priority by each Benefit Agency District are in the attached annex. The figures are for the period 1 April to 30 November 1992 and are the latest available.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Numbers of Social Fund refusals on grounds of insufficient priority April to November 1992 (latest available data)

District	Loans	Grants
Bankside	1,027	169
Barking and Havering	605	340
Barnet	572	165
Barnsley	1,374	510
Bedfordshire	1,025	377
Berkshire	839	258
Birmingham Chamberlain	976	249
Birmingham Heartlands	1,044	60
Birmingham North West	978	487
Birmingham South East	569	142
Birmingham South West	924	351
Blackburn and Accrington	1,034	286
Blackpool	462	15
Bolton	1,160	776
Bradford	1,514	595
Bristol Severnside	1,106	971
Brunel	1,121	366
Buckinghamshire	579	535
Burnley and Rossendale	640	283
Cambridgeshire	870	262
Canterbury and Thanet	430	152
Central Staffordshire	712	442
Channel	698	194
Cheshire North West and Central	1,174	645
Cheshire South and West	1,146	352
Chesterfield and Worksop	602	347
City East	587	260
Clyde Coast and Cowal	1,346	66
Clyde Valley	1,722	1,258
Coatbridge	2,214	294
Cornwall	836	507
Coventry	1,028	158
Cynon Merthyr and Rhymney Valley	3,082	258
Derbyshire Central	1,179	365
Derbyshire South	484	248
Devonia	621	396
Doncaster	1,688	16
Dorset	723	792
Durham North	1,889	253
Durham South	1,619	18
Ealing	755	241
East Lowlands	1,695	342
East Sussex	340	50
Essex South East	548	346
Essex South West	760	200
Euston	1,859	662
Fife	2,046	475
Forth Valley	1,534	364
Fulham	1,337	955
Glamorgan South	2,345	253
Glasgow City	1,471	447
Glasgow East	2,847	1,161
Glasgow Laurieston	2,061	258
Glasgow South West	1,375	261
Glasgow Springburn/Cumbernauld	1,961	1,023
Glasgow West	1,207	432
Gloucestershire	1,224	436
Grampian/Shetland	647	228
Gwent North and Brecon	926	203
Gwyneddigion	701	74
Hackney and Islington	864	354
Halifax	893	363
Hampshire North	767	188
Harrow and Hillingdon	449	415
Hereford and Worcestershire	472	174
Highlands and Islands	559	273
Hounslow and Kingston	467	333
Hull	2,961	953
Humberside South	1,147	279
Irvine	71,391	135
Kent North	1,661	243
Kirklees	1,247	428
Knowsley	1,536	596
Lancaster and South Cumbria	743	218
Lea Roding	930	317
Leaside	680	256
Leeds Aire and Wharfedale	1,526	631
Leeds Ridings	1,523	397
Leicester North	955	160
Leicestershire South	517	337
Lewisham and Brixton	1,943	814
Lincolnshire East	513	354
Liverpool Central	888	251
Liverpool North	1,179	176
Liverpool South	1,582	815
Lomond and Argyll	1,232	209
London Central	306	114
Lothian Central	1,038	405
Lothian West	1,488	253
Manchester Central	1,194	120
Manchester North	697	385
Manchester South	1,588	797
Mid Wales and Maelor	823	133
Neasden	770	281
Newcastle	2,960	733
Newham	1,129	249
North and East Hertfordshire	501	622
North Cumbria	930	633
North Essex	778	344

District	*Loans*	*Grants*
North Staffordshire	1,196	635
North Tyneside	836	210
North Wales Coast	982	513
North Yorkshire	358	205
Northamptonshire	1,018	194
Northumberland	862	117
Norwich	1,242	338
Nottinghamshire East	909	363
Nottinghamshire North	927	372
Nottinghamshire West	968	734
Ogwr Afan Nedd	1,198	44
Oldham	825	522
Oxfordshire	705	123
Preston	864	352
Renfrew	1,451	117
Rother and Dearne	1,260	619
South East Hants and Wight	1,654	298
Sale and East Cheshire	447	156
Salford District	650	177
Sandwell	823	299
Scotland South West	1,432	202
Sefton	1,181	140
Sheffield East	2,036	569
Sheffield West	1,133	527
Shropshire	924	1,073
Solent and Forest	1,117	136
Somerset	380	140
South Devon	1,622	456
South Downs	677	308
South Gwent and Islwyn	1,184	383
South West Lancashire	1,127	161
South West Thames	1,394	519
Stockport	724	251
Suffolk	1,062	715
Surrey Downs	319	22
Surrey North	1,006	340
Swansea	1,012	415
Taff Rhondda	855	198
Tameside	1,061	357
Tayside	2,500	668
Tees North	2,619	673
Tees South	2,493	677
Thameside	972	126
Tyneside South	2,559	291
Wakefield	1,141	525
Wales West	937	250
Walsall	1,277	163
Warwickshire	789	221
Wearside	2,784	471
West Hertfordshire	361	324
West Kent	549	114
West Lincolnshire	1,145	335
West Pennine	1,219	773
West Sussex	570	245
Wigan and Leigh	770	533
Wiltshire	917	421
Wirral	2,064	676
Wolverhampton	752	249
Worcestershire North	830	291
Yorkshire East	410	95

Disability Allowances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the target clearance rates for new claims and reviews of disability living allowance and attendance allowance to be met.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 18 January 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when we expect the target clearance rates for new claims and reviews of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) to be met.

The most recent clearance performances during the month of December are 55 per cent. (DLA) and 54·4 per cent. (AA65+) against targets of 60 per cent. cleared in 30 and 35 days respectively. The numbers of new claims on hand is reducing month by month and we will continue to give detailed management attention to achievement of targets during the remainder of the current financial year.

As far as DLA and AA65+ reviews are concerned, we are recruiting and deploying additional staff at Fylde and elsewhere to deal with the arrears. A profiling exercise is in progress to establish the effect of these extra staff against the backlog of work and expected intake and we will soon be able to predict a date for achievement of clearance targets. I will continue to take a close personal interest in the progress of performance.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide details of the training provided to *(a)* benefits inquiry line staff and *(b)* adjudication officers working on disability living allowance and attendance allowance, including the dates and duration of training courses provided on these benefits; what percentage of the annual training budget for these benefits has already been spent; and what plans he has to increase this budget in real terms in the financial year 1993-94 and in subsequent years.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 18 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security. You asked for details of training provided to *(a)* Benefits Inquiry Line staff and *(b)* adjudication officers working on Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance, including the dates and duration of training courses provided on these benefits; what percentage of the annual training budget for these benefits has already been spent; and what plans he has to increase this budget in real terms in the financial year 1993-94 and in subsequent years.

Initial training for Benefits Inquiry Line staff is covered within a period of 6 weeks. In this time all trainees are given a basic awareness of all Social Security benefits. Further benefits training is given which enables the trainees to calculate comfortably various Social Security benefits, and how to use these calculations. I shall write to you again with details of the dates of these training courses.

In addition to the basic benefits training the advisers training also incorporates:

Disability awareness

Listening in—(trainees listen to calls with an experienced adviser)

Supervised calls—(trainees take first calls with experienced advisers)

Telephone techniques.

A visit to a District office.

Training for Adjudication Officers based on the Fylde DLA Unit began in November 1991. There were approximately 7 courses running at any one time with 12 people on each course between November 1991 and March 1992. The duration of each course is 22 days.

At the Fylde Attendance Allowance Unit (AAU) seven courses were held and were attended by 70 adjudication officers. Six courses of 4 weeks duration were held for existing staff and one course lasting 6 weeks for new entrants. The dates of these courses were

6 January 1992 to 31 January 1992 (2 courses)
17 February 1992 to 13 March 1992
17 February 1992 to 27 March 1992
27 April 1992 to 25 May 1992
7 September 1992 to 2 October 1992
5 October 1992 to 30 October 1992.

Training for adjudication staff for both benefits in the DBCs was mainly undertaken during January, February and March 1992. The courses were held on different dates and locations but were all approximately five weeks in length.

On the question of training budgets, for DLA 73 per cent. of the annual training budget has been spent as at the end of December. For AA this figure is 88 per cent. It is too early to say what the training budget will be for the financial year 1993-94 and subsequent years.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the average number of inquiries received each day on applications for disability living allowance by *(a)* the hotline established to serve hon. Members and *(b)* other units of his Department since the benefit was introduced; what is the current backlog of applications for the allowance; what is his target date for clearing this backlog; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is *(a)* the target and *(b)* the average length of time taken to determine an application for the disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 18 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security. You asked what is the average number of enquiries received each day on applications Disability Living Allowance by *(a)* the hotline established to serve honourable Members and *(b)* other units of his Department since the benefit was introduced; what is the current backlog of applications for the allowance what is his target date for clearing this backlog. You also asked what is *(a)* the target and *(b)* the average length of time taken to determine an application for the Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Significant numbers of individual customers have contacted offices of the Benefits Agency concerning the delay in their payments. Information is not available on the precise number of representations received but I can assure you that we endeavour to answer enquiries as quickly as possible. The average daily number of enquiries received on the hotline established for honourable Members to use is 35. This is over the period 6 July 1992 to 8 January 1993.

On the question of target clearance times I should explain that the Benefits Agency introduced a standard performance measure across benefits some time ago. This is expressed in terms of clearance targets by x per cent. of claims cleared in y days rather than average clearance times as was previously the case. The most recent clearance performances during the month of December are 55 per cent. for DLA and 54·4 per cent. for AA65+ against targets of 60 per cent. cleared in 30 and 35 days respectively.

The numbers of new claims on hand is reducing month by month and we will continue to give detailed management attention to achievement of targets during the remainder of the current financial year. I have expressed my regret for the delays which occurred following the introduction of this new benefit. I am pleased to say that claim levels for Disability Living Allowance have stabilised and work on hand has now reduced to normal levels.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Fraud Investigators

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are employed by his Department specifically to investigate fraudulent claims.

Miss Widdecombe: The investigation of social security fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Gordon McMaster, dated 18 January 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people are employed by his Department specifically to investigate fraudulent claims.

The complement for 1992-93 for staff specifically to investigate fraudulent claims is 2,853, however all staff are expected to identify fraudulent claims and may be involved in an investigation.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

HEALTH

Hospital Closures

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the legal provisions regarding consultations by health authorities and trusts with elected representatives and members of the public on proposals to close hospitals or reduce the numbers of beds in hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health authorities are required to consult their local community health council (CHC) or councils when substantial changes in local services are under consideration. There is no similar requirement for national health service trusts to consult CHCs. However, as a matter of course, NHS trusts discuss proposed service changes with their purchasers. If appropriate, the health authority would then consult the relevant CHC.

Skin and Allergic Disorders

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will estimate the annual cost to the national health service for prescribed drugs in the categories *(a)* drugs acting on the skin and *(b)* drugs for allergic disorders;

(2) how many people were using national health service prescribed drugs as *(a)* drugs acting on the skin and *(b)* drugs for allergic reactions.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not available on the number of people using national health service prescribed drugs which act on the skin and for allergic disorders. The number of prescriptions dispensed in England in 1991 for drugs in these categories and the relevant net ingredient cost is as shown.

	Prescriptions (thousands)	*Net ingredient cost (£ thousands)*
Drugs acting on the skin	28,255	108,383
Drugs for allergic disorders	5,519	22,637

The figures include prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and dispensing doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.

Community Supervision Orders

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people she expects to become subject to a community supervision order in 1993.

Mr. Yeo: No decision has been taken to introduce a community supervision order for psychiatric patients. The case for this is one of the issues to be considered by the official team referred to in the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on 13 January at column *731*.

Mental Illness

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the timing and costs of full implementation of the care programme policy for mentally ill people, including the costs of necessary psychiatric services.

Mr. Yeo: We required all district health authorities to implement fully the care programme approach from 1 April 1991 and we have received assurances from regional health authorities that this has been done. The Department and the regional health authorities are monitoring progress.

The introduction of the care programme approach in itself imposed no new costs on either health or local authorities as it embodied existing good professional practice.

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she is taking to monitor the application of section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983;

(2) how many people are subject to the provisions of section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983; and what is the current cost of its implementation for each regional health authority.

Mr. Yeo: The implementation of section 117 of the Act is reviewed by the Mental Health Act Commission as part of its programme of visits to health and social services. In its fourth biennial report, published in December 1991, the commission reported that most health authorities and social services departments had completed their policies and procedures for the implementation of section 117.

The services which this section of the Act requries authorities to provide for formerly detained patients form part of the general provision of services for mentally ill people in the community and we do not collect separate figures about them. Under the care programme approach introduced in April 1991 all patients using these services, whether or not they have been detained in hospitals, are required to have an individual care programme and a named key worker.

Blyth Valley (Patient Numbers)

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of patients per general practice in Blyth Valley.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is shown in the table.

Practice	*List size*
1	12,656
2	12,645
3	12,356
4	8,822
5	6,867
6	5,677
7	4,664
8	4,264
9	4,208
10	4,168
11	924
12	633

Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessments have been undertaken of the number of patients potentially contaminated with Creutzfeldt Jakob disease as a result of surgery within the NHS.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 23 November 1992 at column *504*.

Mental Health Task Force

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the names, qualifications and experience of the members of the mental health task force.

Mr. Yeo: The membership of the mental health task force and its support group is in the process of being finalised. A copy of the full list of members of the group will be placed in the Library when it has been completed.

NHS Trusts

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which hospital trusts had by 31 December 1992 completed their contracts for the period to 31 March for elective treatments in *(a)* orthopaedic surgery, *(b)* ENT, *(c)* general medicine and *(d)* general surgery.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Drug Prescribing

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money will be saved by expanding the selected list of drugs that cannot be prescribed under the national health service to her proposed new categories.

Dr. Mawhinney: The savings from extending the selected list scheme will depend on the specific changes made to the list of drugs which cannot be prescribed under the national health service. These will be made only on the recommendation of the independent Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs and cannot be predicted in advance.

Supported Lodgings

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people *(a)* in Nottinghamshire and *(b)* nationally were classified as being looked after in supported lodgings by reason of being cared for by the carer in the carer's own home on (i) 1 January 1991 and (ii) the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not available centrally.

Community Care

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are expected to be discharged into the community from Winterton and Kyhope Cherry Knowle hospitals in the coming year; how many were discharged in 1990, 1991 and 1992; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the Northern Regional health authority, for details.

Doncaster Health Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the chairmen and non-executive directors of health authorities and trusts in Doncaster in 1991-92; how much each received as salary and expenses; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chairmen of health authorities and national health service trusts and the non-executive directors of NHS trusts in Doncaster are as follows:

Body	*Chairman*	*Non-executive directors*
Doncaster DHA	Mr. J. G. Smith	
Doncaster FHSA	Mr. K. Jones	
Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montagu Hospital Trust	Mr. C. Bryant	Mr. G. A. Brown Mr. M. A. Mitchell Mr. J. H. Pickup Mrs. R. M. Cottrell Mrs. E. Sparrow
Doncaster Healthcare Trust	Mr. P. Horsburgh	Mr. L. Lucas Mr. J. Millar Miss C. Fleming Mrs. M. Spencer Mr. J. Liversedge

District health authority and family health service authority members are appointed by regional health authority chairmen.

All health authority members and NHS trust non-executive directors receive remuneration of £5,000 per annum.

DHA, FHSA and trust chairmen are remunerated annually according to a banding system as follows:

1 April 1991:
Band 1—£18,935
Band 2—£16,835
Band 3—£14,850

1 December 1991:
Band 1—£19,285
Band 2—£17,145
Band 3—£15,125

Health authority chairmen and members and trust chairmen and non-executive directors are entitled to have, where appropriate, expenses refunded, but details are not held centrally.

Unemployment and Ill Health

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies she has made on the association between unemployment and ill health.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are fully aware of the extensive research literature about the association between unemployment and ill-health. This literature includes analysis of the respective contributions of unemployment itself and of the related variables of social class, poverty, age and pre-existing ill-health. Studies also indicate the value of preventive health care and of social support of unemployed people and their families.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she has commissioned into the risks to the health of persons under the age of 18 years of the indiscriminate use of anabolic steroids.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has commissioned no research specifically into the risks to the health of persons under the age of 18 years of the use of anabolic steriods. However, in October 1991 we commissioned Professor G. V. Stimson, Director of the Centre for Research on Drugs and Health Behaviour, to undertake a study into the extent of misuse of anabolic steriods. The report of this study has just been received by this Department and is currently being considered.

Weight Training

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she has commissioned into the risks to the health of persons under the age of 18 years of *(a)* weight lifting and *(b)* weight training; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Health Centres

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the report of the Hambros bank into the funding of health centres is to be published.

Dr. Mawhinney: The report has been received by the Department and its recommendations are now being considered. We shall announce our proposals for action in due course.

Azapropazone

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the side effects of azapropazone; how many cases of such side effects have

come to her attention; what consideration the Committee on Safety of Medicines is giving to this matter; and what central guidance on the side effects has been given to general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: The safety of all licensed medicines, including azapropazone, is constantly monitored by the Medicines Control Agency. As part of this process, the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) operates a yellow card scheme for physicians to report suspected adverse reactions to drugs. Under this scheme, CSM has received 2,041 reports of adverse reactions which may be associated with azapropazone. A report of a suspected reaction in association with a drug does not necessarily mean that the drug caused the effect reported. Azapropazone belongs to a group of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) used in the treatment of rheumatic disease and other musculoskeletal disorders. More reports of suspected adverse reactions are received in association with this group of drugs than any others, reflecting their wide usage.

A number of studies are being conducted comparing the relative safety of different NSAIDs. CSM will be reviewing these studies when the results become available and, if necessary, will issue advice to prescribers. It has been recognised for some years that NSAIDs can cause serious gastrointestinal reactions such as bleeding and perforation of ulcers. This problem was drawn to the attention of doctors by the CSM in articles in the *British Medical Journal* in March and May 1986 and in its bulletin "Current Problems No. 16" issued in 1986. No specific guidance has been issued by CSM regarding the side effects of azapropazone. Information is available to physicians in the *British National Formulary*, which the Department issues free of charge to all prescribers, and in the data sheet for products, which are produced by the manufacturers and authorised by the licensing authority.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the expenditure on azapropazone in cash terms, and as expenditure per 1,000 population in each NHS region and health district in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available as soon as possible.

Special Hospitals

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what percentage of patients currently residing in special hospitals in England and Wales an assessment has shown that they could more appropriately be dealt with in gaols or other forms of accommodation.

Mr. Yeo: Information is not readily available in the form requested. One hundred and fourteen special hospital patients, or 7·5 per cent. of the total, were awaiting transfer to other facilities on 31 December 1992. Six of these were awaiting transfer to prison.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 she requires to be made by local authorities and health departments for mentally disordered offenders.

Mr. Yeo: Section 46 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 requires local authorities, in consultation with health authorities, to prepare and publish plans for the provision of community care. Section 47 of the Act requires local authorities to involve district health authorities in the assessment of need for those people in their areas who are identified as requiring community care services. These would include services for mentally disordered offenders who require them.

Disabled People

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what maximum figure she intends to set for the combined total public funding available after April to individual disabled people to live in their own homes.

Mr. Yeo: I do not intend to set a maximum figure for the amount that health and local authorities may spend in helping people live in their own homes.

Dentists

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists went bankrupt during 1992; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally. However, the Dental Practice Board has confirmed that during 1992 it received notices of bankruptcy in respect of nine dentists.

Health Authority Meetings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will require health authorities to publish the agenda for matters to be considered in private; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. Whether and when to exclude the press and general public is a matter for the authorities themselves to decide. However, authorities are expected to conduct their business in as open a manner as possible.

SCOTLAND

Prison Transfers

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications have been received for transfers from prisons in Scotland to Northern Ireland, from *(a)* loyalist prisoners, *(b)* republican prisoners, *(c)* men and *(d)* women; and how many of each of these applications have been accepted.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information available is as follows:

	Number of requests (no women applied)	*Agreed*
1985	3	2
1986	1	1
1987	3	—
1988	2	1
1989	1	—
1990	[1]5	2
1991	[2]4	1
1992	5	[3]3

[1] One withdrawn.
[2] Two withdrawn.
[3] One still under consideration.

Prisoners in Scotland are not classified by reference to the political or other motivation of their offences.

Revised criteria for interjurisdiction transfers were announced in the *Official Report*, 23 November 1992, columns *476-77*.

Legal Aid

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount he expects to be saved from the current civil legal aid budget resulting from the Government's proposals for each of the next five financial years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The purpose of the proposed changes announced on 16 November is to ensure the continuation of reasonable access to legal aid for the most needy, while at the same time taking action to control the rate of growth in legal aid expenditure. The proposed changes are expected to reduce forecast expenditure on civil legal aid by between £2 million and £3 million in 1993-94 rising to around £5 million in 1997-98. Total expenditure on legal aid will, however, continue to increase and in financial year 1995-96 it is expected to be 40 per cent. higher than the planned expenditure for the current year.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, under the Government's new legal aid proposals, applicants will be required to make continuous contributions over the full life of the case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the Government's proposals a person granted civil legal aid in Scotland after 1 April 1993 will not be required to make continuous contributions over the full life of the case.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish detailed proposals regarding changes in civil legal aid and civil advice and assistance schemes in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Draft regulations will be laid before the House in the spring.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what level of contributions will be required in civil legal aid cases under the Government's new legal aid proposals.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the Government's proposals a person receiving civil legal aid will be required to make a maximum contribution of up to one third of the amount by which his disposable income exceeds the lower free limit for civil legal aid.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the maximum income level for obtaining free advice and assistance for legal aid applicants from April 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The maximum disposable income level for obtaining free advice and assistance has yet to be determined.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his estimate of the proportion of the adult population of Scotland which after 1 April will be eligible for *(a)* legal advice and assistance and *(b)* legal aid, for civil purposes on a nil contribution;

(2) what is his estimate of the proportion of the adult population of Scotland which after 1 April will be eligible for *(a)* legal advice and assistance and *(b)* legal aid for civil purposes irrespective of the level of contribution;

(3) what is the proportion of the adult population of Scotland currently eligible for *(a)* legal advice and assistance and *(b)* legal aid for civil purposes on a nil contribution;

(4) what proportion of the adult population of scotland is currently eligible for *(a)* legal advice and assistance and *(b)* legal aid, for civil purposes irrespective of the level of contribution.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Given the variations over time in individuals' circumstances it is not possible to estimate with any precision the proportion of the adult population eligible for legal aid.

Analyses of data from the family expenditure survey suggest that in Scotland the percentage of households which would be eligible for civil legal aid under the proposed changes to eligibility criteria would be in the range of 45 to 55 per cent. with between 20 and 30 per cent. free of contributions. Similar figures would apply to advice and assistance. This represents a reduction of between 5 and 10 per cent. of the households currently eligible in financial terms.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he had with relevant parties and bodies prior to his announcement of 16 November 1992 of reduced access to civil legal aid and legal advice and assistance in Scotland; and how many legal applicants are likely to be affected by the announced changes after 1 April.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* No detailed consultations were held before the announcement on 16 November 1992, but discussions have since taken place with the Scottish Legal Aid Board and the Law Society of Scotland.

Given the variations over time in individuals' circumstances it is not possible to estimate with any accuracy how many legal aid applicants are likely to be affected after 1 April by the proposed changes but I refer the hon. Member to my reply today to the questions by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell).

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each of the last five years for which figures are available the number of civil legal cases which occurred in sheriff courts in Scotland by category of case, indicating the percentage increase over the period for each category.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Figures for the number of ordinary cause, summary cause and small claim actions disposed of in sheriff courts in Scotland are set out in the table. The percentage increase or decrease between 1987 and 1991 is also shown except for small claims where the figure relates to the period 1989 to 1991.

	Ordinary cause	*Summary cause*	*Small claims*	*Total*
1987	47,555	121,996	—	169,551
1988	47,735	109,745	—	157,480
1989	46,232	51,881	62,520	160,633
1990	49,308	41,941	83,119	174,368

	Ordinary cause	Summary cause	Small claims	Total
1991	54,512	44,758	87,769	187,039
Percentage Increase/ Decrease 1987-1991 (1989-1991 for Small Claims)	+14·6%	−63·3%	+40·4%	+9·7

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average cost per case to the civil legal aid budget in each category of civil legal actions occurring in sheriff courts in Scotland over the past five years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Civil Legal Actions in Sheriff Courts

Subject Matter	Average Cost Per Case to Scottish Legal Aid Fund 1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Divorce 2 year separation (Pursuer)	452·80	450·99	459·59	490·13	573·71
Divorce 2 year separation (Defender)	443·22	481·89	478·10	461·12	641·20
Divorce 5 year separation (Pursuer)	460·08	481·90	488·15	512·80	600·38
Divorce 5 year separation (Defender)	552·34	784·43	711·73	717·31	770·64
Divorce Other Grounds (Pursuer)	644·13	638·36	698·93	749·27	814·21
Divorce Other Grounds (Defender)	607·42	620·85	714·81	724·24	831·41
Separation	536·30	661·24	703·21	781·59	789·94
Aliment	475·46	464·17	472·27	486·48	476·98
Husband and Wife Miscellaneous	491·26	459·54	513·84	551·07	622·15
Affiliation/Aliment	501·41	561·13	627·91	635·51	664·75
Custody	529·35	481·81	606·60	635·49	683·25
Adoption	305·85	272·64	267·62	354·04	563·55
Parent and Child Miscellaneous	478·10	526·26	635·11	575·14	711·56
Reparation	673·71	890·29	1,058·76	1,011·98	1,405·83
Diligence	—	102·25	213·25	3,010·33	686·44
Other	—	348·59	408·50	450·68	502·10
Total	560·22	534·50	603·55	636·59	699·11

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Her Majesty's Government expects to save in civil legal aid expenditure in Scotland from 1 April as a result of the changes announced on 16 November 1992 in financial eligibility; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The purpose of the proposed changes announced on 16 November 1992 is to ensure the continuation of reasonable access to legal aid for the most needy, while at the same time taking action to control the rate of growth in legal aid expenditure. Depending on the detailed circumstances of the individual cases involved, the proposed changes are expected to reduce forecast expenditure on civil legal aid in future years by between £2 million and £3 million. Total expenditure on legal aid will, however, continue to increase and in financial year 1995-96 is expected to be 40 per cent. higher than the planned expenditure for the current financial year.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average contribution paid by legal aid recipients in each category of civil legal action over the past five years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The information is not readily available in the form requested.

Over 80 per cent. of those receiving civil legal aid are not required to pay any contribution. The average contribution paid by recipients of civil legal aid falling within the contributory band in the financial years 1987-88 to 1991-92 is set out in the following table:

Year	Average contribution £
1987-88	486·46
1988-89	342·88
1989-90	262·50
1990-91	228·95
1991-92	321·12

Skye Bridge

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take in the light of the absence of the lodging of the geographical survey, relevant to the Skye bridge contract, with the British Geological Survey; what legal force is ascribed to the relevant section

of his Department's "Road's Directorate Invitation to Tender" document in this respect; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The arrangments for the various tenderers to undertake a joint geological investigation and ultimately to lodge the factual results of their survey with the British Geological Survey is a roads directorate contractual requirement not a legal requirement. This practice is undertaken on trunk road projects whereby the information provided by public expenditure is made available for general use. There is no prescribed time limit for the lodging of such information and it is done at an appropriate time, often at the conclusion of the construction works.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what allowance he has made for the extent of public subsidy to Caledonian Macbrayne Ltd. after the loss of Kyle of Lochalsh-Kyleakin ferry fares income to the company when the Skye bridge opens; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The company's corporate plan for 1992-95 contains assumptions on cost savings and loss of revenue which are likely to occur upon the discontinuation of the Kyle of Lochalsh-Kyleakin ferry service. My right hon. Friend has taken these assumptions into account in making provision for deficit subsidy for the company within the planning period. My right hon. Friend does not consider it desirable to make public such commercially-sensitive information.

Caledonian Macbrayne Ltd.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the public subsidy given in each of the last 10 financial years to Caledonian Macbrayne Ltd.; what proportion this subsidy represented of the total income of the company; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Year	*Deficit subsidy*	*Turnover*	*Deficit subsidy as percentage of turnover*
1981-82	5·800	17·5	33·1
1982-83	6·115	17·6	34·7
1983-84	6·650	19·2	34·6
1984-85	6·987	21·0	33·3
1985-86	7·500	22·3	33·6
1986-87	7·400	23·1	32·0
1987-88	6·900	23·8	29·0
1988-89	6·540	25·4	25·8
1989-90	6·280	26·9	23·3
1990-91	5·722	28·6	20·0
1991-92	5·800	31·7	18·3

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is made available to him by Caledonian Macbrayne Ltd as to *(a)* the profitability of individual ferry routes and *(b)* the extent to which there is cross subsidisation of fares within the network; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The scale fare system which has been operated by Caledonian MacBrayne since 1975 generalises costs across the network as a whole and produces network-based information about costs, fares income and deficit subsidy requirements. The new CFARES fares setting system which the company is in process of introducing will be based upon route-specific infomation about costs, surpluses and deficits.

As a consequence of this change from network-based information to route-specific information, Caledonian MacBrayne makes available to my right hon. Friend an increasing amount of information about costs, surpluses and deficits incurred on individual routes. Since deficit subsidy is paid to meet the operating loss incurred by the company in providing a network of approved services, there is some cross subsidisation of services within this arrangement.

However, the overall deficit of £6,050,000 likely to be incurred by the company this year in operating the network indicates that the majority of the company's routes are unprofitable. My right hon. Friend does not consider it desirable to make public commercially-sensitive information about operating costs, surpluses or deficits incurred on individual routes.

Correspondence

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his target timespan for responding to letters received from hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) on 2 December 1992 at col. *183*.

Justices of the Peace

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names and addresses of justices of peace serving the district of Renfrew; and what plans he has to make further appointments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As for other commission areas, my right hon. Friend is advised on the need for new appointments as justices of the peace for the commission area of Renfrew by the Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace for that area. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible about the further information he requests.

Homelessness

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of household units *(a)* making application for and *(b)* being awarded homeless persons status in each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest complete information is published in table 1 of "The Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin 'Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland 1980/81 to 1991/92, Housing/ 1992/6'," which is available in the House Library.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the aims and objectives of the competition on measures to deal with homelessness referred to by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for housing on 16 December 1992; if he will list the likely competitors; and what criteria he will apply in judging any submissions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: All local housing authorities in Scotland were invited to submit proposals by 11 December for the additional £7·5 million housing capital allocations in 1992-93 for projects to tackle homelessness which I announced in November. When proposals were invited, it was made clear that priority would be given to projects assisting homeless one-parent f amilies and those housed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Forty-eight local authorities submitted proposals and I announced the successful projects on 23 December. The extra £7·5 million will fund 59 projects in 48 local authorities to provide accommodation for over 470 homeless people.

City Status

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria are applied in determining applications by Scottish towns for city status; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: City status in Scotland, which has no statutory significance, derives from royal charters granted by the Monarch. There are no formal criteria. No such charter has been granted for over a century.

Rights of Way

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on rights of way in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have any plans to make a statement on rights of way in Scotland at present.

Scottish Natural Heritage issued on 13 January a consultation paper entitled "Enjoying the Outdoors" which considers arrangements for access to the countryside in Scotland, including rights of way. It will report the results of its consultation exercise to me in due course and I shall consider then any recommendations which it may make.

Polling Stations (Access)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make available resources for the purchase of *(a)* static and *(b)* portable ramps to improve access to polling stations;

(2) what resources he made available in the last financial year for *(a)* static and *(b)* portable ramps to improve access to polling stations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Finance is available from the consolidated fund to meet 50 per cent. of the cost of providing temporary ramps for polling stations to assist access by disabled voters. As elections are held only infrequently in comparison with the other uses made of buildings designated as polling stations, there is no justification for central Government to meet the full cost of providing either permanent ramps or the full cost of temporary ramps from election funds.

The Secretary of State assumed responsibility for financing parliamentary elections in Scotland on 22 August 1991. No applications for support towards the cost of providing ramps at polling stations were made by Scottish returning officers in the remainder of that financial year; one such application has been made, successfully, in the current financial year.

Water and Sewerage Services

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received about the future of water and sewerage services in Scotland since July 1992; how many of these were letters from *(a)* individuals and *(b)* organisations or institutions; what is his estimate of the number of signatures appended to any petitions he has so far received; how many representations were (i) for and (ii) against taking these services out of the control of local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: To date, a total of 6,311 representations has been received. This includes 5,154 pre-printed postcards, 142 responses to the consultation paper and 1,015 other representations. There have been 1,056 letters from individuals and 101 from organisations or institutions and 23 petitions carrying 5,372 names.

An analysis of responses to the consultation paper will be made after the end of the consultation period.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many responses to representations about the future of water and sewerage services in Scotland have been issued since July 1992 *(a)* by him, *(b)* by Ministers, *(c)* by the engineering, water and waste directorate of the Environment Department and *(d)* by other representatives of the Scottish Office; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: To date, 5,703 responses have been issued. Ministerial replies have been given to 112 representations; the engineerin, water and waste directorate of the Scottish Office environment Department has replied to 5,528; and 13 which dealt with matters in addition to the future of water and sewerage services have received replies from other parts of the Scottish Office.

"Investing in our Future"

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct the engineering, water and waste directorate of the Environment Department to advise where copies of the consultation paper "Investing In Our Future" may be obtained free of charge when it is responding to representations from members of the public.

Sir Hector Monro: The consultation paper is issued to everyone who expresses an interest in receiving it or in participating in the consultation process.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland where copies of his consultation paper "Investing In Our Future" may be obtained free of charge by members of the general public.

Sir Hector Monro: The consultation paper can be obtained from the Scottish Office environment department, water restructuring division, room 203A, 27 Perth street, Edinburgh EH3 5RB.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will instruct the engineering, water and waste directorate of the Environment Department to

advise where copies of the consultation paper "Investing in our Future" may be obtained free of charge when it is responding to representation from members of the public.

Sir Hector Monro: It is standard practice in replying to representations to draw attention to the availability of the consultation paper. The address from which copies of the consultation paper may be obtained has been given wide publicity, and all letters informing the public that the paper is available carry that address and telephone number.

Argyll and Clyde Health Board

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 9 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *133*, when he plans to announce the appointments made to vacancies which will arise on Argyll and Clyde health board on 31 March; what consultations he is undertaking or has undertaken prior to his decisions; what plans he has to consult hon. Members representing constituencies within the health board area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend expects to announce shortly appointments to fill vacancies arising in Argyll and Clyde health board. The consultation required by the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 has been carried out and the views of the health board chairman have been taken. There are no plans to consult hon. Members representing constituencies within the health board area; it is open to hon. Members, as some indeed have done, to suggest names for possible appointment to health boards.

Public Housing (Windows)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies he has available on the need to replace metal-framed windows in public sector housing in Scotland; what financial provision he has made for the programme in the current and future financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have received no reports specifically on the need to replace metal-framed windows.

Local authorities and other public sector housing landlords can carry out the replacement of metal-framed windows as part of their capital programmes if they see this as a priority in comparison with other housing needs. Gross capital expenditure resources available for public sector housing in Scotland in 1992-93 are estimated to be £549 million. An equivalent estimate for 1993-94 will not be available until decisions are taken on the allocation of Scottish Homes' budget and final capital allocations to local authorities are announced in March.

Scottish Homes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* name, *(b)* occupation, *(c)* honoraria, salary or allowance and *(d)* estimated time commitment of each member of the board of Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Name	*Occupation*	*Salary*	*Estimated Time Commitment*
Sir James Mellon KCMG (Chairman)	Former Diplomat	£35,330	3 days per week
John Richards CBE, PPRIAS (Deputy Chairman)	Architect with John Richards Associates	£16,055	1½ days per week
Norman Lessels CA	Partner in Chiene and Tait, also non-executive Chairman of Standard Life Assurance Company	£6,140	½ day per week
Mrs. Frances McCall MBE	Chairperson of the Confederation of Scottish Housing Co-operatives	£6,140	½ day per week
Professor Duncan MacLennan	Director of the Centre for Housing Research at Glasgow University	£6,140	½ day per week
Tom Begg JP, BA, OBE	Lecturer in Economics at Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh	£6,140	½ day per week
Mrs. Heather Sheerin OBE	Co-Director of family-owned retail carpet business	£6,140	½ day per week
Mrs. Daphne Sleigh	Freelance Market Researcher	£6,140	½ day per week
Cameron Parker	Non-executive Vice-Chairman of Lithgows Ltd	£6,140	½ day per week

In addition the chief executive, Peter McKinlay, is an ex-officio member of the board. His salary is linked to civil service grade 2.

Paisley (City Status)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to award the burgh of Paisley city status.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no such plans.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his plans to consider the wheel clamping of vehicles in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Appeal Court judgment of 12 June 1992 determined that wheel-clamping a vehicle on private land and demanding money for its release is a crime. There are statutory provisions which would authorise the police and parking attendants to clamp vehicles illegally parked on public roads. The power in relation to the police is exercisable by statutory instrument made by the Secretary of State at the request of a regional or islands council. The power has not so far been exercised in Scotland. The power in respect of parking attendants will not be brought into force until the operation of similar powers in London has been evaluated.

Health Service

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number and location of intensive therapy units in Scotland; and how many organ donors have arisen in each during the past 12 months.

Mr. Stewart: At 30 September 1992 there were 24 NHS intensive therapy units in Scotland. These are as listed.

NHS hospitals in Scotland with intensive therapy beds (by health board)

Argyll and Clyde Health Board –
Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley

Ayrshire and Arran Health Board –
Ayr Hospital
Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock

Borders Health Board –
Borders General Hospital, Melrose

Dumfries and Galloway Health Board –
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary, Dumfries

Forth Valley Health Board –
Stirling Royal Infirmary

Grampian Health Board –
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital

Greater Glasgow Health Board –
Glasgow Royal Infirmary
Glasgow Western General
Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow
Southern General Hospital, Glasgow
Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow

Highland Health Board –
Raigmore Hospital, Inverness

Lanarkshire Health Board –
Hairmyres Hospital, East Kilbride
Law Hospital, Carluke
Monkland District General Hospital, Airdrie

Lothian Health Board –
St. John's Hospital, Livingston
Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh
Western General Hospital, Edinburgh

Tayside Health Board –
Ninewells Hospital, Dundee
Perth Royal Infirmary
Stracathro Hospital, By Brechin

Information on the numbers of organ donors in each unit is not collected centrally.

The number of organ donors, by region, in the period January 1992 to December 1992 was as follows:

	Number
West of Scotland	58
East of Scotland	
Edinburgh	13
Dundee	12
Aberdeen	20
Total	103

Weapons Control

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce legislation on the control of offensive and lethal weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As I indicated in my response to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 16 December at columns 423-24, we shall be consulting shortly on this issue with a view to legislating at the first available opportunity.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what resources he made available in the last financial year to enable *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* Scottish Homes, *(c)* housing associations, *(d)* housing co-operatives, *(e)* owner-occupiers, *(f)* tenants in the private-rented sector, *(g)* universities and colleges and *(h)* other housing providers to finance the installation of smoke alarms; if he will issue a circular to the providers of public housing encouraging the installation of smoke alarms; if he will introduce legislation to require smoke alarms to be fitted in all homes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Resources are not earmarked to finance the installation of smoke alarms. Local authorities and other housing providers have substantial capital resources available to them which can be used for smoke alarms where they see this as a priority compared with other needs. The Scottish Office Environment Department wrote to all local housing authorities in 1991 and 1992 highlighting the contribution which smoke alarms can make to the saving of lives, and encouraging authorities which have not already completed a smoke alarm installation programme to include this in their forthcoming capital programmes.

We intend shortly to lay before Parliament an amendment to the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1990 and the technical standards for compliance with these regulations which will require all new dwellings to be provided with mains-operated smoke alarms.

Mr. Thomas Adleigh

Mrs. Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Scottish ambulance service is to hold a disciplinary inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. Thomas Adleigh of 27 Glencairn road, Paisley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* No. Disciplinary matters are for the management of the Scottish ambulance service in the first instance and thereafter by the Board of the Common Services Agency as the statutory employer. The report prepared by the general manager of the Scottish ambulance service on the ambulance response to this patient does not indicate any grounds for disciplinary action against any member of staff. I have arranged for a copy of this report to be sent to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will hold a full public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. Thomas Adleigh of 27 Glencairn road, Paisley, to include the general effectiveness of ambulance services in the Argyll and Clyde health board area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* Until my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has reached a decision as to whether a fatal accident inquiry into the death of Mr. Adleigh should be held, it is not appropriate to consider whether any other form of formal inquiry should be undertaken into the service within Argyll and Clyde health board area.

Ambulance Service

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the emergency response time of ambulance crews is calculated by the Scottish ambulance service; what changes there have been to the method of calculation during the last 15 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The calculation of the response time of ambulance crews is made on the basis that the time begins from the moment the 999 call is answered by the control officer until the ambulance crew arrives at the side of the patient. Previously the calculation began when the vehicle started the journey to the patient.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make available for public inspection the logged, written and audio records for emergency calls and consequent responses from depots of the Scottish ambulance service controlled from within the Argyll and Clyde health board area from 1 November 1992 until 31 December 1992.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* On request, the general manager of the Scottish ambulance service will make available all written and audio records of emergency calls and responses from ambulance stations to legitimate inquirers, subject to appropriate safeguards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of patients. If the hon. Member contacts the general manager he will make the appropriate records available.

Mrs. Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy for the Scottish ambulance service to restore the shift patterns operating in the Argyll and Clyde health board area prior to October 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* Shift patterns are an operational matter and are the responsibility of the management team led by the general manager of the Scottish ambulance service. I understand that these are based on historical level of demand at different times of the day and night. They are kept under review and are adjusted to take account of new patterns of demand. Revised shift arrangements were introduced in October following a careful assessment of the likely demand at various times of the day.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of ambulance staff in Scotland employed by the NHS in the years 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991, using whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The number of ambulance staff was as follows:

Year	*Ambulancemen/ women*	*Ambulance officers and control assistants*	*Total*
1987	1,751·0	181·0	1,932·0
1988	1,789·7	188·0	1,977·0
1989	1,793·2	220·0	2,013·2
1990	1,802·7	220·0	2,022·7
1991	1,963·0	223·0	2,186·9

The figures exclude administrative and clerical staff and other support staff employed by the Scottish ambulance service.

Royal Alexandra Hospital

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what salary, allowance or honorarium will be paid to *(a)* the chairman and *(b)* the members of the trust board of the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley; what budget these will be drawn from; which services are covered by that budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The chairman of the trust board of the Royal Alexandra hospital will receive remuneration of £17,145 per annum and non-executive directors will receive £5,000. In addition the chairman and members are entitled to claim travelling and subsistence allowances at rates set for members of public bodies. These costs will be met from the trust's contract income.

Dentistry

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the reduction in turnover experienced by dental practices in Scotland as a result of the Government's recent changes in method of remuneration.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* There have been no recent changes in the method of dentists' remuneration. Since the introduction of the new dental fee scale in July 1992, turnover as reflected in gross income received by dentists in Scotland, which includes fees paid to dentists by health boards and charges collected by dentists from patients, has been at a higher level than in the comparable period for the previous year. From July to November 1992—the latest month for which figures are available—the total gross fees authorised to dentists (which include the value of charges paid by patients) were £56,379,000, compared with £56,316,000 for the same period in 1991.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the amount paid to dental practitioners in Scotland over the past three years at constant prices together with the planned level of expenditure for the next three years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The remuneration received by dentists in Scotland for provision of NHS services as reflected in the total gross fees authorised for payment to dentists (which include the value of charges paid by patients) is shown in the table for the last three financial years. Estimates of expenditure for future years are not yet available.

Year	*Gross payments to dentists £ million*	*Gross payments to dentists at 1991-92 prices £ million*
1989-90	94·393	108·971
1990-91	111·463	119·165
[1]1991-92	132·822	132·822

[1] Figures for 1991-92 reflect the fact that dentists' average gross earnings for NHS work were significantly higher than the target average gross income (TAGI) set for that year.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the assumptions used by his Department when seeking to estimate the fixed costs of a dental practice.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* No such estimate is made by the Department. Average national health service dental practice expenses in Great Britain are estimated each year by the dental rates study group and full reimbursement of these costs to dentists on an average basis is included in dental fees.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many courses of dental treatment were undertaken in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The figures for 1991 and the preceding four years are contained in the table. The figures from 1 October 1990 are for adults only as under the new dental contract introduced from that date children are now treated under capitation arrangements to provide continuing care, and information is not recorded on individual courses of treatment. The number of children registered with a dentist under these arrangements at the end of the calendar years since October 1990 is shown separately in the table. The number of courses of dental treatment undertaken in Scotland for 1992 is not yet available. To the end of November 1992 —the latest month for which figures are available—a total of 2·357 million courses of adult treatment had been undertaken, and a total of 0·72 million children were registered with dentists.

Million

	Number of courses of treatment	*Number of children registered (as at December)*
1987	2·987	n/a
1988	3·053	n/a
1989	3·144	n/a
1990 January to September	2·316	n/a
1990 October to December[1]	0·545	0·29
1991	2·485	0·66

[1] New contract for General Dental Services introduced on 1 October 1990.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the method of arriving at payments for courses of dental treatment, materials and laboratory fees.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Dentists' remuneration for national health service work is set by a process of several stages. The Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB) recommends a target average net income (TANI) which it considers dentists should earn from providing national health service general dental services, and the Government decide to accept or amend the recommendation and sets the TANI. The dental rates study group (DRSG) then forecasts the level of dentists' expenses (including materials and laboratory costs) for the coming year and adds this figure to the TANI to produce the target average gross income (TAGI).

The DRSG then applies a balancing mechanism to the TAGI figure to correct for any over or underpayments to dentists in previous years as a result of differences between forecast expenses and earnings and actual figures, and produces the amount due to the average dentist. Finally the DRSG forecasts the amount of national health service work that dentists will undertake in the coming year and sets the scale of individual payments and fees at a level that, taking account of the forecast amount of work, will deliver the TAGI due to the average dentist.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from dentists in Scotland regarding the current system of remuneration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend has received a wide range of representations from dentists. The Government recognised the concern about the current system of dental remuneration and therefore commissioned Sir Kenneth Bloomfield to undertake his fundamental review of that system. Dentists were invited to contribute to the review.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dental practices in each health board area have opted out of national health service dental treatment in the last 12 month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* According to information held by health boards, in the last 12 months one general dental practitioner in Fife health board area and one in Tayside health board area have left their dental lists because they no longer wish to provide national health service dental treatment.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in which towns in the Borders health board area dental practices have gone private in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* According to information held by Borders health board, in the last 12 months no general dental practitioner has left the Borders health board dental list in order to provide private treatment only.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the Bloomfield review committee to report on the future system of remuneration for dentists.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Ministers have now received Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's report on his fundamental review of dental remuneration.

Drugs and Alcohol

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the establishments in Scotland which provide residential facilities for *(a)* those with alcohol problems and *(b)* those with drug problems; if he will show for each establishment (i) the capital grant and (ii) the total revenue grant provided by his Department in each of the last five years; and if he will provide estimated figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Information on residential facilities for alcohol misusers is contained in The Scottish Council on Alcohol publication, "Alcohol Services in Scotland" and for drug misusers is contained in the Scottish Drugs Forum/Health Education Board for Scotland's "Register of Helping Agencies", copies of which I am arranging to place in the Library.

Funding for residential establishments is provided directly and indirectly by the Scottish Office from a number of sources. Most funding for residential establishments is provided locally by local authorities and health boards either from funds specifically allocated for drug misuse or from their general allocations. Details of funding from all these sources could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

It is possible to provide information on the limited funding which is available from the Scottish Office for alcohol and drugs projects, including residential facilities, undertaken by voluntary sector organisations working in the social care field under section 10(1) of The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and of the funding which is available under the urban programme. Details of the residential establishments benefiting under these schemes are set out in the tables.

Table 1
Grants awarded under section 10(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968
Residential Establishments

Establishment	*1987-88*		*1988-89*		*1989-90*		*1990-91*		*1991-92*		*1992-93*	
	Rev £	*Cap* £	*Rev* £	*Cap* £	*Rev* £	*Cap* £	*Rev* £	*Cap* £	*Rev* £	*Cap* £	*Rev*[1] £	*Cap*[1] £
Alcohol												
Albyn House, Designated Place Aberdeen	45,909	—	3,500	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deeford House Aberdeen (also covers drug misuse)	11,400	—	600	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Beechwood House, Designated Place Inverness	—	—	—	—	—	6,750	3,349	150,000	97,132	—	101,652	—
Glasgow Council on Alcohol (Designated Place)	—	—	—	—	—	10,521	—	—	—	—	—	—
Drugs												
Simpson House Edinburgh	32,977	—	8,233	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aberdeen Drugs Action	47,500	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Drugs Problems Resources Group, Kilmahew Place, Glasgow	25,269	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aberdeen Drugs Action	—	—	40,370	—	2,485	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Red Towers Drugs Project, Helensburgh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	200,000	—	—	—	—

[1] Estimated.

Note: No figures are yet available for 1993-94.

Table 2: Grants awarded under the urban programme Residential Establishments

Establishment	*1987-88*		*1988-89*		*1989-90*		*1990-91*		*1991-92*		*1992-93*	
	Rev £	*Cap* £	*Rev* £	*Cap* £	*Rev* £	*Cap* £	*Rev* £	*Cap* £	*Rev* £	*Cap* £	*Rev* £	*Cap* £
Alcohol												
Alcohol counselling/ lodging houses, Glasgow	23,616	—	25,482	—	29,124	—	2,351	—	—	—	—	—
Anchor House, (Cyrenians), Tayside	—	—	—	—	10,608	12,456	22,000	—	58,906	330	61,557	—
West Lothian supported accommodation (residential hostel)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,669	103,545	37,881
Drugs												
Brenda House extended care, Edinburgh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	17,635	—	106,605

Notes: No figures are yet available for 1993-94.

NHS Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of *(a)* nursing and midwifery staff, *(b)* managerial staff and *(c)* clerical and administrative staff in the NHS in each year since 1989.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The information requested is as follows:

	September			
	1989	*1990*	[1] *1991*	[1 2] *1992*
(a) Headcount				
Nursing and midwifery[3]	74,949	74,573	75,068	73,625
Managerial[4 6]	800	1,072	1,315	1,659
Administrative and clerical[5]	16,617	17,136	17,679	18,429
(b) Whole time equivalent				
Nursing and midwifery[3]	64,452·3	63,687·2	63,503·0	61,658·8
Managerial[4 6]	797·6	1,064·5	1,301·3	1,642·6
Administrative and clerical[5]	14,425·3	14,859·3	15,282·8	15,850·7

[1] 1991 and 1992 figures include staff of the State Hospital.
[2] Data for September 1992 are provisional.
[3] Nursing and midwifery includes qualified, unqualified and in-training staff. The decrease in numbers between 1991 and 1992 is largely accounted for by Project 2000 student nurses who are not included in the figures.
[4] The 1989 figure includes administrative and clerical staff on grade 18 and above; the 1990-92 figures include grade 7 and above.
[5] Includes control assistants and ambulance officers.
[6] Part of the increase in numbers in this group is accounted for by the transfer of some professional staff to senior manager grades.

Ardrossan-Saltcoats-Stevenston Bypass

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Messrs Wimpey on the proposed Ardrossan-Saltcoats-Stevenston bypass.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Until such time as a public inquiry is held for a scheme, it is not the Department's practice to make public representations received by parties affected by the scheme. However, Wimpey Homes Ltd is not an objector to the published bypass proposals.

Scottish Natural Heritage

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland pursuant to his answers of 15 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *169-70*, when Scottish Natural Heritage will write to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer, 18 January 1993]:* Scottish Natural Heritage will write to the hon. Member by the end of January. Work related to the MV Braer incident in Shetland has delayed the collection of relevant information.

Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which fox and deer hunts have been issued with licences or permits to hunt live quarry on Forestry Commission land.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* The Forestry Commission has issued the following hunts with licences or permits to hunt on Forestry Commission land.

Fox Hunts

Ashford Valley Hunt
Banwen Miners Hunt
Barlow Hunt
Barton Hunt
Beaufort Hunt
Belvoir Hunt
Bewcastle Hunt
Bicester Hunt with Wheddon Chase
Bilsdale Hunt
Blankney Hunt
Blencathra Foxhounds
Border Hunt
Brocklesby Hunt
Cambridgeshire Hunt
Chiddingfold, Leaconfield and Cowdray Hunt
Cleveland Hunt
College Valley Hunt
Coniston Foxhounds
Cottesmore Hunt
Crawley and Horsham Hunt
Cumberland Farmers Foxhounds
Cumberland Foxhounds
Curre Hunt
Derwent Hunt
Duddon Valley and District Hunt
East Essex Hunt
East Kent Hunt
East Sussex and Burstow Hunt
Eskdale and Ennerdale Foxhounds
Essex Hunt
Farndale Hunt
Fitzwilliam Hunt
Gelligaer Farmers Hunt
Goathland Hunt
Grafton Hunt
Grove and Rufford Hunt
Hampshire Hunt
Haydon Hunt
Hodder Valley Foxhounds
Hurworth Hunt
Isle of Wight Hunt
Liddesdale Hunt
Llangeinor Hunt
Llangibby Hunt
Melbreak Hunt
Middleton Hunt
Milvain Hunt
Monmouthshire Hunt
Morpeth Hunt
North Lonsdale Foxhounds
North Norfolk Harriers
North Tyne Hunt
Oakley Hunt
Ols Surrey and Burstow Hunt
Pennine Foxhounds
Pentyrch Hunt
Percy Hunt
Puckeridge Hunt
Saltersgate Farmers
Sinnington Hunt
Southdown and Eridge Hunt
South Notts Hunt
South Pembrokeshire Hunt
South Wold Hunt
Staintondale Hunt
Suffolk Hunt
Surrey Union Hunt
Talybont Hunt
The New Forest Foxhounds
Thurlow Hunt
Tredegar Farmers Hunt
Tynedale Hunt
United Pack Shropshire
West Norfolk Hunt

West Percy Hunt
West Somerset Vale Foxhounds
Woodland Pytchley Hunt
York and Ainsty North Hunt
Ystrad Hunt

Deer Hunts
Quantock Staghounds Hunt
The New Forest Buckhounds

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when an application for a permit to hunt on Forestry Commission land was last refused.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* In November 1990 the Forestry Commission refused an application for a permit to hunt deer in Buckland wood in Devon, as this is an area where deer hunting is not a traditional activity.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when a permit to hunt on Forestry Commission land was last withdrawn.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* The Forestry Commission has no record of a permit to hunt being withdrawn.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what charge is made for a permit to hunt on Forestry Commission land.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* No charge is made for a permit to hunt on Forestry Commission land.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many vehicle permit applications to the Forestry Commission to follow hunts have been *(a)* refused and *(b)* withdrawn in the latest period for which figures are available; and what are the terms and conditions of such vehicle permits.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 January 1993]* The Forestry Commission only issues vehicle permits to follow three hunts in Yorkshire and two hunts in south-east England. The conditions are listed in the permits, an example of which has been placed in the Library. Some permits to hunt also give authority for a specified number of vehicles to follow the hunt. No record is kept of applications which have been refused or not renewed; the Forestry Commission has no record of a permit being withdrawn.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what charge is made for a vehicle permit from the Forestry Commission to follow a hunt.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* The Forestry Commission makes no charge for a vehicle permit to follow a hunt.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what monitoring procedures are in force to ensure the conditions of vehicle permission from the Forestry Commission to follow hunts are adhered to.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* Some hunts provide vehicle stewards who are responsible for ensuring that only authorised vehicles enter Forestry Commission land. In addition, Forestry Commission staff carry out random checks on hunt days to ensure that the conditions of the permits are being followed.

Forestry

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress he is making in preparing *(a)* draft national or regional programmes and *(b)* zonal plans under Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2080/92 instituting an aid scheme for forestry measures in agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* To receive Community part-financing of forestry grant-aid under Council Regulation No. 2080/92, member states have to submit national or regional programmes describing their forestry aid schemes to the European Commission, which will decide whether they comply with the objectives and conditions of the regulation. Preparation of zonal plans is entirely optional.

The Forestry Commission is currently preparing a draft national programme for the United Kingdom, in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish and Welsh Office Agriculture Departments, and this is expected to be submitted to the European Commission in the spring. We will not be producing either regional or zonal plans.

Fluoridation

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will issue a statement clarifying the chief medical officer's statement to the *Evening Times (Glasgow)* on fluoridation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 17 December at column *457* to his two earlier questions on this matter.

Heritage Coastline

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many kilometres have been designated as heritage coasts; and what proportions this represents of the total Scottish coastline.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The designation of heritage coast is not used in Scotland. Important coastal areas are protected by other landscape and conservation designations and through development plans.

Smokers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the total number of habitual smokers in Scotland by regional and island council area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* In 1990 —the latest year for which information is available—the general household survey conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) indicated that 34 per cent. of the Scottish population aged 16 or over were cigarette smokers. Information broken down by region or island council is not available.

Smoking is the single most important contributor to ill-health in Scotland. It is a high priority for health

education and last autumn the Health Education Board for Scotland launched major campaigns directed at young people and adults. My right hon. Friend also announced a number of other steps to combat smoking in the policy statement "Scotland's Health—a Challenge To Us All" which he published last July.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 20 January 1993

HOME DEPARTMENT

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (i) how many juveniles have been convicted of *(a)* offences against property, *(b)* assault, *(c)* taking cars without the owner's consent, *(d)* driving without a licence and *(e)* dangerous driving in England in each of the last five years;

(2) how many juveniles have been convicted of burglary in England in the last five years.

Mr. Jack: The information is given in the table.

Number of juveniles (persons aged 10 to under 17) convicted at all courts of certain offences 1987-91)

England *Principal offence*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	[1] *1991*
Offences against property					
Burglary	10,244	8,474	7,060	6,266	5,549
Theft and handling stolen goods	19,967	16,365	10,013	9,123	7,976
Fraud and forgery	436	357	317	243	214
Criminal damage	1,462	1,420	1,072	1,120	969
Assault					
Grievous bodily harm	582	616	565	551	464
Actual bodily harm	2,789	2,983	2,863	2,423	2,190
Assault on constable	259	240	233	232	192
Common assault[1]	59	59	157	220	231
Theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle					
Theft	921	668	582	524	500
Unauthorised taking[2]	4,919	4,507	4,284	3,861	3,573
Driving without a licence	38	42	16	28	26
Dangerous driving					
Reckless driving	76	113	169	214	288

[1] Provisional.
[2] Reclassification as summary offences under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (October 1988).

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of offences committed by juveniles in England while on bail in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: Information is not currently available nationally. However, my Department is presently examining with the police ways in which the extent of offending on bail can be effectively monitored at a national level.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consult the police authorities on the reform of legislation to permit custodial sentences to be imposed on juvenile offenders.

Mr. Jack: We intend to consult widely, including representative organisations of the police service, before bringing any firm legislative proposals before Parliament.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of offenders in *(a)* the east midlands, *(b)* Nottinghamshire, *(c)* Mansfield and *(d)* England and Wales were under 21 years in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* Information for 1991, which is provisional, is given in the tables.

Table A
Number and percentage of offenders found guilty at all courts and cautioned in the East Midlands region, Nottinghamshire police force area and England and Wales by age and type of offences 1991[1]

Area/type of offence	*Aged under 21 years*						*All Ages*		
	Cautioned		*Found guilty*		*Total found guilty or cautioned*		*Cautioned*	*Found guilty*	*Total found guilty or cautioned*
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*[=100%]*	*[=100%]*	*[=100%]*
East Midlands region									
Indictable offences	10,868	69	9,541	36	20,409	48	15,782	26,311	42,093
Summary non-motoring offences	3,081	59	6,011	17	9,092	22	5,226	36,420	41,646
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	13,949	66	15,552	25	29,501	35	21,008	62,731	83,739
Nottinghamshire pfa									
Indictable offences	4,353	67	3,501	38	7,854	50	6,452	9,190	15,642
Summary non-motoring offences	1,040	66	2,100	18	3,140	23	1,573	11,885	13,458
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	5,393	67	5,601	27	10,994	38	8,025	21,075	29,100
England and Wales									
Indictable offences	119,424	66	115,376	34	234,800	46	179,885	335,394	515,279
Summary non-motoring offences	38,649	39	63,279	14	101,928	19	98,880	450,558	549,438
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	158,073	57	178,655	23	336,728	32	278,765	785,952	1,064,717

[1] Provisional.

Table B
Number and percentage of offenders found guilty at Mansfield[1] petty sessional division by age and type of offence 1991[2]

Area/type of offence	*Aged under 21 years Found guilty Number*	*per cent.*	*All ages Found guilty (= 100 per cent.)*
Mansfield petty sessional division			
Indictable offences	734	41	1,807
Summary non-motoring offences	418	18	2,364
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	1,152	28	4,171

[1] Including convictions at the Crown Court where the committing court was Mansfield petty sessional division.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. George Pai

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration is being given to the deportation of Mr. George Pai of Manchester.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mr. Chan Yee Yau, also known as Georgie Pai, last entered the United Kingdom in breach of an extant deportation order. He was arrested on 9 December 1991 and detained as an illegal entrant with a view to his removal. On 19 December 1991 an application on Mr. Yau's behalf to the divisional court for leave to move for judicial review of the decision to remove him was granted. The case was adjourned pending the outcome of a relevant case then before the European Court of Justice. On 24 December 1991 the court granted an application for bail, and Mr. Yau was released. His case is still pending before the divisional court.

Triads, Manchester

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Manchester on the progress of the investigations into Triad gangs in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. These are operational matters and the responsibility of the chief officer of the Greater Manchester police.

Stabbings

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of stabbing there have been in each of the last three years in which the perpetrator has been aged *(a)* under 16, *(b)* 16 to 20, *(c)* 21 to 24 years or *(d)* other.

Mr. Jack: Information is not collected centrally on the age of the perpetrator in all incidents of stabbing. However, the number of currently recorded homicides in England and Wales where the method of killing was by a sharp instrument is shown by age of suspect for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 in the following table:

Offences currently recorded as homicide involving a sharp instrument by age of principal suspect

Age of principal suspect	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Aged less than 16	1	2	2
Aged 16-20	32	25	32
Aged 21-24	34	35	29
Aged 25 and above	104	108	149
Total	171	170	212

Betting Offices

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to publish the Licensed Betting Office Regulation 1986 (Amendment) Regulations;

(2) what consideration is being given to allowing betting offices to open during evening hours.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to a question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 19 January 1993, at column *141*.

Surveillance Equipment

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce restrictions on the manufacture, use and sale of equipment that can be used to eavesdrop on the activities of private individuals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no present plans to impose restrictions on the manufacture and sale of equipment that can be used to receive and amplify sound.

As part of their response to the Calcutt review of press self-regulation—*Official Report*, 14 January, columns 1067-69—the Government have accepted the case for restrictions on the use of surveillance devices in certain circumstances. We have also accepted the Calcutt recommendations that further consideration should be given to legislation covering the interception of telecommunications, with a view to identifying all significant gaps and determining whether further legislation is needed, and that further consideration should be given to the introduction of a new tort of infringement of privacy.

Mental Illness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of persons currently under the supervision of the probation service in England and Wales are considered to be mentally disordered or mentally ill.

Mr. Jack: In 1991, 147 persons conditionally discharged from psychiatric hospitals were under probation service supervision and a total of 911 persons commenced probation orders with a requirement of psychiatric treatment—784 non-residential, 119 residential, eight juvenile non-residential. Information on mental disorder and mental illness in respect of the total probation caseload is not collected centrally.

Mr. Sodigar Hussain

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange for the post in Islamabad to refer the latest entry clearance application by Mr. Sodigar Hussain, date of birth 21 July 1959, to join his wife in the United Kingdom to him for consideration under the review concerning couples with children separated for more than five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Any further application by Mr. Hussain will be considered by the entry clearance officer under the immigration rules taking account of relevant policy guidance.

Karimjit Singh Chahal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now release Karimjit Singh Chahal from Bedford prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The decision to detain Mr. Chahal is regularly reviewed, but at the present time my right hon. and learned Friend sees no grounds for his release.

Mrs. Hildegarde Biel

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a decision is to be taken on the application to remain in the United Kingdom by Mrs. Hildegarde Biel—Ref: IMP R63833/5 (S) and PO 17232/92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We hope to reach a decision shortly, and I will then write to the hon. Member.

Juvenile Crime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the impact of the decision of the magistrates court in Leeds to impose a fine on Leeds city council after a child in its care committed a burglary on *(a)* crime prevention and reduction and *(b)* the resources available for diverting young people from criminal activity.

Mr. Jack: It would not be appropriate to comment on, or assess the impact of, a decision of the courts in an individual case. Nevertheless, we intend to monitor carefully the effect of the new powers for courts introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991 which, inter alia, allow them to make local authorities liable to pay fines and compensation when children in their care commit offences. The purpose of these new provisions, which parallel those which apply to parents, is to ensure that local authorities do all in their power to ensure that children in their care do not commit offences. Local authorities are under a separate duty under the Children Act 1989 to encourage children in their areas not to commit criminal offences.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Whisky

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in *(a)* duty rate and *(b)* total duty received on whisky and whiskey in each of the past 15 years.

Sir John Cope: The information is as follows:

	Estimated duty (£m) on whisky/whiskey	*Percentage change in duty rate*
1977-78	447	0·0
1978-79	567	0·0
1979-80	572	13·7
1980-81	578	14·6
1981-82	623	6·4
1982-83	478	5·0
1983-84	818	1·9
1984-85	591	1·9
1985-86	714	0·0
1986-87	667	0·0
1987-88	698	0·0
1988-89	682	0·0
1989-90	650	10·0
1990-91	726	9·3
1991-92	730	4·5

Civil Servants

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish tables giving for an administrative assistant, an administrative officer, an executive officer, a higher executive officer and a principal UG7 *(a)* the maximum annual salary on 1 April each year since 1970 and on 1 August 1992 excluding range or performance points, *(b)* the percentage of the national average wage represented by each figure and *(c)* the value today of the figures for 1 April 1976, 1 April 1980 and 1 April 1985 if they had been increased in line with (i) the movements in the retail prices index and (ii) the gross domestic product deflator.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is as follows:

	Salary[1] *£*	*Percentage of national average earnings*[2]
Administrative Assistant		
1 April 1970	943	72·3
1 April 1971	1,037	73·8
1 April 1972	1,123	71·7
1 April 1973	1,235	68·1
1 April 1974	1,456	71·9
1 April 1975	1,940	73·1
1 April 1976	1,940	61·4
1 April 1977	1,940	56·0
1 April 1978	2,608	67·0
1 April 1979	2,894	63·7
1 April 1980	3,155	57·0
1 April 1981	4,070	64·7
1 April 1982	4,340	62·2
1 April 1983	4,584	61·4
1 April 1984	4,813	58·1
1 April 1985	5,054	56·8
1 April 1986	5,357	55·8
1 April 1987	5,799	56·1
1 April 1988	6,081	53·5
1 April 1989	6,324	50·7
1 April 1990	7,322	53·5
1 April 1991	8,720	58·9
1 April 1992	8,790	55·59
1 August 1992	8,790	[3]55·5
If increased in line with Retail Price Index to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	6,526	
1 April 1980	6,382	
1 April 1985	7,353	
If increased in line with Gross Domestic Product Deflator to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	6,890	

	Salary[1] £	Percentage of national average earnings[2]
1 April 1980	6,438	
1 April 1985	7,573	

	Salary[1] £	Percentage of national average earnings[2]
Administrative Officer		
1 April 1970	1,253	96·0
1 April 1971	1,385	98·5
1 April 1972	1,489	95·0
1 April 1973	1,601	88·3
1 April 1974	1,883	92·9
1 April 1975	2,540	95·7
1 April 1976	2,540	80·4
1 April 1977	2,540	73·4
1 April 1978	3,280	84·2
1 April 1979	3,627	79·8
1 April 1980	4,000	72·2
1 April 1981	5,102	81·2
1 April 1982	5,421	77·7
1 April 1983	5,708	76·5
1 April 1984	5,993	72·3
1 April 1985	6,293	70·8
1 April 1986	6,671	69·5
1 April 1987	7,091	68·6
1 April 1988	7,555	66·5
1 April 1989	7,857	63·0
1 April 1990	9,278	67·8
1 April 1991	9,983	67·4
1 April 1992	10,409	65·7
1 August 1992	10,409	[3]65·7
If increased in line with Retail Price Index to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	8,544	
1 April 1980	8,092	
1 April 1985	9,155	
If increased in line with Gross Domestic Product Deflator to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	9,021	
1 April 1980	8,162	
1 April 1985	9,429	

	Salary[1] £	Percentage of national average earnings[2]
Executive Officer		
1 April 1970	1,835	140·6
1 April 1971	2,000	142·2
1 April 1972	2,150	137·2
1 April 1973	2,288	126·2
1 April 1974	2,782	137·3
1 April 1975	3,670	138·3
1 April 1976	3,670	116·2
1 April 1977	3,670	106·0
1 April 1978	4,579	117·6
1 April 1979	5,043	111·0
1 April 1980	5,700	102·9
1 April 1981	7,247	115·3
1 April 1982	7,700	110·4
1 April 1983	8,078	108·2
1 April 1984	8,492	102·6
1 April 1985	8,917	100·3
1 April 1986	9,452	98·4
1 April 1987	9,864	95·4
1 April 1988	10,755	94·7
1 April 1989	11,185	89·7
1 April 1990	12,621	92·3
1 April 1991	13,605	91·9
1 April 1992	14,165	89·4
1 August 1992	14,165	[3]89·4

	Salary[1] £	Percentage of national average earnings[2]
If increased in line with Retail Price Index to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	12,345	
1 April 1980	11,531	
1 April 1985	12,973	
If increased in line with Gross Domestic Product Deflator to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	13,034	
1 April 1980	11,631	
1 April 1985	13,361	

	Salary[1] £	Percentage of national average earnings[2]
Higher Executive Officer		
1 April 1970	2,392	183·3
1 April 1971	2,625	186·7
1 April 1972	2,809	179·3
1 April 1973	2,961	163·3
1 April 1974	3,585	176·9
1 April 1975	4,700	177·2
1 April 1976	4,700	148·8
1 April 1977	4,700	135·8
1 April 1978	5,718	146·8
1 April 1979	6,233	137·2
1 April 1980	7,250	130·9
1 April 1981	9,184	146·1
1 April 1982	9,758	139·9
1 April 1983	10,218	136·9
1 April 1984	10,729	129·5
1 April 1985	11,263	126·7
1 April 1986	11,941	124·3
1 April 1987	12,448	120·4
1 April 1988	13,458	118·5
1 April 1989	13,996	112·3
1 April 1990	15,786	115·4
1 April 1991	17,017	114·9
1 April 1992	17,718	111·9
1 August 1992	17,718	[3]111·9
If increased in line with Retail Price Index to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	15,810	
1 April 1980	14,666	
1 April 1985	16,386	
If increased in line with Gross Domestic Product Deflator to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	16,693	
1 April 1980	14,794	
1 April 1985	16,876	

	Salary[1] £	Percentage of national average earnings[2]
Grade 7		
1 April 1970	3,902	299·0
1 April 1971	4,400	312·9
1 April 1972	4,708	300·4
1 April 1973	4,908	270·7
1 April 1974	5,775	285·0
1 April 1975	7,450	280·8
1 April 1976	7,450	235·8
1 April 1977	7,450	215·2
1 April 1978	8,729	224·2
1 April 1979	9,515	209·4
1 April 1980	11,750	212·2
1 April 1981	15,010	238·7
1 April 1982	15,948	228·6
1 April 1983	16,656	223·2

	Salary[1] £	Percentage of national average earnings[2]
1 April 1984	17,489	211·1
1 April 1985	18,363	206·5
1 April 1986	19,465	202·7
1 April 1987	20,297	196·2
1 April 1988	21,936	193·1
1 April 1989	22,606	181·3
1 April 1990	24,075	176·0
1 April 1991	26,121	176·4
1 April 1992	27,819	175·6
1 August 1992	[4]28,904	[3]182·5
If increased in line with Retail Price Index to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	25,060	
1 April 1980	23,770	
1 April 1985	26,716	
If increased in line with Gross Domestic Product Deflator to 1 April 1992:		
1 April 1976	26,459	
1 April 1980	23,977	
1 April 1985	27,514	

Notes:

[1] National pay scales applying to civil servants outside London.

[2] Percentages of gross national earnings calculated on the basis of figures published in the New Earnings Survey, including overtime and allowances.

[3] Percentage based on the most recent figure available for national average gross annual earnings, i.e. as at 1 April 1992.

[4] Old scale maximum increased by the across-the-board increase of 3·9 per cent. payable from 1 August 1992. The old scale maximum is not a feature of the new pay arrangements introduced for certain grades (including Grade 7) on 1 August 1992.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Portillo: HM Treasury has awarded two contracts to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months, one for staff appraisal training and a research project.

Third World Debt

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to public funds in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992 of granting banks tax relief on setting money aside in case of default on debts by third world countries.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is given in my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 7 December 1992, at columns *471-72*.

Child Care

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the cost to the Treasury of tax relief on employer-provided child care in *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92 and *(c)* 1992-93; and what are his estimates for the cost in 1993-94.

Mr. Dorrell: The revenue cost of exempting employer-provided child care is estimated to be about £10 million for each of the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93. The revenue cost for 1993-94 would depend on the level of provision.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on Treasury revenue in 1993-94 of extending tax relief on employer-provided child care to *(a)* employer-provided cheques and vouchers for child care and *(b)* all forms of employer assistance for child care.

Mr. Dorrell: Exempting all existing employer assistance for child care would have a revenue cost, at 1992-93 levels of provision and subsidies, of approximately £5 million. There is insufficient information to subdivide this estimate. We expect that if such a measure were introduced there would be substantial behavioural effects.

"Made in UK" Labels (Textile Imports)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what investigations he is intending to make into the production of "Made in UK" labels in Serbia and Macedonia which were supplied to Messrs. Dewhursts of Driffield, North Humberside;

(2) what proposals he has for the examination of tachographs in establishing the source of textile products imported by Dewhursts of Driffield, North Humberside;

(3) whether he intends to arrange for the interview of vehicle drivers employed or formerly employed by Burlington Ocean Express so as to secure statements on their involvement in the transportation of textile products from Serbia to an Otex-owned factory in Macedonia;

(4) what information he has as to the relationship between Otex of Macedonia and Genex of Serbia;

(5) what proportion of textile imports for Messrs. Dewhursts held at port in December 1992 were subject to individual examination.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* Customs tell me that they have almost completed inquiries in this case and so far there is no evidence to suggest any breaches of sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. As the case is not yet finalised, it would be inappropriate to comment further.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disabled People

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many disabled people below the pensionable age are living in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: Estimates derived from the surveys of disability undertaken by the policy planning and research unit of the Department of Finance and Personnel in 1989-90 indicate that, according to the definition used in the survey, there were 96,000 disabled people under pension age in Northern Ireland.

Forestry (Public Access)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many public access agreements have been concluded in Northern Ireland in each of the past three years in respect of Forestry Commission holdings sold to the private sector; and what percentage of total sales these figures represent.

Mr. Hanley: The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland is responsible for state forestry in

Northern Ireland. It has not entered into any public access arrangements in respect of woodland areas disposed of in the past three years. All such disposals during this period were in isolated localities, were small in size and were of no recreational significance.

Local Authorities

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to seek to allow local authorities in Northern Ireland additional powers and responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* I have no such plans. However, the Government believe that there is considerable scope to transfer greater power, authority and responsibility to locally elected representatives in Northern Ireland and would be willing to give serious consideration to any proposals regarding future arrangements for regional or local government in Northern Ireland which seemed likely to prove widely acceptable. These issues are best considered in the comprehensive context of further political talks.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will estimate the total expenditure on *(a)* green form assistance, *(b)* legal aid for civil cases and *(c)* legal aid for criminal cases that will be authorised in 1993-94 (i) in England and (ii) in the Yorkshire region on the assumption that the current eligibility rules continue to apply and also on the assumption that the new eligibility criteria which were proposed at the time of the autumn statement are introduced on 1 April.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The only estimates available for 1993-94 are those for England and Wales as a whole. For England and Wales it is estimated that following the abolition of contributory green form assistance, £138·7 million will be spent on legal advice and assistance in 1993-94; £142·4 million would be spent if there were no changes to financial eligibility. It is estimated that £508·7 million will be spent on civil legal aid in 1993-94 and that £548·2 million would be spent if there were no changes to financial eligibility. The changes will have little effect on total expenditure on criminal legal aid which it is estimated will be £570 million in 1993-94.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will estimate for England and for the Yorkshire region the number of applications for *(a)* green form assistance and *(b)* civil legal aid that will be approved in 1992-93; and how many would be eligible under the new rules.

Mr. John M. Taylor: For England and Wales as a whole it is estimated that in 1992-93, a total of 1,461,000 bills will be paid for legal advice and assistance under the green form scheme and that 413,000 civil legal aid certificates will be issued. For the Yorkshire and Humberside region, not including Hambledon, Richmond, Ryedale or Scarborough, it is estimated that in 1992-93, 120,000 bills will be paid for advice and assistance under the green form scheme and that 40,000 civil legal aid certificates will be issued. It is not possible to estimate how many of these green form bills would have been paid, or these civil legal aid certificates issued, had the new eligibility limits been in force.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will estimate for England and for the Yorkshire region the number of applications for *(a)* green form assistance and *(b)* civil legal aid that will be approved in 1993-94 (i) on the assumption that the current eligibility rules are unchanged and (ii) on the assumption that the new eligibility criteria proposed at the time of the autumn statement are introduced on 1 April; and if he will estimate how many of those receiving legal aid under the new criteria would receive less aid in cash terms than they would have received under the old rules.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The only estimates available for 1993-94 are those for England and Wales as a whole. It is estimated that in 1993-94 under the current financial eligibility regulations, 1,548,000 bills for legal advice and assistance under the green form scheme would have been paid, and that 452,000 civil legal aid certificates would have been issued. Under the new regulations it is estimated that around 1,400,000 green form bills will be paid and 333,000 civil legal aid certificates will be issued. It is not possible to estimate the number of people who will receive less aid in cash terms under the new criteria.

Public Record Office

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many papers withheld at the Public Record Office have been subsequently released after review by the Lord Chancellor's advisory council in each year since 1979.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Advisory Council on Public Records has a role in considering and commenting on applications to the Lord Chancellor by Departments for the extended closure of public records, that is, beyond the statutory period of 30 years after their creation. It has never reviewed records after they have been closed.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Physics Departments

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response he has made to the representations made to him by the Institute of Physics concerning the maintenance of the dual support system for physics departments not currently considered to be in the top rank.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The president of the Institute of Physics wrote to the chief scientific adviser on 17 November with the institute's views on the forthcoming science and technology White Paper. These included comments on the operation of the dual support system. The chief scientific adviser replied on 27 November thanking him for the institute's comments, which will be considered in preparing the White Paper.

Copies of the institute's comments were placed in the Library of the House on 18 December.

ENVIRONMENT

Lead Shot

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress his Department is making in discussions with interested parties concerning development of alternatives to lead shot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department set up a working group with interested parties on 31 October 1991 to develop a programme for introducing non-toxic shot and phasing-out lead shot in wetland areas.

The group has concluded that a target for commercial quantities of non-toxic shot for 12-bore shotguns to be available by September 1995 is feasible. The group intends that the majority of lead shooting over wetlands should be phased-out by September 1997; a ban on lead shot could operate from that date. The group will continue to pursue these objectives.

Rough Sleeping

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are used in assessing applications for grants under the rough sleeping initiative.

Mr. Baldry: Grants under the rough sleepers initiative in central London are given at the discretion of the Secretary of State. Projects are assessed against their value in meeting the policy objectives of the initiative. Capital projects comply with the standards laid down in the Housing Corporation's published schemework procedure guide and the value for money criteria published in the corporation's total cost indicator and grant rate circular.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of grant received by each organisation under the rough sleeping initiative.

Mr. Baldry: I will write to my hon. Friend about this shortly.

Parliamentary Alternative Energy Group

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent meetings he has had with the parliamentary alternative energy group; and what meetings he has planned with the parliamentary alternative energy group in the current year.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment attended a reception organised by the parliamentary alternative energy group at the House of Commons on Monday 14 December 1992. He has no plans at present to meet the group this year.

Peatlands

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to bring forward new measures to safeguard lowland peatlands of nature conservation importance in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: A working group on peat extraction comprising representatives of the main interested parties is preparing advice for my right hon. and learned Friend. The Government strategy for peatlands will be announced after receiving the working group's advice and considering all other relevant information.

Environmental Inspectorates

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to propose that a meeting of each EC nation's environmental inspectorate will also include the environmental authorities of central and eastern European nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government attach importance to improving the quality of inspection through, inter alia, exchanging information and experience. To this end, in November last year, the United Kingdom presidency launched the network of EC environmental enforcement agencies. The value of participation in the network by central and east European countries can be assessed in due course when we have had more experience of how the network is working and taking account of other options that may be available. The Department is already providing some advice and assistance to central and east European inspectorates through the environmental know-how fund.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what form he intends to publish the responses received from the first consultation exercise on contaminated land; if he will place a copy of all responses in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We are still considering the way forward on proposals for registers of land which may be contaminated which have been the subject of two consultation exercises. Copies of responses to both consultation exercises will be placed in the Library when we have announced our decisions.

Homelessness

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are used in assessing applications for grants under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Baldry: Grant under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 is given at the discretion of the Secretary of State against criteria set out each year in notes for the guidance of applicants. I have today placed in the Library a copy of the guidance notes for 1993-94.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of grant received by each organisation under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 in each of the past three years.

Mr. Baldry: I have today placed in the Library a list showing grants to homelessness voluntary organisations in England under the main section 73 grant programme in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Drinking Water (Lead)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to introduce World Health Organisation standards for lead in drinking water; and if he will take steps to eradicate lead from drinking water supplies.

Mr. Maclean: We are considering whether any changes are needed in the light of the revised guidelines that the World Health Organisation is expected to publish later in the year.

Housing, Sandwell

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new homes will be provided by Sandwell metropolitan borough authority in 1993-94; what is the total provision from central funds which will be received by the authority in support of capital expenditure on housing; and what capital expenditure he expects the authority to incur next year.

Mr. Baldry: The level of local authority housing capital expenditure in Sandwell in 1993-94, and priorities within the capital programme for that year, are matters for the council to decide in the light of available resources. Sandwell's housing investment programme allocation for 1993-94 is £21,554,000. Further resources for 1993-94 could be made available to Sandwell from housing special programmes.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the planning laws relating to car boot sales.

Mr. Baldry: My Department issued a public consultation paper—"Temporary Uses of Land, External Lighting and Miscellaneous Amendments to the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988" —in August last year inviting views on the proper scope of permitted development rights for the temporary use of land, including the use of land for markets and car boot sales.

More than 1,250 responses to the consultation paper have been received and are currently under consideration.

Environmental Disasters

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he gives to local authorities seeking to provide financial and other assistance to those whose homes are affected by environmental disasters of any kind.

Mr. Robin Squire: Guidance issued by my Department and others covering a wide range of local authority functions may be relevant, depending on the circumstances. Local authorities have a general power to incur expenditure which is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to their area or its inhabitants, and we expect them to make appropriate use of that discretion.

Local Government Employment, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time in local government in Hampshire in each year since 1987.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is given in the table for each authority in Hampshire. Totals have not been given because data for some authorities are not available centrally.

Numbers employed in local authorities in Hampshire
At June of each year

Authority	1987		1988		1989		1990		1991		1992	
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time
Hampshire County	29,205	27,295	29,515	27,836	27,775	28,324	27,604	27,827	27,796	27,070	28,150	27,907
Basingstoke	655	49	669	45	687	35	714	42	723	40	683	41
East Hampshire	418	78	379	95	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	462	221	369	198
Eastleigh	481	63	489	75	537	86	512	82	436	106	399	86
Fareham	495	46	493	47	504	45	506	59	508	64	487	68
Gosport	479	143	464	143	470	150	490	160	449	147	365	148
Hart	300	45	306	59	286	63	297	64	306	69	278	48
Havant	694	142	688	164	676	157	659	172	640	177	629	205
New Forest	722	175	676	192	713	212	752	207	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Portsmouth	2,312	502	2,307	569	2,304	548	2,291	520	2,141	511	2,083	536
Rushmoor	614	90	584	84	606	83	617	90	610	90	585	97
Southampton	2,322	208	N/A	N/A	2,243	285	2,271	302	2,226	350	2,153	358
Test Valley	566	176	547	190	549	188	547	196	541	197	542	198
Winchester	552	94	581	80	605	147	618	170	649	178	614	125

N/A = Data not available.
Source: Joint Staffing Watch for England.

Note: Education, passenger transport, fire services, police and social services are administered by Hampshire County Council. The other authorities shown are District Councils, which, amongst other services, administer housing and refuse collection.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he is giving to the holding of a public inquiry before coming to a decision on whether the THORP at Sellafield should proceed.

Mr. Maclean: The regulatory authorities' consultation on their proposed draft authorisations for the Sellafield site, including THORP, ends on 25 January. The chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will then consider whether there is a need to make changes to the draft authorisations in the light of comments received. Once they have decided whether, and if so how, the authorisations should be amended, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will consider whether to afford a hearing in accordance with the terms of the legislation.

Environment Council

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report on the achievements of the United Kingdom's presidency of the Environment Council.

Mr. Howard: At the outset of our presidency I set a number of objectives. The first was to follow through the agreement reached at Rio and to begin to formulate the Community's response to them. This was to carried forward in many ways. Environment Ministers discussed the way forward at their informal meeting at Gleneagles in September following the lead given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the eight-point strategy that he put to the Lisbon European Council in June. Development Ministers have also given priority to UNCED follow-up in their declaration on the future of development policy. Much of the work in Brussels over the last six months has also been about measures to help put into practice the agreements reached at Rio. Foremost among these has been the consideration and endorsement by the Council of the fifth environmental action programme, which will not only provide the blueprint for the Community's environmental policy up to the end of the century, but will constitute the basis for the Community's response to "Agenda 21".

The second objective was to improve the integration of environmental considerations into other policy areas as the key to sustainable development. This is also a central theme of the fifth action programme, and reflects the strengthened text we had successfully negotiated into the Maastricht treaty.

Improved integration is a long-term objective, but good progress was made over the last six months. The Government commissioned a widely acclaimed report from the Institute for European Environmental Policy and made the subject the centrepiece for ministerial discussion at the Informal Council, where useful ideas for improving integration at Community level were generated. These were reflected not only in the conclusions of that meeting, but in the Council resolution on the fifth action programme. The Department of the Environment also collaborated with other Departments to influence and monitor the activities of other EC policy areas. Environmental issues were discussed in eight different Councils during the United Kingdom presidency, and a number of special conferences linked to the integration theme were organised or supported.

The third objective was to secure improvements in the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation across the Community. The Government secured significant achievements here. We hosted the first meeting of the network of environmental enforcement authorities, securing participation from all member states and agreeing terms of reference and a programme of work for the future. This should ensure that the network is now firmly established as a mechanism for improving standards across the Community through exchanges of information, personnel and ideas between environmental regulators. The Government also secured an undertaking from the Commission to produce regular reports for the Council of Ministers on the application of existing Community legislation in the member states, held a first formal debate on this subject at the December Council meeting, and obtained the Council's agreement that such debates should take place annually in future. The Government have continued to press the Commission to bring forward proposals for a Community body to audit the application of EC environmental legislation, and have secured growing support from other member states for this idea.

The Government also made progress on a broad range of detailed measures in the Council.

Waste: agreement was finally reached on a regulation controlling the movement of waste within, into and out of the Community. This important and hard-won agreement opens the way for Community ratification of the Basel convention on trade in hazardous waste.

Ozone layer : a regulation was agreed accelerating the phase-out dates for the production and consumption within the Community of CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances.

Vehicle emissions: agreement was reached on stringent emission standards for vans and other light-duty vehicles to fill the gap between those already agreed for cars and for heavy-duty vehicles.

Fifth action programme: the Council agreed a resolution setting out its response to the Commission's fifth environmental action programme, which maps out a broad strategy for the Community's environment policy until the end of the century. The resolution included a passage taking account of the Edinburgh European Council conclusions on subsidiarity which will now guide Community environment policy.

Eco-Audit Scheme: broad agreement was reached on a Community eco-management and audit scheme, the aim of which is to encourage effective environmental management of industrial sites and regular public reporting of their environmental impacts.

Climate change: discussions were taken forward on all elements of the Commission's proposals for Community action. The proposed carbon/energy tax was discussed by Finance Ministers and remitted to experts for further work on a number of specific questions. The Energy Council discussed the draft directive on energy-saving measures and agreed new measures on the exploitation of renewable energy sources. Environment Ministers made good progress towards agreement on a mechanism for monitoring national programmes on greenhouse gas emissions.

Endangered species: good progress was made towards agreeing a workable basis for strict new Community controls on the wildlife trade. Member states' concerns about the complexity of the Commission's original proposals have largely been overcome.

Packaging: a good start was made in discussions on new Commission proposals for a directive on packaging and packaging waste.

Air pollution: the Council formally adopted a directive on air pollution by ozone, and work was started on two new measures concerning emissions from hazardous waste incineration and evaporative emissions from petrol distribution.

In addition, the Government made strenous efforts to overcome the blockages which have prevented the establishment of the European Environment Agency. Although it proved impossible to obtain agreement on a site during the course of the presidency, there is every indication that the main obstacles have now been removed, and that agreement should be possible under the Danish presidency. In the meantime, we worked closely

with the Commission to identify tasks which could usefully be set in hand in the interim to anticipate the future work and needs of the agency.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside and I also represented the Community as presidency at several international meetings such as the UN general assembly in October and the Copenhagen meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol in November. Officials from my Department also spoke for the Community and chaired Community co-ordination meetings as appropriate at various international meetings held at official level.

This represents a substantial record of achievement during the six months of our presidency. We achieved the objectives which we set ourselves at the outset, and worked hard to carry forward the environmental protection policies of the Community efficiently and effectively during our term of office. The Government look forward to further progress under the Danish presidency.

PRIME MINISTER

Security Service

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the oral answer of 14 January by the Secretary of State for National Heritage to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), *Official Report*, columns *1075-76*, to what categories of questions regarding the security service Ministers are now willing to provide substantive replies.

The Prime Minister: As I said in my statement to the House on 6 May last year, at column 65, successive Governments have not commented on matters relating to security and intelligence. The reason for that is clear: it is difficult to comment without revealing, by what is said or not said, information that can have a bearing on the effectiveness of these services and the safety of their staff.

Nevertheless, from time to time there will be matters of public concern on which it is desirable and possible to make a considered statement. There are precedents under successive Administrations when such statements have been made without prejudice to the general convention. An example is the assurance which I gave hon. Members on 29 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *37*, about postal and telephone interception.

UN Aims Register

Mr. Alton: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on progress with setting up a United Nations arms register.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The register was established by a UN general assembly resolution in December 1991. In December 1992 the general assembly approved by consensus a report by technical experts on the register's implementation. Participating countries are required to provide their first returns of information by 30 April 1993 covering arms imports and exports in the calendar year 1992. The Secretary-General will produce an annual report containing the information registered which will be available for consultation by member states.

Royal Family (Telephone Tapping)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement concerning Her Majesty's Government's policy regarding the tapping of telephones of members of the royal family or their personal friends.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The interception of communications during their transmission by means of a public telephone system is subject to the provisions of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. The Government have accepted Sir David Calcutt's recommendation to consider whether the legislation adequately protects private telephone calls. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage assured the House in his statement on 14 January, there is no substance to rumours about the involvement of the security and intelligence agencies in interception of the communications of the royal family.

Intergovernmental Binding Decisions

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 14 December 1992, *Official Report*, column 37, what are the criteria distinguishing an intergovernmental binding decision and treaty if both are justiciable in the International Court of Justice.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 15 January, at column *822*.

TRANSPORT

English Channel

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what action is taken at the time, or subsequently, if a vessel is observed to be violating the rules for preventing collisions in the English channel;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the rules for preventing collisions in the English channel and the policing of the rules by radar or otherwise.

Mr. Norris: The channel traffic separation scheme, coupled with radar surveillance by the United Kingdom and France of traffic in the Dover strait, has been effective in reducing the level of accidents in the area by over 85 per cent. Where there is evidence of a contravention of the rules, appropriate follow-up action will be taken by the Department which may include prosecution.

Speed Limits

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses have been received to date on his Department's consultation paper on speed limits; and how many such representations have advocated the fitting of speed limiters on cars.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A total of 142 responses were received and six advocated the fitting of speed limiters to cars.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will invite Steve Wright of BBC Radio 1 to assist the campaign to raise awareness of the effect of greater speed on pedestrian fatalities.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department always looks to enlist the media's support for its publicity campaigns to reduce road casualties. Radio 1 has been particularly helpful in pressing home the messages of recent Christmas drink-drive campaigns. We are currently drawing up our campaign plans for 1993 and look forward to their continuing support.

Transport Links

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make available copies of all papers presented to the Council of Ministers and European Commission and the individual directorates general by his Department relating to the development of *(a)* transport link projects between Wales and Ireland, *(b)* the trans-European transport network and *(c)* the INTERREG programme.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Over a period of many years my Department and others have contributed to the EC Commission's work on transport links between Wales and Ireland and on trans-European networks in the context of the European regional development fund, the series of EC transport infrastructure programmes and, more recently, the development of networks guidelines for transport. It would not be possible at reasonable cost to identify all the papers in question: there is also the difficulty that in some cases the material may contain commercially sensitive information. INTERREG, an EC initiative on cross-border co-operation under the structural funds, is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement outlining his Department's policy on the establishment of trans-European networks; and what representations he has made to the European Community concerning prioritisation for the development of such routes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As one of the signatories to that treaty, the Government support the provisions of Maastricht, including the articles on trans-European networks for transport, energy and telecommunications. With other member states, we are now contributing to the Commission's work in drafting network guidelines for various transport modes.

British Rail (Concessionary Travel)

Sir Giles Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he intends to make to safeguard concessionary travel arrangements for employees, and their dependants, and for retired staff on the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: We intend to take powers in the forthcoming Railways Bill to ensure that future passenger service operators may be compelled to provide travel facilities so as to protect the benefits currently enjoyed by BR staff, pensioners and their dependants. The regulator will be enabled to impose conditions in operators' licences requiring them to honour these existing travel facilities. Successor employers of present BR staff will be under an obligation to secure such facilities because the obligation will be preserved when those staff transfer from BR. Pensioners and their dependants, and others with preserved facilities, will continue to enjoy the travel facilities which they have now.

Railway Pensions

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the paper on railway pensions to which he referred on 12 January, *Official Report*, column 794.

Mr. Freeman: I am publishing the paper today and have placed copies in the Library. It confirms that there should be a joint industry pension scheme to succeed the present BR open scheme; that there should be arrangements to ensure that pensions to which present railway staff are now entitled are safeguarded; and that their future pension benefits should be no less favourable than in the present BR scheme. It also invites comments on two alternative arrangements proposed to secure the rights of railway pensioners and on other proposals made in the paper.

Hereford Bypass

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from *(a)* English Nature, *(b)* the Herefordshire nature trust and *(c)* the Council for the Protection of Rural England regarding the environmental impact of the published route for the A49-465 Hereford bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: All three bodies submitted written representations concerning the environmental impact of the scheme, in particular on the Lugg meadows site of special scientific interest.

In addition, the Herefordshire nature trust and the CPRE appeared at the public inquiry which opened in 1991. Both these groups put forward alternative routes to that proposed by the Department.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what total area of farmland would suffer from severance under *(a)* the published route for the A49-465 Hereford bypass and *(b)* the western alternative route 1C; what proportion of the area in each case would be (i) grade 1, (ii) grade 2 and (iii) grade 3*a*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The total area of farmland to be severed is not readily available. MAFF's evidence to the public inquiry gave as the prime reason for their support of the eastern route the view that the western route options traverse more of the best quality land than the eastern options and the former would also result in the isolation of significant pockets of very high quality land inside the western bypass line.

The areas of farmland required for the scheme, in the grades requested are:

	Published Route hectares	*Alternative 1C hectares*
Grade 1	1·1	5·2
Grade 2	22·6	20·0
Grade 3*a*	29·2	15·8

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the lengths of *(a)* the published route

for the A49-465 Hereford bypass and *(b)* the western alternative route 1C; what are the (i) estimated construction costs and (ii) vehicle travelling times for both HGV and other vehicles, of each of the two routes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The length of the published route is 13·6 km, 8·4 miles. The length of the alternative route 1C is 9·15 km, 5·7 miles.

The estimated construction cost, excluding land, at Q2/1992 prices for the published route is £28·2 million. The cost of alternative route 1C is £21·1 million.

Vehicle travelling times are:

	HGVs minutes	*Other vehicles minutes*
Published Route	11·10	9·04
Alternative 1C	7·84	6·36

These times are based on speeds for HGVs of 64 kph, 40 mph, on single carriageways and 80 kph, 50 mph, on dual carriageways. Speeds for other vehicles are 80 kph, 50 mph, on single carriageways and 97 kph, 60 mph, on dual carriageways.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the distances and travelling times expected for *(a)* HGV vehicles and *(b)* other vehicles starting from a common point on the A49 north and ending at a common point on the A465 south (South Wales) along (i) the inner ring road through Hereford, (ii) the published route for the A49-A465 Hereford bypass and (iii) the western alternative route 1C; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The distances and travelling times are as follows:

	Length	*HGV times (minutes)*	*Other vehicle times (minutes)*
(i) Inner Ring Road	8·61 km (5·3 m)		11·78
(ii) Published route	14·48 km (9·0 m)	12·13	9·85
(iii) Alternative 1C	8·15 km (5·0 m)	6·91	5·73

Journey times for HGVs on the existing road are not available as surveys were not undertaken. However, in general terms in an urban area these can be expected to be considerably longer than for other vehicles.

Chicago (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of the recent ministerial visit to Chicago; who went; and what was studied.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to confirm that the total cost of the recent visit to Chicago was not £25,000 as reported by the *Evening Standard*, but just under £7,000. I can only assume the £25,000 estimate was based on at least one journalist's attempt to justify his own expenses.

I visited Chicago to look at the city's system of parking enforcement and adjudication prior to a new system being introduced in London. I also took the opportunity to see traffic control and information systems, incident management on freeways and an in-vehicle route guidance system, and held meetings with the mayor, the city aviation commissioner and the head of the regional transit authority.

I was accompanied by my private secretary and three other officials from the Department.

WALES

River Dee Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the completion date of the third River Dee crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Transport grant approval has been given for a start to be made in 1994-95. The scheme is expected to take approximately two and a half years to complete. The precise start date will be a matter for Clwyd county council to determine following the transport grant settlement for 1994-95 which will be announced towards the end of the year.

Forestry Commission (Asset Sales)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list each area of Forestry Commission land in Wales by county hectarage and location sold to the private sector during each of the last five years and the total receipts, by county, accruing to the commission from such sales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission in the four years from 1988 to 1991 are held in the Library of the House. A similar list is being prepared of the areas of forest land sold in 1992 and I shall arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House as soon as possible.

The receipts from sales of forest land are not recorded by county, but the total receipts for Wales in each of the last five financial years are as follows:

Year ended 31 March	*Receipts £000*
1988	871
1989	1,527
1990	1,786
1991	1,956
1992	2,179

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his current policy in respect of the sale of Forestry Commission assets in Wales; and if he will list those forest areas currently available for sale to the private sector.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Scotland on 16 June 1989.

The following areas of forest land in Wales are at present being offered for sale on the open market:

County and Name	Area (hectares)
Dyfed	
Allt Crychdu	18
Allt Fawr	7
Allt Llwyn Dyfrion	11
Allt Pistyll Dewi	33
Allt Pwll Priddog	18
Allt Tir Isaf	5
Allt y Fergwm	23
Brynwicket	8
Bwich Newydd	8
Bylchau Duon	62
Careg Fadog	6
Cilfowyr	3
Coed Cwm Saethe	5
Coed Ffridd Cwmere	20
Coed Gwastad	28
Coedmore, Coad Newydd	17
Coed Rhosan	5
Coed y Gorof	7
Cresselly Big Wood	48
Cwmcroiddur	7
Cwmfran Fawr	3
Cwm Gwachel	15
Cwnheidre Uchaf	24
Erryd Wood	5
Fforest	22
Ffynon Le Frith	25
Glanteifi	3
Glaspant	4
Glebe Woods	17
Hafod Iwan	32
Knightson Bottom	15
Llwyn y Gwair	14
Lon Isaf	7
Maestwynog	12
North Wood	27
Pant y Gaseg	3
Pencwm Fawr	9
Penhill Wood	4
Penrallt Ddu	13
Pont Eynon and Allt y Forlan	29
Pont Henri	14
Portis Pant	30
Prycemoor	5
Rams Wood	26
Rhos Geler	9
Scolton	30
Sunnyhill Wood	9
Tanyrallt	6
The Coombes	6
Trevane Wood	10
Troserch	35
Tynton Wood	4
Ty'r Shyme	7
Waun Baglan Woods	26
Wenallt	17
Gwent	
Craig y Merchant	24
Hafod Risclawdd	23
Luggas Wood and Youngs Grove	15
Gwynedd	
Bodfeddau	10
Coed Dyfi	17
Coed Ty Uchaf	15
Glyn Estate	49
Gwenfro Uchaf	7
Irby	4
Parc Main	6
Tan y Graig	3
Powys	
Allt Cwm Tywyll	6
Craig Yr Henfordd	8
Cwmbach and Cwmcoch	44
Great Wood	9
Pwll Llydan	31
South Glamorgan	
Breach Wood	9
West Glamorgan	
Craig Ynysgollen	10
Gelligaer	33

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what evidence he has that a public access requirement diminishes the market value of Forestry Commission assets in Wales on offer of sale to the public sector;

(2) if he will list each area of Forestry Commission land in Wales sold to the private sector over the last five years in respect of which public access agreements have been made.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The arrangements for securing continued public access to woodland sold by the Forestry Commission were introduced in October 1991. They have not been in operation long enough to assess what effect they might have on market values. Only five of the woodland areas considered under these arrangements have been sold so far. None of the sales was subject to an access agreement.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy in respect of the maintenance of public access to Forestry Commission land sold to the private sector; what steps he has taken to ensure the implementation of this policy; and what assessment he has made of its efficacy.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Scotland on 21 November 1990, columns *164-66*. The arrangements to implement the policy were introduced in October 1991 and are scheduled to be reviewed at the end of this year.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning the incidence of TB in humans, by county in Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of notifications of incidents of tuberculosis made to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for each of the last five years are shown in the following table.

Notifications of tuberculosis

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*[1]1991*
Clwyd	22	19	16	28	30
Dyfed	28	21	20	32	31
Gwent	44	25	33	20	20
Gwynedd	21	33	23	26	6
Mid Glamorgan	45	37	49	22	21
Powys	4	1	3	3	0
South Glamorgan	44	37	37	36	45
West Glamorgan	24	28	28	27	13

[1] Provisional.
Source: OPCS.

Alcohol and Drugs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish a table showing the total grant paid by his Department *(a)* in total, *(b)* in revenue and *(c)* in capital towards the provision of (1) residential facilities and (2) non-residential facilities for (i) people with alcohol problems and (ii) people with drug problems in each of the past five years;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the total grant available from his Department *(a)* in total, *(b)* in revenue and *(c)* in capital towards the provision of (1) residential facilities and (2) non-residential facilities for (i) people with alcohol problems and (ii) people with drug problems in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Funds for drug and alcohol projects are provided directly and indirectly from the Welsh Office from a number of sources. In part they are provided from small specific budgets: others are disbursed by health authorities, either from moneys specifically allocated—some £3 million in 1992-93—or from their general allocations. Details of individual allocations funded from all these sources could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Public Bodies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the bodies in Wales to which *(a)* he nominates members at present and *(b)* to which he nominated members in 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 30 October 1992, column *866-905*, listing current appointments I have made to public bodies in Wales. Comparable information for 1979 is not available.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidance sent to the chairmen of national health service trusts in relation to the salaries of directors of trusts and increases thereof in 1993.

Mr. David Hunt: I have placed in the Library of the House copies of the two guidance letters sent to trust chairmen in November.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with representatives of the football pools industry and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers about the proposed national lottery; and what conclusions were reached.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* I met representatives of the Pools Promoters Association on 9 December 1992, when they put forward a list of changes that they would like to see to their regulatory regime. I look forward to continuing the debate as the Bill progresses. I am not conscious of any approach for a meeting from the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Police Complaints Authority to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 1 to 5 February 1993.

Testicular Cancer

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to early detection of testicular cancer to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 29 March to 2 April 1993.

Old People

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations 1993 to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 22 to 26 February 1993.

EDUCATION

Higher Education

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to ensure that, after 1993, Her Majesty's inspectorate will inspect all institutions funded by the Higher Education Funding Council in the same way.

Mr. Boswell: Her Majesty's inspectorate ceased to have responsibility for inspection in higher education in England on 1 September 1992. That responsibility, extended to the established universities, now rests with the Higher Education Funding Council for England which plans shortly to issue a circular on its approach to the assessment of teaching quality.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for the latest full year for which figures are available, for all institutions funded for taught courses by the Universities Funding Council *(a)* the number of full-time equivalent students enrolled upon degree-level courses, *(b)* the total funding for teaching received from the Universities Funding Council, *(c)* the proportion of that institution's total public funding received from the Universities Funding Council and *(d)* the proportion of full-time equivalent students at the institution following non-degree courses.

Mr. Boswell: Statistics on funding and enrolments of higher education courses are contained in "Funding and Enrolments 1991-92", an information document published by PCFC in November 1992, a copy of which is in the Library. For the first time, in respect of 1991-92, all PCFC institutions will be completing a finance return. This will indicate the public funds received from the council and from other public sources. Results from this survey will be available during the next three months and will be published this summer.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for the latest full year for which figures are available, all institutions funded for taught courses by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council *(a)* the number of full-time equivalent students enrolled upon degree-level courses, *(b)* the total funding for teaching received from the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, *(c)* the proportion of that institution's total public funding received from the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and *(d)* the proportion of full-time equivalent students at the institution following non-degree courses.

Mr. Boswell: Statistics on funding and enrolments on higher education courses are contained in "Funding and Enrolments 1991-92", an information document published by PCFC in November 1992, a copy of which is in the Library. For the first time, in respect of 1991-92, all PCFC institutions will be completing a finance return. This will indicate the public funds received from the council and from other public sources. Results from this survey will be available during the next three months and will be published this summer.

Degree-level Education

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures he will take to ensure that, under the proposed arrangements after April, the validation and quality of degree-level education provided will be assessed in precisely the same way for all institutions funded by the Higher Education Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: The Higher Education Quality Council is undertaking a programme of academic audits of all degree awarding institutions. These audits will scrutinise the quality assurance systems of institutions, including any validation arrangements for non-degree awarding institutions, and report on their operation. The council will also advise the Secretary of State on applications from non-degree awarding institutions for degree awarding powers. The Higher Education Funding Council for England will be undertaking a programme of quality assessments. All these activities will be undertaken in a way which ensures comparability.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for the latest year available and for every institution funded by the Universities Funding Council or the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, the proportion of students admitted to degree-level courses who have successfully completed that course.

Mr. Boswell: Details of leavers from the old universities are given in table 10 of "University Management Statistics and Performance indicators", 1992 edition, published by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the University Funding Council, a copy of which is in the Library. Aggregate data for the former polytechnics and colleges are shown in the Department for Education statistical bulletin 9/92, which is also in the Library. The next Department for Education departmental report will contain a table showing that approximately 15 per cent. of all full-time and sandwich first degree students did not successfully complete their course.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list the authorities authorised to award degrees for the taught courses which commenced in September 1992 at each of the institutions funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council or the Universities Funding Council;

(2) if he will list the authorities authorised to award degrees for the research courses which commenced in September 1992 at each of the institutions funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council or the Universities Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: The following institutions, funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council or the Universities Funding Council, are authorised to award both taught course and research degrees:

University of Aberdeen
Anglia Polytechnic University
Aston University
University of Bath
University of Birmingham
Bournemouth University
University of Bradford
University of Brighton
University of Bristol
Brunel University
University of Cambridge
University of Central England in Birmingham
University of Central Lancashire
City University
Coventry University
De Montfort University
University of Derby
University of Dundee
University of Durham
University of East Anglia
University of East London
University of Edinburgh
University of Essex
University of Exeter
University of Glasgow
University of Greenwich
Heriot-Watt University
University of Hertfordshire
University of Huddersfield
University of Hull
University of Humberside
University of Keele
University of Kent at Canterbury
Kingston University
University of Lancaster
University of Leeds
Lees Metropolitan University
University of Leicester
University of Liverpool
Liverpool John Moore University
University of London
London Business School
London Guildhall University
Loughborough University of Technology
University of Manchester
The Manchester Metropolitan University
Middlesex University
University of Newcastle upon Tyne
University of North London
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
University of Nottingham

The Nottingham Trent University
University of Oxford
Oxford Brookes University
University of Plymouth
University of Portsmouth
University of Reading
Royal College of Music
University of St. Andrews
University of Salford
University of Sheffield
Sheffield Hallam University
University of Southampton
South Bank University
Staffordshire University
University of Stirling
University of Strathclyde
University of Sunderland
University of Surrey
University of Sussex
University of Teeside
Thames Valley University
University of Wales
University of Warwick
University of the West of England, Bristol
University of Westminster
University of Wolverhampton
University of York

The following institutions, funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, are authorised to award taught course degrees only:

Bath College of Higher Education
Bolton Institute of Higher Education
Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education
Luton College of Higher Education
West Surrey College of Art and Design

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those official publications in which potential undergraduate and research students may inform themselves of the list of colleges in receipt of funding from the Higher Education Funding Council, together with associated relevant information about degree-level courses.

Mr. Boswell: The Department published last year a leaflet, "Higher Education: A New Framework", which lists all higher education colleges which are to be funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. Information on courses is available in the "Guide for Applicants" available from the polytechnics central admission system and a number of commercially published compendia. Copies of both named publications are available in the Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for the latest year available and for every institution funded by the Universities Funding Council or the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, the proportion of mature students admitted to degree-level courses funded by those institutions.

Mr. Boswell: The numbers of mature students in United Kingdom universities and in other higher education institutions in England are shown in volume 1—students and staff—of "University Statistics 1990-91" published by the Universities Statistical Record, and statistical bulletin 19/92, "Students in Higher Education, England 1990", published by the Department. Copies of both publications are in the Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he intends to take this year to ensure that prospective students entering degree-level courses in September 1993 are fully aware that the quality of degree courses offered by institutions which are not permitted to designate themselves as universities is comparable to that provided by institutions which are.

Mr. Boswell: All institutions that offer degrees have appropriate quality assurance mechanisms in place irrespective of whether they have "university" in their title. The Department's leaflet, "Higher Education: A New Framework", sets this out.

Truancy

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement regarding his policy on *(a)* parents removing children from school during term time for reasons other than illness or bereavement and *(b)* his plans to reduce truancy levels in schools.

Mr. Forth: It is for individual schools to determine whether a given absence should be treated as authorised or unauthorised in the light of the particular circumstances of each case. My right hon. Friend attaches particular importance to maintaining high levels of attendance in our schools. To this end, schools are now required to publish their rates of unauthorised absence in their prospectuses and annual reports and this information will also be figuring in local comparative tables of school performance from this year onwards. To improve attendance at schools with high truancy levels, we have recently announced support for projects in 64 English local education authorities to a total value of £8·6 million under the "Reducing Truancy" programme of the grants for education support and training scheme for 1993-94.

Colleges

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all those institutions of which he is aware which now designate themselves colleges of further and higher education.

Mr. Boswell: On the basis of the list of institutions which have been incorporated under sections 15 and 16 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the information requested is as follows:

Bromley College of Further and Higher Education
Havering College of Further and Higher Education
Matthew Boulton College of Further and Higher Education, Birmingham
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education
Sandwell College of Further and Higher Education
Stockport College of Further and Higher Education
York College of Further and Higher Education
Yorkshire Coast College of Further and Higher Education, Scarborough

Research Courses

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for the latest full year for which figures are available, for all institutions funded for research from the research councils, Government Departments and other public sources *(a)* the number of researchers at the college, *(b)* the total public research funding received by the institution and *(c)* the proportion of that institution's total research funding received from public sources.

Mr. Boswell: The latest details of research income received by each university in the United Kingdom were shown by source in "University Statistics 1989-90—

Volume 3 (Finance)", published by the Universities' Statistical Record in February 1992. The latest details of the number of staff engaged in research only at each university were shown in "University Statistics 1990-91 —Volume 1 (Students and staff)", published in November 1992. Copies of both are available in the Library. Comparable information is not available for the former polytechnics and colleges funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Boswell: Six contracts were awarded by the Department for Education to KPMG Management Consulting in the 12 months to 31 December 1992:

(a) Market testing programme for the Department.
[1](b) Financial Management Review of Research Council contracts with other Government Departments.
(c) Review of Data Collection Processing System.
(d) Customer Survey (Teachers' Pensions Agency).
(e) Follow up to the Customer Survey (Teachers' Pensions Agency).
(f) Assessment of the Pensions Administration System project (Teachers' Pensions Agency).

[1] Under the Department of Education and Science.

Youth Organisations

Mr. Bill Walker : To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give details of the names and addresses of the organisations which are on his register of voluntary youth organisations eligible for grants under a special London scheme; if he will give details of the grants given to each organisation in the years *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92 and *(c)* 1992-93; and what has been achieved by the grants.

Mr. Boswell: The Londonwide education voluntary organisations that benefited from the Department's three-year interim scheme, and the levels of grant awarded are listed in the table; their addresses have been placed in the Library. These special grants enabled the organisations concerned to sustain their work during a three-year transition period following the abolition of the ILEA.

Londonwide education voluntary organisations in receipt of special grants 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93

	1990-91 £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
Association of Combined Youth Clubs	12,600	12,600	12,600
Association of Jewish Youth	5,000	5,000	5,000
Boys Brigade	7,600	7,600	7,600
Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council	7,200	7,500	7,500
Diocese of London Lay Ministry	10,800	10,800	10,800
Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme	5,000	5,000	5,000
Friends for the Young Deaf	7,600	7,600	7,600
Girl Guides Association	20,700	20,700	20,700
Greater London Central Scout Association	5,000	5,000	5,000
Handicapped Adventure Playground Association	19,800	21,400	21,400
Inner-London Pre-school Playgroups Association	66,500	66,500	66,500
London Youth Matters	26,100	26,700	26,700
Inter-Action	18,000	18,000	18,000
London Adventure Playground Association	51,500	51,800	51,800
London Federation of Boys Clubs	61,200	61,800	61,800
London Union of Youth Clubs	54,900	56,500	56,500
London Voluntary Services Council	18,000	13,000	13,000
Methodist Association of Youth Clubs	7,200	7,200	7,200
National Federation of Gateway Clubs	5,000	5,000	5,000
Parents in Partnership	5,000	5,800	5,800
PHAB	5,000	5,000	5,000
Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster	5,000	3,400	3,400
SENSE	12,100	12,100	12,100
Southwark Catholic Youth Service	18,900	19,700	19,700
Southwark Diocesan Board of Education	12,600	12,600	12,600
United Reformed Church	5,000	5,000	5,000
Volunteer Reading Help	5,000	5,300	5,300
Woodcraft Folk	10,800	10,800	10,800
YWCA	10,600	10,600	10,600

Youth Organisations

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the names and addresses of voluntary youth organisations which have received grants for programmes of work designed to promote the personal and social education of young people in the years 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what has been achieved by the grants.

Mr. Boswell: Organisations which have been awarded grant under the Department's scheme for national voluntary youth organisations—NVYOs—during 1991-92 and 1992-93 are listed in the table; their addresses have been placed in the Library. The grants have helped to promote the planned personal and social education of young people in priority areas including work with young people at risk, those from ethnic minorities, and those with disabilities; curriculum development work in areas such as health education and social education; and work to increase the operational efficiency of organisations and promote management training.

NVYOs in receipt of grant during 1991-92 and 1992-93

Association for Jewish Youth
Baptist Union of Great Britain
Boys Brigade
British Red Cross
British Youth Council
Campaigners
Catholic Youth Services
Church Army
Church of England Board of Education
Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade
Council for Environmental Education
Deaf Accord
Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
Endeavour
Fairbridge
Forest School Camps
Frontier Youth Trust
Girl Guides Association
Girls Brigade
Inter-Action
Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade

Methodist Association of Youth Clubs
National Association of Boys Clubs
National Association of Muslim Youth
National Association of Youth Theatres
National Council of YMCAs
National Federation of 18+ Groups
National Federation of Gateway Clubs
National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs
National Organisation for Work with Girls/Young Women
National Youth Choir
National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain
National Youth Theatre
National Association of Young People's Counselling and
Advisory Services (now Youth Access) (NAYPCAS)
New Testament Church of God
Ocean Youth Club
Outward Bound Trust
Physically Handicapped and Able-bodied (PHAB)
Quaker Home Service
Reform Synagogues of Great Britain
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Sail Training Association
St John Ambulance Youth
Salvation Army
Scout Association
Sea Cadet Association
Single Parent Links and Special Holidays (SPLASH)
United Kingdom Federation of Jazz Bands
Union of Maccabi Associations
United Reform Church
Woodcraft Folk
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)
Young Christian Workers
Young Muslim Organisation
Youth Clubs United Kingdom

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bosnia (No-fly Zone)

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received about Croatian air force activity in the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina in breach of UN resolution 781; what evidence exists that Croat flights are engaged in the smuggling of arms in breach of the international arms embargo; what representations have been made to the Government of Croatia on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The UN Secretary-General has issued regular reports to the Security Council giving details of violations of the no-fly zone established by resolution 781 of 9 October and 786 of 11 November. It is clear from these that, to varying degrees, all parties in Bosnia Herzegovina, including the Croats, have conducted flights outside the terms permitted in the resolutions, some of which may have been used to smuggle arms. The total of unauthorised flights to 14 January was 377. The United Kingdom and other members of the Security Council have made a démarche to the Croatian Government representative at the United Nations.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the extent to which Bosnian-Serb aircraft have observed the provisions of UN Security Council resolution 781; and if he will support calls for enforcement of the no-fly zone.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The UN Secretary-General has issued regular reports to the Security Council giving details of violations of the no-fly zone established by resolutions 781 of 9 October and 786 of 11 November. It is clear from these that, to varying degrees, all parties in Bosnia Herzegovina, including the Bosnian Serbs, have conducted flights outside the terms permitted in the resolutions. The total of unauthorised flights to 14 January was 377. Members of the Security Council, including the United Kingdom, are currently considering a resolution on enforcement of the no-fly zone which will apply to all parties.

Religious Freedom

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government are taking to persuade nations with which the United Kingdom trades and maintains diplomatic relations to allow freedom of religious expression and cease persecuting religious minorities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We take regular action on the question of religious intolerance, both on a bilateral basis and in conjunction with EC partners. We believe that action in international bodies is particularly effective on such matters. We are therefore active within the United Nations in ensuring that the international community continues to concentrate on these issues.

CSCE

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the CSCE Council meeting in Stockholm of 15 and 16 December.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[pursuant to the reply, 11 January 1993, c. 561]:* The complete text of the answer to my hon. Friend is as follows:

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary represented the United Kingdom at the Council meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe which took place on 14 and 15 December in Stockholm.

The Stockholm meeting marked a further stage in the transition of the CSCE from an organisation primarily involved with setting standards of behaviour in the fields of human rights and international security to one whose task is also to prevent and if necessary end conflicts.

The Council endorsed the work of the international conference of former Yugoslavia. It agreed a detailed policy intended to help prevent the spread of the fighting into other parts of the former Yugoslavia and to tighten sanctions. The CSCE missions in Kosova, Sandjak and Vojvodina will be reinforced.

The Council took steps to promote long-term solutions to the conflict in Moldova. The CSCE will continue to press for agreements to be concluded on the early and complete withdrawal of foreign troops from the territories of the Baltic states and will also dispatch a mission to Estonia to address human rights issues between the different communities in Estonia.

Despite intensive negotiations on Nagorno Karabakh, no progress was made on the declaration of a ceasefire, the dispatch of a CSCE monitoring mission or the convening of the Minsk conference.

The Council strengthened the institutions and procedures of the CSCE in order to help deal with conflict in Europe. Following the Prime Minister's initiative at the Helsinki summit, it established the post of Secretary General, to be filled in 1993. Mr. Max van der Stoel was

appointed high commissioner on national minorities. The chairman in office will take steps to ensure co-ordination of CSCE activities with those of the United Nations.

The CSCE's role as one of Europe's security institutions is now better defined and its organisation is evolving to enable it to meet its responsibilities more effectively. It will concentrate on standard setting and monitoring in the fields of human rights and relations between states and also on preventive diplomacy and action to end conflict in Europe. Together with our European partners, we shall continue to support it and work to make it more effective.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Eggs

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration has been given to the marketing of eggs produced in the United Kingdom with a British produce label.

Mr. Curry: There is specific provision in the EC Egg Marketing Standards Regulations for eggs and egg packs to carry terms or symbols which refer to a member state or a region of origin. It is for individual egg packers and retailers to decide whether to mark their eggs as British, but many of them do.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total volume of eggs imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last 12 months; and from which countries.

Mr. Curry: The volume, in metric tonnes, of eggs, including eggs not in shells, imported into the United Kingdom is shown on the table by country of dispatch. Figures are given for the months November 1991 to October 1992, the most recent 12 months for which data are available.

Imports of eggs into United Kingdom (metric tonnes)

	November 1991	*December 1991*	*January 1992*	*February 1992*	*March 1992*	*April 1992*	*May 1992*	*June 1992*	*July 1992*	*August 1992*	*September 1992*	*October 1992*
France	414	392	182	140	235	178	235	159	155	271	205	147
Belgium-Luxembourg	210	201	65	140	190	228	251	103	119	118	106	104
Netherlands	2,191	1,788	722	596	1,524	1,448	1,240	1,059	634	1,304	1,153	510
Germany	294	236	162	230	422	186	336	475	338	270	354	496
Italy	8	12	17	10	25	8	11	7	7	8	7	—
Irish Republic	36	38	63	76	52	43	49	45	47	41	46	55
Denmark	118	178	206	122	262	141	192	331	149	106	102	120
Spain	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	5	—	—	—
Sweden	3	4	—	3	4	4	3	—	—	3	2	2
Canada	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	18
United States of America	13	3	14	1	17	29	29	17	5	1	14	15
South Africa	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	—	—	—
Namibia	—	—	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Taiwan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Japan	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All imports	3,287	2,852	1,431	1,318	2,731	2,265	2,347	2,197	1,460	2,122	1,989	1,467

Note:
— = No trade.
0 = Low value trade (less than 0·5 metric tonnes).
Source: HM Customs and Excise.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks exist to ensure that imported eggs sold in the United Kingdom in pre-labelled packaging meet United Kingdom standards of size and quality marking.

Mr. Curry: Quality and size standards for eggs are laid down in the EC Egg Marketing Standards Regulations. These require all eggs, including eggs imported from other member states, to be subject to checking by means of random sampling at all stages of marketing. These checks are carried out by the egg marketing inspectorate in England and Wales and equivalent bodies in Scotland and Northern Ireland or, at retail, by the trading standards departments of local authorities. Eggs imported from the Netherlands would also be subject to inspection by the Dutch authorities.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to ensure that imported eggs into the United Kingdom are not sold as fresh farm eggs.

Mr. Curry: Eggs can be sold at retail as "farm fresh" only if they meet the standards for class A eggs laid down by the EC Egg Marketing Standards Regulations. Compliance with the standards is checked by the egg marketing inspectorate in England and Wales and equivalent bodies in Scotland and Northern Ireland and, at retail, by the trading standards departments of local authorities. These arrangements apply to both home-produced and imported eggs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure that eggs from egg sale co-operatives in Holland are not being dumped on the United Kingdom market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: A small proportion of eggs sold and processed in the United Kingdom come from other member states and they are generally priced competitively. There is no evidence that any significant volume of eggs is being imported at very low prices.

Oil Dispersants

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tests have been carried out to simulate toxicity in beach and rocky foreshore cleaning for each of the oil dispersants *(a)* Dispolene 345, *(b)* Dasic Slickgone LTSW and *(c)* BP Enersperse 1037; what results were obtained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Before an oil dispersant is approved for use in United Kingdom waters it is required to meet stringent standards for efficacy, viscosity, storage stability and toxicity. Tests are carried out by the Warren Spring Laboratory and this Ministry's directorate of fisheries research.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to state that the Enersperse dispersant used in the Shetlands incident was Enersperse 1583, and not, as previously indicated, Enersperse 1037.

The test for toxicity in sea water and beach conditions compares a suspension of oil in sea water with a similar suspension to which the candidate dispersant has been added. To pass, the suspension containing the dispersant must be no more toxic than that containing oil and sea water alone. Dispolene 34S, Dasic Slickgone LTSW and Enersperse 1583 all passed this test.

The test for toxicity in rocky shore conditions similarly involves a comparative assessment of the toxicity of the oil and of the dispersant. Enersperse 1583 passed this test. Dispolene 34S did not. Slickgone LTSW was not proposed for use on rocky shores and was accordingly not subject to the test.

Further technical details of our toxicity testing procedures are given in fisheries research technical report No. 39, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Bananas

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the proceeds of the tariff on bananas will be redistributed to Africa, Caribbean and Pacific area suppliers of bananas.

Mr. Curry: The Commission has proposed new aid measures to assist ACP banana producers. No decisions have yet been taken on these, but they would not be funded specifically from the proceeds of the tariff on bananas. Tariff revenues from all commodities are treated for budgetary purposes as Community own resources.

Industrial Discharges

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will conduct a survey of dioxin pollution of farmland by industrial discharges.

Mr. Soames: The analysis of milk for contaminants provides a good indication of environmental contamination. The Ministry has therefore undertaken a survey of milk from farms in several rural and urban/industrial areas in the United Kingdom and published the results in food surveillance paper No. 31. The surveillance programme of dioxins in milk from farms in areas near to potential sources of dioxins is planned to continue.

Rape Seed

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans the Government have for encouraging the cultivation of rape seed for use as a fuel for motor vehicles.

Mr. Curry: Rape seed may be grown for non-food use (including for motor vehicle fuel) on arable land, with the benefit of the oil seed area payment, or on set-aside land with the benefit of the lower set-aside payment.

Whisky

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the export record of the Scotch whisky industry for the last five years.

Mr. Curry: The volume and value of Scotch whisky exports for the last five years are as follows:

	Volume (million litres of pure alcohol)	*Value (£ billion)*
1987	240·17	1·14
1988	245·98	1·29
1989	242·49	1·47
1990	238·30	1·71
1991	227·75	1·83

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels 12 m long and under are registered in the north-east; and what is their total horse power.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is as follows:

Fishing vessels 12 m or less	*Total horsepower*
551	43,794

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of total horse power for all vessels is accounted for by boats of 12 m length and under.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

Vessels of 12 m or less represent 42 per cent. of the total fishing vessel horsepower.

SCOTLAND

Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the assessed need and *(b)* the current provision of *(a)* sheltered and *(b)* special needs housing in (i) Scotland, (ii) Strathclyde, (iii) Renfrew district, (iv) Paisley, (v) Johnstone and (vi) Elderslie; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Guidance on the provision of sheltered housing and housing for the

disabled were issued to local authorities on 28 March 1991 in the circular "Housing and Community Care" (Env. 8/91). The guidelines give only a general indication and authorities were advised to set targets in the light of local circumstances.

The latest available information for provision compared to the guidelines is set out in the following table. Information for Paisley, Johnstone and Elderslie is not available centrally.

Sheltered and Special Needs housing, 31 March 1992

Area	Sheltered Housing						Special Needs			
	Very sheltered		Sheltered		Medium dependency		Wheelchair[1]		Mobility standard	
	Number[2]	Guidelines[3] figure (20 dwellings per 1,000 population)	Number[2]	Guidelines[3] figure (46 dwellings per 1,000 population)	Number[2]	Guidelines[3] figure (80 dwellings per 1,000 population)	Number[2]	Guidelines[3] figure (1 per cent. of total stock[4])	Number[2]	Guidelines[3] figure (10 per cent. of total stock[4])
Scotland	326	15,228	30,593	35,024	31,147	60,912	3,620	21,420	19,336	214,200
Strathclyde	21	6,662	10,591	15,323	15,588	26,648	1,084	—	10,411	—
Renfrew	—	548	735	1,260	1,329	2,192	146	—	55	—

[1]Including sheltered wheelchair houses
[2]All figures, except for guideline figures, relate to provision by public agencies and housing associations only
[3]Derived from guidance circular Community Care in Scotland issued to local authorities etc. on 28 March 1991
[4]Figures for total stock not available below Scotland level
Source: Hsg/1992/8: Housing Trends in Scotland—Quarter ended 30 June 1992

Ambulance Service

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the controller of the Scottish ambulance service to discuss the efficient operation of services within *(a)* the Argyll and Clyde health board area and *(b)* Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State meets the general manager of the Scottish ambulance service from time to time. He is accountable to the Common Services Agency for the performance of the Scottish ambulance service. Officials of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department regularly meet senior staff of the Common Services Agency and discuss measures aimed at improving response rates having regard to the resources made available.

Homelessness

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of which local authorities have benefited during 1991-92 and 1992-93 from the additional £15 million capital allocation made to enable local authorities to tackle homelessness; and if he will detail the homelessness initiatives which the allocation has led to with a breakdown of how the allocation has been distributed between *(a)* the local authorities and *(b)* the specific homelessness initiatives.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* A table setting out the additional resources made available to local authorities in 1991-92 and so far in 1992-93 to support homelessness projects has been placed in the House Library.

Acid Rain

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sites of special scientific interest damaged by acid rain in the latest year for which figures are available and give the hectarage of each site of special scientific interest affected.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Research between 1988 and 1991 funded by the former Nature Conservancy Council examined fresh waters within sites of special scientific interest which were considered to be vulnerable to the effects of acid rain. Of 89 sites in Scotland which were examined, the 44 listed in the table showed evidence of acidification beyond natural background levels of one or more fresh water features for which acid rain is the presumed cause.

Sites of special scientific interest showing evidence of acidification

Mochrum Lochs
Wood of Cree
Glentrool Oakwoods
Merrick-Kells
Cairnsmore of Fleet
Kenmure Holms
River Dee Parton to Crossmichael
Laughengie and Airie Hills
Moffat Hills
Bogton Loch
Loch Doon
Feoch Meadows
Arran Northern Mountains
West Loch Lomondside Woodlands
North End of Bute
Hells Glen
Loch Eck
Rinns of Islay
Ardpatrick and Dunmore Woods
Doire Darach
Crannach Wood
Coladoir Bog
Central Mull Complex
Rannoch Moor
Lon Leanachain
Glen Coe
Ben Nevis
Claish Moss
Loch Bran
Glen Affric
Beinn Eighe
Loch Maree Islands
Inverpolly
Ben Loyal
North Harris
Tweed River
Lochan Lairig Cheile
Rowardennan Woodlands
Loch Con
Glen Muick and Lochnagar
Cairngorms

Eastern Cairngorms
Kinveachy Forest
Creag Meagaidh

SOCIAL SECURITY

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many parliamentary questions in *(a)* the last and *(b)* the current Session of Parliament have been referred to the chief executive of the Benefits Agency; what percentage this is of the total number of parliamentary questions tabled in each of these Sessions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table:

Session	*Total*	*Benefits Agency*	*Percentage*
[1]1991-92	1,270	110	7
[2]1992-93	1,822	283	16

[1]31 October 1991 to 16 March 1992.
[2]27 April 1992 to current date.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claimants in *(a)* York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* England who were in receipt of mobility allowance or attendance allowance before April 1992 are still waiting for a decision on (i) claims and (ii) appeals for disability living allowance;

(2) how many claimants in *(a)* York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* England have been waiting (i) less than three months, (ii) three to six months, (iii) six to 12 months and (iv) more than 12 months for a decision on (1) claims and (2) appeals for disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give *(a)* the number of applications for disability living allowance and attendance allowances referred to the ministerial hotline since it was opened and *(b)* the number of those which have been cleared, together with the average waiting time.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 17 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of applications for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) referred to the ministerial hotline since it began and the number of those which have been cleared, together with the average waiting time.

As you are aware an unprecedented number of letters had been received from MPs as a consequence of the large number of claims following the successful launch of DLA. The DLA hotline was set up to alleviate problems experienced when MPs were unable to contact the DLA Unit via the main switchboard and to provide up to date information about a specific claim with the minimum of delay.

Up to 8 January 1993, 4,607 calls have been received. All the cases have had some action taken and an update provided to the enquirer. The aim is to provide an update to the enquirer within 48 hours of the initial call and this target has been met on average in 97 per cent. of cases. Of the calls received 4,197 have been finally cleared and the remaining calls will be finally cleared when the operational areas have processed the cases. I can assure you that these cases are being monitored to ensure they are cleared as quickly as possible. These calls are not necessarily about new DLA claims, some refer to existing awards of AA and Mobility Allowance (MobA) transferred to the DLA Unit and DLA reviews and appeals. Statistics are not held in a format that enables me to provide an average clearance time.

There is no dedicated hotline for AA but calls are treated in the same way and the DLA hotline liaise with the special correspondence section in the AA Unit who are then responsible for responding directly to the MP. Up to 8 January 1993, 483 of the 4,607 calls have been referred to the AA Unit and 13 have not yet been cleared. The target 48 hour update has been met in all cases by the AA Unit.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims to date for the disability living allowance have been completed *(a)* with the assistance of telephone calls and *(b)* with the assistance of visits made by the forms completion service staff in the disability benefits centres.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply, 27 October 1992, Official Report, columns 751-52]:* The chief executive has written further to the hon. Member.

Carers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the effect of the registration of a supported lodging as a small residential home, pursuant to the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 on the benefit entitlement of a typical carer previously in receipt of housing benefit, disability living allowance (care) and the income support severe disability premium and now receiving the residential allowance in their place.

Mr. Burt: The operation of the Registered Homes Act is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. However, I understand that from 1 April 1993, under an amendment to that Act, proprietors of residential care homes for fewer than four people—small homes—which are judged by their local authority as providing both board and personal care, will be required to register with that authority. Homes providing board and personal care for four residents or more are already required to register.

The residential allowance will be introduced from 1 April as part of the new community care arrangements and will be paid to residents who enter a registered home as part of their normal income support entitlement.

People resident at 31 March in small homes, which are subsequently required to register, and who are receiving housing benefit to help with the home fees will have their entitlement to housing benefit transitionally protected for as long as they remain in the same home and otherwise remain entitled to that benefit.

Only those residents in small homes at 31 March 1993, which are subsequently required to register, who are already receiving higher levels of income support will have preserved rights to those higher levels.

Where a resident has a preserved right to income support, they will also have a preserved right to attendance allowance or the care component of disability living allowance and any associated income support premium.

Benefit Entitlement

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the principal provisions governing entitlement to social security benefits of unemployed people involved in self-build projects.

Mr. Burt: People receiving benefits for unemployment involved in self-build projects are subject to the normal conditions of entitlement to benefit; in particular they must continue to actively seek work each week and be prepared to take a job offer or attend a job interview immediately the opportunity arises.

Independent Living Fund

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the limit for establishing the cost of a placement in a residential or nursing home will be set under the proposed arrangements for the replacement of the independent living fund; who will assess the needs of a disabled person requiring personal assistance over the level; whether the cash payment from the new fund will be claimed by the individual or the local authority; and whether the expertise required by the administrators of the new fund will be the same as that required by the administrators of the fund continuing for existing ILF claimants.

Mr. Scott: The means by which the costs of a placement in residential or nursing care will be assessed for the purposes of the body that will replace the independent living fund are still being considered. An announcement will be made in due course.

The needs of a disabled person who applies to the new body will be assessed and agreed by the local authority, by social workers employed by the successor body, and by the disabled person themselves.

The cash payment from the new body will be paid to the individual. The question of whether the individual or the local authority should make the application is under consideration.

The expertise required by the administrators of the new body will be broadly similar to that required by those administering the fund for existing cases because both bodies have the same fundamental aims. Operational details of the new body are still under discussion.

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision will be made between now and April for people who would previously have been eligible for funding from the independent living fund who require funding over the level provided by the local authority; and what provision there is for people whose local authority is unable to make appropriate personal assistance provision between now and April.

Mr. Scott: Those people should approach their local authorities, whose duties to provide services to disabled people are unchanged.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward proposals to extend the payment of housing benefit following the death of the claimant to cover a period when the deceased's affairs are being dealt with by family or representatives.

Mr. Burt: The purpose of housing benefit is to help claimants to meet their liability to pay rent. We therefore have no plans to extend payment of housing benefit to cover a period after a claimant's death.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the areas in which cold weather payments have been triggered since 1 November 1991, the national climatological message stations involved, the dates in each case between which payments were made, the numbers of people who have received such payments in each of those areas and the total sum paid out during each such period.

Mr. Scott: So far this winter more than 2·6 million people have been sent cold weather payments worth in total more than £16 million. The specific information requested on weather stations, trigger dates and the number of payments made is made available in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what relationship exists between the living expenses of homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation paid through income support and the hotel charges paid to landlords by local authorities.

Mr. Burt: Income support provides help with day-to-day living expenses. Housing benefit is available to people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation to help with reasonable charges. Arrangements made between landlords and local authorities are a matter for them.

Care Homes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is total expenditure on *(a)* private residential homes and *(b)* private nursing homes by his Department in 1991-92 (i) in Doncaster and (ii) for Doncaster residents.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

War Pensions

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many war pensioners currently reside within the area of Barnsley metropolitan borough council.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available. It is estmated that in 1991 6,784 war disablement pensioners and 1,771 war widows were resident in the South Yorkshire and Humberside area.

Pensioners Living Overseas

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost of uprating all pensions currently received by British state pensioners living in *(a)* Canada, *(b)* Australia, *(c)* New Zealand, *(d)* South Africa and *(e)* other EC countries.

Miss Widdecombe: The estimated additional cost, at 1992 rates, would be as follows:

		£ million
(a)	Canada	70
(b)	Australia	120
(c)	New Zealand	30
(d)	South Africa	25

United Kingdom pensions are already paid at full United Kingdom rates to beneficiaries living in EC countries.

EMPLOYMENT

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the contracts awarded by her Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Contracts for consultancies awarded to KPMG Management Consultants in the current financial year (1992-93) were as follows:

A review of the training development arrangements in the Department's training, enterprise and education directorate.

A feasibility study on output related funding for TECs.

A workshop on market testing for managers in the Department's business services division.

An assessment of the scope for market testing in the Department's economics, research and evaluation division.

A study into the distribution of HSE publications.

A review of the roles and functions of SEOs/business managers in the Department.

To produce and disseminate (in two contracts) extensions of manuals on key skills for the training of trainers.

The office of manpower economics also awarded the following contracts to KPMG Management Consultants in 1992-93;

Work relating to the civil service grades 5 to 7 pay levels survey. Work associated with the schoolteachers' pay review body (two contracts).

Labour Statistics

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the actual and percentage figures for the numbers of adult males *(a)* registered unemployed, *(b)* receiving income support and *(c)* economically inactive for each standard planning region.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 17 December 1992]:* The extent of the latest available information is given in the following tables.

Table 1
Male claimant unemployed aged 16 and over (not seasonally adjusted) in November 1992[1]

Region	Number	[2] Per cent. rate
South East (including Greater London)	682,597	13·2
East Anglia	61,310	10·4
South West	166,416	12·9
West Midlands	213,030	14·5
East Midlands	136,919	12·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	187,784	13·8
North West	252,333	14·4
Northern	128,716	16·2
Wales	102,530	13·5
Scotland	187,478	13·0
Northern Ireland	80,542	18·7

[1] Males aged 16 and over claiming Unemployment Benefit, Income Support and National Insurance Credits at Employment Service local offices.
[2] Percentage of male workforce (the sum of unemployed claimants, employees in employment, self-employed, HM forces and participants on work-related Government training schemes).

Source: Employment Department.
Monthly unadjusted claimant unemployment data.

Table 2
Males aged 16 and over in receipt of Income Support in May 1991[3]

Region	Number	[1] Percentage
England[2]	1,645,000	8·9
Wales	111,000	10·4
Scotland	209,000	10·8

[1] Males in receipt of Income Support as a percentage of the male population aged 16 and over. Population figures were obtained from the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) and apply to mid 1991.
[2] Data is not available for the standard regions of England.
[3] No data is available for Northern Ireland.

Source: Department of Social Security (DSS).
Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry May 1991.

Table 3
Males aged 16 and over economically inactive in summer 1992[2]

Region	Number	Percentage rate[1]
South East (including Greater London)	1,560,986	23·5
East Anglia	191,950	24·0
South West	471,183	26·2
West Midlands	494,279	24·6
East Midlands	391,411	25·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	501,305	26·6
North West	654,128	27·2
Northern	336,087	28·8
Wales	352,215	32·1
Scotland	481,026	25·3

[1] Males economically inactive as a percentage of the male population aged 16 and over.
[2] No data is available for Northern Ireland.

Source: Employment Department.
Labour Force Survey summer 1992.

DEFENCE

PSA Projects

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts between the pre-privatised PSA Projects and his Department were amended to ensure a greater proportion of *(a)* contract costs and *(b)* fee income became due in the period preceding the transfer of projects to the private sector.

Mr. Aitken: None. The only revisions made were to total fees where the level was considered to be disproportionate to the contract costs and the work involved. This negotiation was unconnected to the sale of PSA Projects.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what value of new work the MOD has guaranteed to PSA Projects Ltd; and how the MOD will ensure it receives value for money.

Mr. Aitken: The MOD has a contract with PSA Projects for architectural, design and related services to the value of £8 million. This contract ensures value for money through predetermined prices and its provision for termination if the company's performance is unsatisfactory.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each project undertaken by PSA Projects Ltd. for his Department by name and value; and if he will publish for each of these projects a breakdown of the proportion of fees to be earned at each stage of the project.

Mr. Aitken: The information that the hon. Member requests could not be provided without incurring disproportionate costs. My Department has contracts with PSA Projects Ltd. for some 480 projects with an estimated total value of £4 billion. The phasing of fee payments is related to progress achieved.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of contracted work currently undertaken by PSA Projects Ltd.. at the Faslane and Coulport sites; and what was the total value of contracts held by PSA Projects for work at the Faslane and Coulport sites on 1 November 1992.

Mr. Aitken: The total value of the outstanding project management task which PSA Projects Ltd. is contracted to undertaken on Trident works at Faslane and Coulport, including costs for employment of consultants, is some £69·3 million. As at 1 November 1992, the total outstanding value of the supply and service agreements for Trident works at Faslane and Coulport with PSA Projects was £81·9 million. The value of other non-Trident work at Faslane and Coulport with PSA Projects Ltd. is about £3 million.

Market Testing

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the MOD's market-testing programme for maintenance work for each year from 1993-94 to 1998-99.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has a rolling programme to complete market testing of property management, which includes all maintenance and new construction jobs up to a value of £300,000, between now and 1999. Maintenance projects with a value in excess of £300,000 are now subject to competition.

Maintenance

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total value of maintenance work carried out on behalf of the Ministry of Defence by *(a)* other undertakings, *(b)* the PSA building management business divisions and *(c)* private contractors.

Mr. Aitken: The current value of MOD property management, based on 1992-93 contract figures, is estimated at £593 million, including works costs and fees. Of this some £78 million has been won in competition, including £21 million by PSA Building Management, the balance going to private contractors. The rest of the work remains largely with PSA and there are no other bodies, including MOD employees, undertaking any significant amount of work.

Departmental Land

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the whereabouts of the land owned and leased by his Department and the land over which his Department has rights in Wales, indicating the amount of land area involved in each instance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Research

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many research agreements or contracts have been agreed by *(a)* the royal aircraft establishment, *(b)* the atomic weapons research establishment, *(c)* the royal signals and radar establishment, *(d)* the aeroplane and armament experimental aircraft establishment, *(e)* the royal armament research development establishment, *(f)* the Admiralty research establishment, *(g)* the chemical defence establishment and *(h)* the Royal Ordnance factories with universities and other institutions of higher education (i) within and (ii) outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: In April 1991 RAE, RSRE, RARDE and ARE were amalgamated to form the Defence Research Agency (DRA). The DRA currently sponsors 690 research agreements and contracts within the United Kingdom and two overseas.

The atomic weapons establishment currently sponsors 29 research agreements and contracts within the United Kingdom and one overseas.

The aeroplane and armament evaluation establishment, now part of directorate general of test and evaluation, does not currently sponsor any research agreement or contracts.

The chemical and biological defence establishment currently sponsors 66 research agreements and contracts within the United Kingdom and none overseas.

Following their sale on 2 April 1987, the Royal Ordnance factories now are part of British Aerospace plc and I am therefore not in a position to provide the information that the hon. Member requests.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many research projects in universities and other

institutions of higher education have been funded under the joint research council-Ministry of Defence research grants scheme in each year since the inception of the scheme.

Mr. Aitken: A total of 552 research projects have been funded under the joint Research Council/MOD research grants scheme since the inception of the scheme in 1986. The annual breakdown is as follows:

Year	*Number of projects started*
1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987	64
1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988	42
1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989	76
1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990	143
1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991	122
1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992	53
1 April 1992 to 15 January 1993	52

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list his Department's research contracts currently placed with United Kingdom universities and other institutions of higher education.

Mr. Aitken: It has been the consistent policy of my Department not to release details of individual research contracts at universities and other institutions of higher education, but to leave it to the institutions themselves to confirm their involvement.

Procurement

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of his Department's procurement expenditure was spent in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Northern ireland and *(d)* each of the standard English regions during the last financial year.

Mr. Aitken: A geographical breakdown is available only for equipment expenditure, which excludes items such as fuel, food and clothing. This is published in table 1.11 of Defence Statistics, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Defence Lectureship Scheme

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many academics are at present sponsored under the defence lectureship scheme; and at which universities or other higher education institutions they are based.

Mr. Aitken: There are four academics fully sponsored by my Department under the defence lectureship scheme, based at Aberdeen, Aberystwyth, Birmingham and London universities. My Department also continues to meet the administrative and support costs of two academics at Cambridge university who have come to the end of their lectureship term.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of nuclear weapons withdrawn from deployment by NATO in Europe *(a)* as a result of unilateral decisions by NATO, *(b)* as a result of bilateral negotiations with the former Soviet Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States and *(c)* as a result of multilateral negotiations with former members of the Warsaw treaty organisation since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of nuclear warheads deployed by NATO in Europe has since the late 1970s been reduced by some 90 per cent, to a current toal of well under 1,000. This includes the elimination of all ground-launched and tactical martime nuclear weapons in Europe. The withdrawal of some 400 ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing II missiles came specifically under the bilateral US/USSR INF treaty, other reductions have resulted from reassessments, within the alliance, of NATO's minimum security requirements.

Seismology

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money was allocated by his Department on unclassified work on seismology as a verification technology in 1992.

Mr. Aitken: Funding allocated for this purpose was £1·5 million.

Defence Land

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the establishments of, and land owned by, or leased by, or in which an interest is held by *(a)* the Territorial Army, *(b)* the Home Service Force, *(c)* the Royal Observer Corps, *(d)* recruitment offices of the armed forces and *(e)* the cadet forces in Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Arms Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), 3 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *365*, if he will set out the criteria used to evaluate the commercial sensitivity of arms exports.

Mr. Aitken: All information on individual arms exports is normally judged to be a commercial matter between the customer government and the commercial firm concerned. However, in exceptional circumstances such as those surrounding the conflicts with Argentina and Iraq, when the information concerned is no longer commercially sensitive, this rule may be overriden.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what investigations his Department made, prior to 10 November 1992, into the involvement of United Kingdom companies in establishing military production facilities in Yugoslavia since 1984.

Mr. Aitken: Prior to July 1991, applications for licences to export military production facilities to the former Yugoslavia were considered on a case-by-case basis. It is not our policy to discuss the details of individual export licence applications.

Aldermaston

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the atomic weapons research establishment at Aldermaston became aware that rabbits had been affected by plutonium stored in the open; when the establishment made this fact publicly known; what was the reason for the interval between these dates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 25 June, *Official Report*, column *298*. In addition I emphasise that plutonium is not stored in the open at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the atomic weapons research establishment at Aldermaston *(a)* commenced and *(b)* ceased storing plutonium radioactive waste in the open.

Mr. Aitken: From 1953 to October 1984 plutonium contaminated waste awaiting disposal was held in sealed steel drums, some of which were stored in the open for limited periods. Since October 1984 all such solid waste awaiting disposal has been held in sealed steel drums and other closed steel containers located safely and securely in purpose-built stores.

Prior to 1983 all plutonium contaminated liquid waste was solidified for disposal as solid waste. Since 1983 all such liquid waste has been held in closed steel tanks located in bitumen lined pits.

Helicopter Carrier

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce who has won the contract for a new Royal Navy helicopter carrier; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne East, (Mr. Brown) on 12 January 1992, *Official Report*, col. *759*.

Aircraft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the result of his Department's and the Royal Air Force's discussions with Russian aircraft manufacturers on replacing the RAF's squadrons of *(a)* Nimrod MR.2 aircraft with the Beriev Be-42 Mermaid, and *(b)* Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft with the Antonov An-70T; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: There have been no substantive discussions with Russian aircraft manufacturers. Western firms wishing to offer Russian aircraft have been advised that we are generally prepared to consider competitive bids on their own merits from sources that can demonstrate their ability to meet our technical, financial and other requirements.

Sri Lanka (Arms Sales)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent contacts his Department has had with the Government of Sri Lanka about arms sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has had a number of contacts with the Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence covering a variety of issues. Such contacts, however, are a confidential matter for the two Governments.

Aircraft

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present number of *(a)* helicopters and *(b)* fixed-winged aircraft in each of the services; and what were the figures in 1978 and 1988, respectively.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Service Type	*Aircraft*	*1978*[1]	*1988*	*Present*
Royal Navy	Helicopter	200	183	165
	Fixed wing	117	73	66
Army	Helicopter	—	283	307
	Fixed wing	—	26	28
Royal Air Force	Helicopter	153	164	181
	Fixed wing	1,271	1,238	1,035

[1] The information for the Army could not be obtained in the time available.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many search and rescue helicopter flights were flown from RAF Leuchars in 1992; how many persons were rescued; of those rescued, how many were service personnel and how many civilians; and if he will list the same information for the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The table gives the total number of search and rescue flights—civil and military, flown from RAF Leuchars over the past five years. The figures in brackets show the number of persons rescued, including the transfer of sick or injured people from ship to hospital.

Year	*Military*		*Civilian*		*Total callouts*	
1988	18	(3)	134	(112)	152	(115)
1989	19	(11)	114	(51)	133	(62)
1990	6	(4)	119	(45)	125	(49)
1991	7	—	154	(90)	161	(90)
1992	13	(7)	118	(54)	131	(61)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of occasions that search and rescue helicopter operations were called out from RAF Leuchars between 24 December 1992 and 4 January 1993.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There were five SAR helicopter call-outs from RAF Leuchars in the period.

Logistic Vehicles

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to receive the Defence Research Agency's study of future logistic vehicles; and if he will publish it when he does so.

Mr. Aitken: The study into future logistic vehicles policy is being led by my Department's operational requirements staff. As part of this activity, we have sponsored the Defence Research Agency's vehicle conceptual study and expect to receive their report in mid-January. My Department's report is scheduled for completion in June; it will not be published but those companies which contributed to the conceptual study will be briefed once the results have been fully evaluated.

Defence Employment Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the reduction of his Department's employment in Hampshire arising from reductions in the Defence Research Agency.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. Chisholm to Mr. John Denham, dated 20 January 1993:

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that I would be replying directly to your question of what estimate he has made of the reduction of his Department's employment in Hampshire arising from reductions in the Defence Research Agency.

I estimate that DRA job losses in Hampshire will be in the region of 700.

I hope you will find this information useful.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for defence what was the total number of personnel employed by his Department whose place of work was located in Hampshire in each year since 1987.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total number of Ministry of Defence personnel employed in Hampshire in each year since 1987 is as follows:

Year	Service personnel	MOD civilians[1]
1987	38,543	22,275
1988	37,904	21,336
1989	36,715	20,495
1990	34,254	20,642
1991	33,412	20,146
1992	31,742	19,598

All figures are as at 1 July.
[1] Excludes casual staff.

Spare Parts

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount of expenditure on spare parts for *(a)* Tornado GR1 aircraft, *(b)* Tornado F3 aircraft, *(c)* Harrier aircraft, *(d)* Chinook helicopters and *(e)* Rapier missiles in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Information is not held in the form requested and could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost and effort. I will write to the hon. Member.

RAF (Voluntary Redundancy)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force personnel have applied for voluntary redundancy in each year since 1990; what plans he has to make further offers of voluntary redundancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No Royal Air Force personnel applied for voluntary redundancy in either 1990 or 1991. Under the first phase of the current redundancy scheme, some 1,100 applications have been received for the 960 or so redundancy places available up to April 1994.

The extent of the second phase of the redundancy scheme, which is scheduled to take place in FY 94/95, is subject to review in the light of forecast requirements and outflow trends. Details will be finalised and announced in due course.

RAF (NATO Role)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role the Royal Air Force will have in *(a)* the new NATO rapid reaction force, *(b)* the new NATO main defence forces and *(c)* the new NATO augmentation forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The RAF will be making a significant contribution of up to 80 aircraft to the Reaction Force (Air). The aircraft will be drawn from the Tornado, Harrier and Jaguar forces. Rapier surface-to-air missiles will also be assigned. The broad range of capabilities that these forces will provide to both the immediate reaction and rapid reaction components of the force has been warmly welcomed by NATO.

RAF assets not assigned to the Reaction Force (Air) will form part of the NATO main defence force. Our contribution to this will include strike-attack and reconnaissance assets, a comprehensive air defence capability and, to reflect the increased emphasis on flexibility of deployment, comprehensive transport, air-to-air refuelling and support helicopter forces. No RAF assets are currently being assigned to the lower readiness augmentation forces.

These contributions to the reaction and main defence forces will ensure that the RAF continues to play a major role in NATO.

Air Force Reserve

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ex-Royal Air Force pilots are currently participating in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently five ex-Royal Air Force pilots in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and four in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made in his policy to encourage pilots who leave the Royal Air Force to

participate in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve since May 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. All officers, including pilots, who retire or leave the RAF are encouraged to join the volunteer reserve forces. They are issued with a booklet, "Notes for Officers retiring from the Royal Air Force", which gives details of the roles of the various reserve units and their locations.

RAF Personnel

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force personnel (i) became qualified to serve in, (ii) served in and (iii) left the service from *(a)* armament engineering, *(b)* mechanical engineering, *(c)* electrical engineering and *(d)* electronic engineering in each year since 1990.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of ground airmen (including airwomen) who:

(i) Became qualified to serve in engineering trades

		1991	1992
(a)	Armaments	195	56
(b)	Mechanical	761	567
(c)	Electrical	147	224
(d)	Electronic	432	663

(ii) Serving in engineering trades as at 1 January

		1991	1992	1993
(a)	Armaments	3,323	3,339	3,233
(b)	Mechanical	14,543	14,282	13,914
(c)	Electrical	4,006	3,937	3,884
(d)	Electronic	10,253	9,918	9,908

(iii) Left the service from engineering trades

		1991	1992
(a)	Armaments	179	162
(b)	Mechanical	1,022	935
(c)	Electrical	216	277
(d)	Electronic	767	673

Air Defences

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current assessment of the threat to United Kingdom air defences; what changes have occurred in that assessment in the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following the collapse of the Warsaw pact and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the immediate threat posed to United Kingdom air defences has reduced significantly. We remain conscious, however, of the uncertainties posed by the massive political, economic and military changes which have occurred over the past four years and, as reported in the 1992 statement of defence estimates, we shall continue to ensure that the armed forces are of a scale and quality able to respond to future challenges.

Running Costs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current average annual running costs of *(a)* a Buccaneer strike/attack squadron, *(b)* a Jaguar offensive support squadron, *(c)* a Nimrod maritime patrol squadron, *(d)* a Tornado F3 air defence squadron and *(e)* a Tornado GR1 squadron.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The average running costs for 1992-93 at outturn prices for a squadron of each aircraft type is as shown in the table. Squadron sizes are variable; this has an effect on average running costs.

	£ million
Buccaneer	19·7
Jaguar GR1a	19·4
Nimrod MR	18·8
Tornado F3	35·6
Tornado GR1	26·7

These running costs do not include costs relating to depreciation, interest on capital or station and administration costs.

Belize

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual running cost of the Royal Air Force detachment stationed in Belize.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cash allocation for 1992-93 for pay (ground and air crew), fuel and garrison costs is some £20 million. Training and engineering support costs are not held separately for Belize.

RAF (Compulsory Redundancies)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force personnel have been made compulsorily redundant in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Legal Immunity

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, columns *131-32*, what other reasons for exemption for legislation exist apart from national security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 13 January 1993]:* The Ministry of Defence would seek exemption from legislation only on grounds of national security. In this context national security includes the operational capability and effectiveness of the armed forces.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Motor Industry (Industrial Strategy)

16. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will next meet representatives of the motor industry to discuss an industrial strategy.

Mr. Salisbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave earlier in response to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler).

GATT Talks

17. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the recent GATT talks and on the effects that the outcome will have on the United Kingdom economy.

21. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the current state of the GATT round.

Mr. Needham: Negotiations are continuing in Geneva, and we still hope it will be possible to reach agreement in the next few weeks. A successful conclusion would bring substantial benefits to the United Kingdom economy: it could directly increase GDP by 1 to 2 per cent. and lead to the creation of 60,000 jobs. Over and above that it would give improved market opportunities and more stable trading conditions for our exporters.

Pit Closures

18. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the proposed closure of coal mines in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government are conducting a wide-ranging review of the prospects for 21 of the pits proposed for closure by British Coal. I hope to be able to publish a White Paper as soon as possible next month setting out the results of that review, which will then be debated in this House.

20. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade which pits he will keep open in the light of his review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The coal review is considering the prospects for 21 pits proposed for closure by British Coal, but not subject to the current statutory consultation exercise, in the context of the energy market as a whole. I obviously cannot anticipate the findings of the review. I hope to be able to publish the coal review White Paper as soon as possible next month.

33. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish his review of British Coal's colliery closure programme.

Mr. Heseltine: I hope to be able to publish the coal review White Paper as soon as possible next month.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what terms of reference have been given to Boyds for its review of the 10 pits on the closure list; and what external legal advice he took from it;

(2) when he expects Boyds to visit each colliery on the 10 pit closure list; what are the causes for the lengthening of the original timetable; and when he expects to receive its report.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade wrote to British Coal and the mining industry unions on 15 January providing them with details of the Boyds study of the 10 pits currently subject to consultation. Copies of these letters, including the terms of reference and proposed details of procedure of the Boyds study, have been placed in the Library of the House.

I understand that Boyds has sent British Coal and the unions a timetable of its visits to the 10 pits, and that this is the only timetable formally drawn up for the study. Boyds has been asked to report by 15 March. It would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend to take legal advice from Boyds, and no such advice was taken.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 13 January to the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), *Official Report*, column *739*, if OFFER submitted evidence to his Department's coal review.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* Professor Stephen Littlechild, Director General of Electricity Supply, wrote to me on 11 January with evidence to the coal review. A copy of the non-confidential parts of this letter has been placed in the Library of the House along with the other evidence to the coal review.

Small and New Businesses

19. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to encourage small and new businesses in Cardiff and in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: The Government will continue to encourage small and new businesses in the United Kingdom by fostering the right economic climate and by providing both directly and through TECs and LECs a wide range of programmes of support and assistance. These policies helped some 400,000 new firms to start last year.

Recent important developments include our plans to establish a network of one-stop shops for businesses in England and changes to the loan guarantee scheme to improve its operation.

Detailed arrangements for encouraging small businesses in Cardiff are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Premium Telephone Services

22. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the Director General of OFTEL to discuss regulation of premium telephone services.

Mr. Leigh: No meeting has been held. Premium rate services are effectively regulated by the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services, ICSTIS.

Insurance Companies (Solvency Margin)

23. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to review the Government's solvency margin criteria for insurance companies.

Mr. Heseltine: The statutory minimum solvency margins are Community obligations and stem from the first insurance directives of 1973 (non life insurance) and 1979 (life insurance). The European Commission has undertaken to review and report on the need for further harmonisation of the solvency margin by July 1997 at the latest. In practice, DTI normally expects insurance companies to maintain a solvency margin of at least twice the statutory minimum. In supervising insurance companies my Department attaches importance to a wide range of other indicators besides the solvency margin.

Manufacturing Industry

24. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the Major Energy Users Council about energy costs of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Eggar: Officials met the Major Energy Users Council (MEUC) in October 1992. The MEUC agreed to survey the electricity prices paid by their members in the second and third quarters of 1991 and 1992. The Department will compare the results of this survey, when it is received, with our own statistics.

Product Safety

25. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent discussions he had with trading standards officers about their staffing requirements for enforcing product safety legislation.

Mr. Leigh: There have been no such discussions. It is the responsibility of local authorities to employ sufficient trading standards officers to enforce legislation effectively.

Public Sector Purchasing

26. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that British companies are able to derive full benefit from the public sector purchasing provisions of the European single market.

Mr. Needham: The opening up of public sector purchasing in the European Community and in the European Economic Area represents a major opportunity for suppliers in Europe. To ensure that British businesses are in a position to take full advantage of this, the EC public procurement programme features prominently in our single market literature. The single market booklet, "A Guide to Public Purchasing", is now in its fifth edition, and in total over 125,000 have been distributed.

Small and Medium Businesses

27. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress he has made on the lifting of the burdens of regulation and form-filling for small and medium-sized enterprises; and if he will make a statement on regulations and forms scrapped since 10 April 1992.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill).

32. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many small businesses there were in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Leigh: Comprehensive figures on the number of small businesses in 1992 are not available. An indication of the change in the number of small businesses can be obtained by comparing the number of VAT registered businesses. The number of businesses registered for VAT at the end of 1979 was 1,289,000. At the end of 1991, the latest year for which we have figures, the number of businesses was 1,716,000, a rise of 33 per cent. These figures have been adjusted to take account of the uplift in the VAT thresholds.

Mining Industry (Redundancy Terms)

28. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of British Coal about redundancy terms.

Mr. Heseltine: I agreed with British Coal the broad terms of its currrent redundancy schemes announced on 13 October 1992. Details of the schemes are a matter for the corporation.

Business Closures

29. **Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many businesses have closed in the last 12 months in the west midlands and Stoke on Trent.

Mr. Needham: A regional breakdown of official insolvency statistics is not available. For compulsory liquidations and bankruptcy orders the only geographical information available is by the court in which the order was made. This is not a good basis for analysing company location, since many cases in England and Wales are dealt with in London regardless of the company's location, and work may be moved between courts according to differing workloads. There is no regional breakdown of creditors' voluntary liquidations.

Machine Tool Industry

30. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to increase Government support to the machine tool industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have met representatives of the machine tool industry twice in recent months. From this and other significant contact, the Government are well aware of the difficulties the industry is currently facing.

Machine tool companies, along with those from other sectors, are and will continue to be eligible for a full range of Government assistance such as for exports and research and development. I also hope that demand for the industry's products may benefit from the temporary increase of capital allowance to 40 per cent. announced in the autumn statement.

Terrorist Incidents (Insurance)

31. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received regarding the withdrawal of cover for terrorist incidents by insurance companies.

Mr. Heseltine: I have received various representations from a broad spectrum of industry and commerce regarding the announcement that insurance companies were to withdraw insurance cover for terrorist attacks. In response to this problem I announced on 21 December that the Government have decided in principle to act as reinsurer of last resort for terrorist attacks against mainland GB non-domestic property and related risks from January 1993.

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to ensure that the rating schedule issued by Associated British Insurers in connection with the Government scheme for terrorism insurance cover, does not discriminate heavily against businesses based outside the eight major urban areas; and if he will consider asking the ABI to review these rates.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The premium rates for terrorist cover, as with all forms of insurance, seek to reflect perceived levels of risk and are therefore weighted towards higher-risk areas. The rates will be reviewed from time to time.

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with retailers and insurance brokers on the Government scheme for terrorism insurance cover.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I met representatives of the British Insurance and Investment Brokers Association on 1 December 1992, and my officials have been in regular touch with them since then. I met representatives of the British Retail Consortium on 19 January.

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider extending the Government scheme on insurance cover for terrorism to companies based outside the United Kingdom, in particular captive insurance companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: These questions are currently under consideration.

Estate Agents (Complaints)

34. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent discussions he had with the National Association of Estate Agents concerning complaints against estate agents.

Mr. Leigh: No such discussions have taken place. If the hon. Member has any evidence of malpractice by estate agents he should bring it to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading or the local trading standards department.

Consumer Protection

35. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to bring forward further legislation in the area of consumer protection.

Mr. Leigh: The Government's manifesto for the 1992 general election included commitments to introduce legislation designed to give consumers confidence that what they purchase is properly described, to ensure that adequate compensation is offered where these requirements are not met, to enable the courts to override unfair terms in contracts, to improve powers to deal with rogue traders, and to amend the law relating to guarantees. Legislation to implement these commitments will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Exporters

36. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to ease further the bureaucratic burdens on exporters within the single market.

Mr. Needham: The completion of the single market has led to the removal of most border formalities on trade with the European Community which has, for example, considerably reduced the burden on businesses of providing trade statistics. Under the new system, Intrastat, three quarters of United Kingdom businesses trading with other member states will have to provide only two statistics on their total value of trade on a quarterly basis. Larger traders will also benefit from the replacement of the previous documentation by a simpler statistical return which will only have to be provided monthly. This system, which also covers VAT returns, replaces the present one where each and every export shipment required its own separate paperwork in the form of the Single administrative document. It means that 10 million export forms will be eliminated each year with net annual saving to United Kingdom exporters estimated to be £135 million.

The Prime Minister has recently announced a scrutiny review of European Community legislation to help ensure that unnecessary burdens are not placed on business when transposing Community legislation into national law. Furthermore the Government will continue to press for policies which will further liberalise the European Community market, including breaking down any bureaucratic barriers.

Mining Equipment

Mr. Bennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance the United Kingdom is providing to help manufacturers of mining equipment to win orders in Iran; and what is the comparable provision made by the German Government and agencies for German firms.

Mr. Needham: My Department is providing support to the Association of British Mining Equipment Manufacturers (ABMEC) to attend the international fair of mining machinery in Teheran and is at present considering inward mission sponsorship for the sector.

Short and medium-term export credit cover is available on the usual "first some first served" basis. My Department has also provided overseas project funding in the last year to assist in the pursuance of a United Kingdom bid for a large mining project in Iran.

The German Government and agencies are subject to the same OECD criteria as the United Kingdom, but I am unable to comment more specifically on German Government policy concerning Iran.

Mine Records

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will arrange for mine records to be available in each region.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal holds and maintains coal mining records on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive. The location of coal mine records offices is primarily a matter for British Coal.

Debt (Late Payment)

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further action he proposes to take on the problem of late payment in relation to small businesses.

Mr. Leigh: The Government are already addressing the problem of late payment with a range of measures including pilots with trade associations and new Government contracting terms.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish monthly figures, by volume, for imports into the United Kingdom of Brazilian rosewood (Dalbergia nigra) and afrormosia (Pericopsis elata) between July and November 1992.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available. The United Kingdom trade classification does not separately identify Brazilian rosewood and afrormosia from other non-coniferous tropical hardwoods.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Batiste: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Internal Market Council held on 17 December 1992.

Mr. Needham: I chaired the final Internal Market Council of the British presidency on 17 December. Overall this was a successful Council ensuring a satisfactory presidency for the United Kingdom on the single market. Twelve single market measures were agreed at this Council, and 90 overall during our presidency. This last figure is a record for any presidency. This confirmed the verdict of the European Council at Edinburgh that the White Paper programme is now complete in all essential respects. The single market is now open for business.

The Council agreed a common position on the future system for the authorisation of medicines in the Community. This package of measures comprises three directives and one regulation which establish new Community licensing procedures for human and veterinary medicines. The regulation creates a centralised licensing system for certain high technology medicines, and establishes a European Medicines Evaluation Agency to provide administrative and technical support for the new procedures.

The directives provide for a decentralised licensing system for other medicinal products, involving mutual recognition of member states' licensing decisions, with binding arbitration in the event of disputes.

The Council also agreed a common position on a directive harmonising laws relating to the civil use of explosives. The directive acknowledges the need to ensure that intra-Community transfers of explosives are properly controlled so that these potentially dangerous products are only shipped to those who have a legitimate reason to acquire them. The same provision will apply to domestic transfers of the explosives covered by the directive. The United Kingdom was able successfully to preserve our export controls on explosives; this helps ensure that they will not fall into the hands of terrorists in the United Kingdom, or third countries.

The Council reached agreement on a directive harmonising the safety and performance requirements for a wide range of medicinal devices. Products covered include tongue-depressors, bandages, artificial limbs, X-ray equipment, brain scanners and electro-cardiograms. The products are classed in four categories, to ensure that the level of control over assessment of conformity with the directive's requirements is proportional to the level of risk inherent in a device. This is an important directive, which will liberalise trade in a sector with trade worth £8 billion in the Community.

A number of significant single market measures were agreed, including common positions on the second amendment to the machinery directive, the sixth amendment to the cosmetics directive, and directives on food hygiene, brakes of motorcycles and statistical units on industrial production. Final adoption was reached on extraction solvents, road and waterway controls on third country transport, and type approval of vehicle external projections. A regulation was agreed creating a fund for re-adaptation measures for Customs agents.

The Council also discussed a directive on copyright in cable and satellite broadcasting, the abolition of frontier controls, a directive on biotechnological inventions, an amendment to the food additives framework directive, the sweeteners directive, a directive on food labelling, and a regulation on dual-use goods.

I must regret the failure of the Council to reach agreement on the Community trade mark regulation. This important measure will establish a Community trade mark office. A trade mark registered with the Community trade mark office will be a unitary right having effect throughout the Community. It will be possible to enforce the rights conferred by it in a single legal action in court in one member state, with effect for all member states. We had put considerable effort into these measures during our presidency, and had cleared away a large number of reservations. However, continuing disagreement between member states over the language regime to be used at the office prevented agreement. I hope agreement can be finally reached under the incoming Danish presidency.

VAT

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what effect the new arrangement for the payment of VAT one month in arrears instead of three months in arrears is having on small and medium-sized businesses in the west midlands.

Sir John Cope: I have been asked to reply.

The new arrangement for the payment of VAT monthly in arrears instead of quarterly in arrears applies only to the 1,600 or so largest VAT payers nationally. It will therefore have no direct effect on small and medium-sized businesses.

HEALTH

Census

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are estimated to have been unenumerated by the 1991 census; and on what basis it has been decided that such unenumerated people will be evenly distributed across the country.

Mr. Sackville: A total of 965,000 people resident in England and Wales, or 1·9 per cent. of the population, are estimated to have not been enumerated in the 1991 census. Census figures are not themselves adjusted. However, the estimated under-enumeration has been taken into account in producing the Registrar General's provisional population estimates for England and Wales for mid-1991. These were published in OPCS Monitor PP1 92/1 on 16 October 1992, a copy of which is in the Library.

The figure of 965,000 is estimated by combining evidence from several different sources. Where evidence was available about the geographical distribution of under-enumeration, it was taken into account. Where

insufficient evidence was available at the local level, an even distribution for each age and sex group was applied across the country as a whole, or across groupings of local areas where sufficient evidence for such groups was available. Details are given in the monitor.

Regional Funding

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice or instructions she has given to regional health authorities about the timescale within which they should move to funding districts by weighted capitation.

Mr. Sackville: Regional health authorities (RHAs) are responsible for revenue allocations to health districts, and for managing their movement towards weighted capitation funding in a way which ensure that services to patients are not disrupted. There is no national deadline, but Ministers continue to attach importance to continued progress towards resource equalisation at district level. The following guidance was sent to all RHAs in circular FDL(92) 113, on 4 December 1992:

"Regions will therefore be asked to report on their planned deployment of the 1993-94 allocation and in particular to demonstrate clear progress towards equalisation. The pace of such progress and whether it should be achieved by reducing resources allocated to districts above their capitation share is a matter for individual regions to judge in the light of local circumstances."

Copies of the circular are available in the Library.

Waiting Lists

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were awaiting treatment on one year waiting lists in each specialty in December 1992; and what were the equivalent figures for April 1992.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information by specialty is published twice a year for 31 March and 30 September. The most recent figures, for 31 March 1992, are given in "Hospital Waiting List, In-Patients and Day Cases" (ISBN 1 85839 003 6)—a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make it her policy that details of the number of patients waiting for a first out-patient appointment should be collected centrally;

(2) if she will take action to establish standards for the maximum wait for a first out-patient appointment.

Mr. Sackville: With over 36 million outpatient attendances each year it is not currently practical to collect information about the numbers of people waiting for out-patient appointments centrally. However, under the patients charter health authorities are required to publish information on the local standards they have set for first out-patient appointments and on performance against these targets. Regional health authorities are required to set targets for 1993-94 to build on this progress.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place a copy in the Library of the guidance notes issued to regional health authorities relating to the creation of a strategy for the disposal of clinical waste.

Mr. Sackville: Yes.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will create an independent agency that can review mergers proposals, price cartels and allegations of anti-competitive practices by NHS trusts; and who has the responsibility for reviewing such matters at the present time.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. The national health service management executive has overall responsibility for managing the national health service internal market and therefore has responsibility for dealing with such matters.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the application of the Government's maximum pay guidelines in the public sector to those NHS trusts being set up on 1 April;

(2) if she will issue a letter of guidance to the chairmen of NHS trusts in relation to the application of the Government pay policy to the remuneration of their emloyees as regards *(a)* pay increases at director level, *(b)* individual pay increases at other levels and *(c)* the total pay bill.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the chairmen of all national health service authorities on the day of the Chancellor's autumn statement, 12 November 1992, to explain the Government's policy of public sector pay restraint this year. A copy of this letter was placed in the Library. The NHS management executive will be issuing further guidance shortly.

Juveniles (Secure Units)

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for more secure units for juveniles to be built, *(a)* in Yorkshire and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Yeo: It is estimated that an additional 60 to 65 secure places nationally will be required in order to imlement the new juvenile remand provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 by the mid-1990s. It is envisaged that some 10 to 15 of these will be needed within the Yorkshire and Humberside region as a whole.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many juveniles were placed in secure accommodation in each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many secure places currently exist for *(a)* male and *(b)* female juvenile offenders; if she will list the units by county; and how many of the places are unoccupied.

Mr. Yeo: Secure units are available for the placement of any child looked after by a local authority, where the statutory criteria for restriction of liberty are met. This includes juvenile offenders.

Information about the number of secure units in each local authority and the number of places occupied during the year and at 31 March 1991 is published in "Children accommodated in secure units during the year ending 31 March 1991 England". A copy is in the Library.

Information about the number of admissions to secure units in England for the individual years 1984-85 to 1990-91 is also included in the publication. Information was not collected centrally for earlier years.

The latest information about secure places is in the table.

Secure accommodation by region
31 December 1992

Regions and Locations	*Managing authorities*	*Type*	*Number of places*
Northern			
New Aycliffe Royston House	Durham	Observation and Assessment Centre	14 mixed
Aycliffe Community Home Special Unit	Durham	Community Home (Education)	36 mixed
Netherton Park Elm Secure Unit	Northumberland	Observation and Assessment Centre	5 mixed
Yorkshire and Humberside			
East Moor Community Home	Leeds	Observation and Assessment Centre	27 boys
Sutton Place Safe Centre	Humberside	Community Home (Education)	5 mixed
North Western			
Redsands Centre Oak House Unit	Cheshire	Community Home (Education)	6 mixed
Redbank Community Home Vardy House	Lancashire	Observation and Assessment Centre	6 boys
Redbank Community Home Special Unit	Lancashire	Community Home (Education)	26 boys
St. Catherine's Community Home Laboure House	Nugent Care Society (St. Helens)	Community Home (Education)	5 girls
Briars Hey Community Home Orchard House	Lancashire	Community Home (Education)	8 girls
Dyson Hall Community Home	Liverpool	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 boys
Park House Barton Moss Secure Unit	Salford	Observation and Assessment Centre	7 boys
West Midlands			
St. John's Safe Centre	Birmingham	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 mixed
Stoke House Sherbourne Unit	Coventry	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 mixed
East Midlands			
Kesteven House	Lincoln	Observation and Assessment Centre	4 mixed
Derbyshire Children's Centre Greenacres Secure Unit	Derby	Observation and Assessment Centre	5 mixed
Amberdale Community Home	Nottinghamshire	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 mixed
Thames Anglia			
Salters	Cambridgeshire	Observation and Assessment Centre	9 girls
Thornbury House	Oxon	Observation and Assessment Centre	3 boys
London			
Middlesex Lodge Heathlands Unit	Hillingdon	Observation and Assessment Centre	9 girls
Little Heath Lodge	Newham	Observation and Assessment Centre	6 boys
Orchard Lodge	Southwark	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 boys
Frant Court Community Home	Greenwich	Community Home (Education)	2 girls
Stamford House	Hammersmith	Observation and Assessment Centre	16 boys
Southern			
Lansdowne Children's Centre	East Sussex	Observation and Assessment Centre	5 mixed
Beechfield	West Sussex	Observation and Assessment Centre	6 mixed
Fairfield	Hampshire	Observation and Assessment Centre	3 girls
Glen House Intensive Care Unit Medina Unit	Hampshire	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 mixed
South Western			
Northbrook Community Home Atkinson Unit	Devon	Observation and Assessment Centre	12 mixed
Kingswood Secure Unit	Avon	Community Home (Education)	20 boys

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what research she has commissioned to identify the number of secure places needed to be provided by local authorities to ensure that persons aged 15 or 16 years are not remanded to prison; and if she will place copies of the research in the Library;

(2) how many extra secure places need to be provided by local authorities to ensure that persons aged 15 or 16 years are not remanded to prison.

Mr. Yeo: The need for additional secure places has been assessed by a multi agency national steering group. It is determined that some 60 to 65 additional places will be required. The group's assessment was based on information for a NACRO/ACOP survey of juvenile penal remands; information provided by local authorities; and historical information about provision and use of existing secure facilities.

Operations

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of operating theatre sessions carried out in the NHS currently every week; and what the figures were in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information for 1987-88 and 1991-92[1] is set out in the table. Comparable information for 1979 is not available centrally.

Operating theatre sessions England: average number per week

	Scheduled session held in year	*Weekly rate*
1987-88	692,804	13,298
[1]1991-92	792,459	15,210

[1]Provisional.

Selected List Scheme

Mr. Renton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *692*, what evidence she has that significant savings continue to be made by the selected list scheme.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service drugs bill is affected by many different factors and it is not possible specifically to identify the continuing effect of measures which have been taken under the selected list scheme. We nonetheless believe that such measures have exerted a continuing downward pressure on the drugs bill.

Dioxin

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department will undertake a study of the link between cancer affecting children and exposure to dioxin; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has no plans to undertake such a study.

Studies of the statistical link between exposure to possible cancer-producing substances and the incidence of cancer in children can be undertaken only where separate groups of children, exposed significantly to different levels of the substance under study, can be identified. Dioxin is present everywhere in industrialised countries at very low levels, so this is not possible. We do however keep under review the outcome of studies of the follow-up to the accident at Seveso in 1986.

NHS Pensions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will order an investigation into the management of the NHS pensioners' trust; if she will seek ways of increasing the proportion of funds paid to those in need; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. The financial policy of the trust is the responsibility of the trustees.

Children in Hospital

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the recommendations made to her by Action for Sick Children into the costs of visiting children in hospital.

Mr. Yeo: We attach particular importance to involving parents in the care and treatment of children in hospital. The hospital travel costs scheme provides help for children, who are in families on income support or family credit or otherwise have a low income, with their expenses for travelling to and from hospital for treatment and the expenses of a companion, where this is medically necessary. Help with the cost of visiting children when in hospital may be available through the social fund to families on income support. We have decided that enhancement of existing help cannot command high priority at the present time as it would entail the diversion of national health service resources away from direct patient care and impose an additional administrative burden on hospitals. Some hospitals are able to give discretionary help from non-exchequer patient amenity funds to parents travelling long distances.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women were screened for breast and cervical cancer in each year since 1987 within the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool health authority areas.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

Table 1
Cervical screening position at 31 March 1992

District Health Authority	*Women tested in last 5·5 years (all ages)*	*Women tested in last 5·5 years target age group (20-64)*	*Estimated 5·5 year coverage of female population target age group Per cent.*
Sunderland	84,998	78,791	84
Durham	39,333	36,517	82
Hartlepool	38,159	35,220	86

Source: Form KC53.

Table 2
Breast screening—Number of women aged 50-64 screened

Centre	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Gateshead	9,013	17,082	19,627
Newcastle	11,856	16,331	21,628
North Tees	—	10,416	20,440

Source: Form KC62.
Data supplied by cancer screening evaluation unit.

NHS Funds (Misappropriation)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is taken when there is a prima facie case that funds or assets of the NHS have been obtained improperly by *(a)* a member of the general public, *(b)* NHS staff, *(c)* executive directors, *(d)* non-executive directors and *(e)* chairmen; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health bodies maintain standing orders supported by standing financial instructions. These should identify the action to be taken in the event of loss of national health service funds or assets. Statutory auditors review these documents as part of their annual audit. The action to be taken where funds or assets appear to have been lost will depend on the circumstances of the case.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region the percentage of ambulances in Northumberland that responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 20 minutes to emergency calls for each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 25 November 1992 at column *728*. In 1987-88, the Northumbria ambulance service responded to 60 per cent. of emergency calls within seven minutes and to 97 per cent. within 14 minutes.

Epilepsy

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will establish a nationally funded programme of research into, and practice of, surgical techniques in the treatment and cure of epilepsy.

Mr. Yeo: No. There are already well-established procedures for neurosurgery on people with epilepsy. It is for health authorities, within available resources, to purchase services to meet the needs of their residents including the need for epilepsy surgery.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish a table showing the total grant available from her Department *(a)* in total, *(b)* in revenue and *(c)* in capital towards the provision of (1) residential facilities and (2) non-residential facilities for (i) people with alcohol problems and (ii) people with drug problems in 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(2) if she will publish a table showing the total grant paid by her Department *(a)* in total, *(b)* in revenue and *(c)* in capital towards the provision of (1) residential facilities and (2) non-residential facilities for (i) people with alcohol problems and (ii) people with drug problems in each of the past five years.

Mr. Yeo: Funding for drug and alcohol projects are provided directly and indirectly by the Department from a number of sources. In part grants are from small centrally administered budgets, such as the specific grant for alcohol and drug misusers, which totalled £2·1 million in 1992-93 and supported expenditure of £3 million; this budget is being increased by 9·5 per cent. to £2·3 million in 1993-94 and will support expenditure of £3·2 million. Other funds are provided locally by health authorities from their general allocations or from money specifically allocated to them for drug misuse services. In 1992-93 earmarked funding comprised:

(1) £17·243 million for the development of services for drug misusers, including the expansion of services to help prevent the spread of HIV among and from drug misusers; this amount will be increased by 10·2 per cent. to £19·001 million in 1993-94;

(2) £2·8 million towards the cost of prescribing methadone as part of a planned programme of treatment, and towards the development of pharmacy-based needle exchange schemes. Decisions on the amounts to be allocated in 1993-94 for these purposes have yet to be taken.

Some additional funding is also provided by local authority social services departments. Details of funding from all these sources could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Harlow Wood Hospital

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the future plans for the Harlow Wood hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No final decision has been made on the long-term future of the hospital and local managers are currently considering the options.

Stockport DHA

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* full-time nursing staff and *(b)* staff with management responsibilities were employed by Stockport district health authority in 1990 and at the most recent available date.

Dr. Mawhinney: In September 1990 there were 1,317 nursing and midwifery staff employed full-time and in September 1991 there were 1,053.

The number of staff employed with a management role is a matter for the district health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. F. A. Russell, the chairman of Stockport health authority, for details.

Special Hospitals

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population of the three special hospitals in England and Wales for the last date available were *(a)* female; *(b)* black and *(c)* aged under 21 years.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is in the tables.

Percentage of female patients in special hospitals on 18 January 1993

Broadmoor Per cent.	Rampton Per cent.	Ashworth Per cent.	Total Per cent.
19·8	20·3	11·6	16·9

Percentages of special hospital patients by ethnic group on 18 January 1993

Ethnic Group	Per cent. of patients in: Broadmoor Per cent.	Rampton Per cent.	Ashworth Per cent.	Percentage of all patients in special hospitals
Black—Caribbean	10·9	11·1	8·0	9·9
Black—African	2·2	0·9	0·8	1·3
Black—Other	2·8	0	0	0·8
Indian	1·2	0·9	0·8	1·0
Pakistani	0·4	0·6	1·0	0·7
Bangladeshi	0·2	0	0	0·1
Chinese	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
White	79·8	83·4	86·8	83·6
Other	2·2	3·0	2·6	2·6

Percentage of patients aged under 21 years in special hospitals on 18 January 1993

Broadmoor Per cent.	Rampton Per cent.	Ashworth Per cent.	Total Per cent.
0·6	0·9	1·0	0·8

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a full breakdown of the ages of the population of each of the three special hospitals in England and Wales.

Mr. Yeo: The available information as at 18 January 1993 is given in the table.

Age band	Special hospital Broadmoor	Rampton	Ashworth	Total
<18	0	0	1	1
18–21	3	5	5	13
21–25	35	26	51	112
25–35	181	153	231	565
35–45	128	200	177	505
45–55	77	108	104	289
55+	71	50	58	179
Total	495	542	627	1,664

NHS Employment (Hampshire)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time in the national health service in Hampshire in each year since 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: The county of Hampshire consists of four whole DHAs; Portsmouth and South East Hampshire, Southampton and South West Hampshire, Winchester, Basingstoke and North Hampshire; and part of West Surrey and North East Hampshire DHA. As it is not possible to identify separately the information for individual units in West Surrey and North East Hampshire, the global figures have been included in the Hampshire figures given in the table.

The figures for 1991 exclude non-professional non-medical staff[1] as they were collected on the Korner aggregate forms (KM 49) and it is not possible to disaggregate the information to district level.

Year	*Full time*	*Part time*	*Total*
1987	—	—	28,240
1988	—	—	28,740
1989	15,010	12,650	29,060
1990	15,380	12,410	29,190
1991	10,600	8,400	19,000

[1] Non-professional non-medical staff groups include ancillary, administrative and clerical, maintenance, works, general and Senior Managers, Ambulance staff, and other non-professional non-medical staff.

Source: Non Medical Manpower Census, Medical Manpower Census; HAP(STATS), NHSME.
Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
Figures quoted are numbers not whole time equivalents.

Dental Care

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 22 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *371*, what plans she has to publish the report of the oral health strategy group on proposed changes to dental policy; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Following advice from the oral health strategy group, proposals for an oral health strategy for England are still being considered.

Mental Illness

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the current effectiveness of care of the mentally disabled.

Mr. Yeo: The Government's long-standing policy is that people with mental illness should have access to all the services they need, as locally as possible, from long-term in-patient care for the severely and chronically ill to domiciliary support for those who can live near normal lives at home.

Research shows that patients moved from long stay mental illness hospitals to community programmes usually do well on transfer and they and their carers and relatives prefer community-based care.

Evidence from such research both in this country and from abroad, particularly in the United States of America, strongly supports the conclusion that mentally ill people, including chronic and severe patients, can be successfully treated in the community.

To promote the development of comprehensive, local community care services for mentally ill people a mental health task force led by David King was set up last year. It will promote and assist the development of a concerted, comprehensive and speedy implementation of our policies for mental health services, with particular regard to the replacement of large long-stay institutions by more locally based and accessible services.

The Government are currently considering whether changes are needed to the mental health legislation to ensure the more effective delivery of care to the small minority of mentally ill people who refuse to participate voluntarily in their care programmes.

Regional Health Authority Appointments

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will make a statement on the position of Sir Donald Wilson, currently chairman of the Mersey regional health authority, and the vacancy for the position of the chairman of the West Midlands health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* Sir Donald Wilson ceased to be chairman of the Mersey regional health authority with effect from 11 January, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appointed him as chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority. My right hon. Friend has appointed Professor A. M. Breckenridge as chairman of the Mersey regional health authority.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 21 January 1993

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Uncorroborated Confessions

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if the Northern Ireland Director of Public Prosecutions intends to continue proceedings on the basis of evidence consisting wholly or mainly of uncorroborated confessions in police custody.

The Attorney-General: In Northern Ireland, as in England and Wales, there is no general requirement in law that a confession requires to be corroborated before reliance can be placed upon it. In cases where the evidence consists wholly or mainly of an uncorroborated admission or confession made in police custody, the director has regard to all the available facts and circumstances surrounding the making of such an admission or confession. Where the Director is satisfied that there is a reasonable prospect of the admission or confession being admitted in evidence and reliance being placed upon it, and that that evidence is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of obtaining a conviction, prosecution is directed or continued if the public interest so requires.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Allason: To ask the Attorney-General how many public interest immunity certificates have been issued in criminal trials *(a)* since 1987 and *(b)* since 1990.

The Attorney-General: The information requested by the hon. Member is not collected centrally either by Government or individual prosecuting authorities. My answer is therefore confined to the three prosecuting authorities for which I have ministerial responsibility and is based on inquiries made of those officials likely to have the requisite knowledge. The number of cases so identified is as follows:

	CPS	*SFO*	*DPP(NI)*
1987	1	—	—
1988	—	—	—
1989	3	1	—
1990	1	1	—
1991	—	1	—
1992	2	—	1

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Romania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for improving relations between the United Kingdom and Romania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We look forward to developing our relations with the new Government of Romania. My brief visit in December was a valuable first step.

We shall continue to assist Romania's programme of economic and political reform, primarily through the know-how fund. We are currently considering with the Romanian authorities significant new know-how fund-supported projects in the areas of agriculture and privatisation. The reinstatement of a measure of ECGD medium-term cover demonstrates our determination to encourage British companies to compete strongly in the market.

The forthcoming signing of the EC association agreement with Romania will contribute to the strengthening of Romania's relationship with the Community and its member states.

HOME DEPARTMENT

IRA Terrorists

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of controls on the movement of IRA activists to the British mainland.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The port checks conducted under schedule 5 to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 continue to represent a valuable means of controlling the movement of terrorists.

Gloucestershire Police

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to allow the chief constable of Gloucestershire constabulary to bring police staffing in the urban areas of Cheltenham and Gloucester city into line with neighbouring counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Deployment of police officers is a matter for the chief constable.

Tyre Dumps

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the tyre dumps notified to his office by fire authorities which provide cover to standards required by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Tyre dumps are notified to the Home Office. Fire authorities are required to be able to deal with all normal requirements, and brigades know the measures which are required to deal with the operational and environmental problems associated with tyre dump and other rubber-based fires.

Police Budgets

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police authority, the standard spending assessment, the actual spending, the police establishment based on SSA and the actual establishment for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1991-92 on standard spending assessments, expenditure and force establishments is given in the table. Police establishments are not based on SSAs.

The table excludes Welsh forces, because no separate police component is identified in SSAs for Welsh county councils.

Police Authority	*Police SSA 1991-92 (£ million)*	*Outturn Expend (£ million)*	*Authorised Establishment 31 March 1992*
Avon and Somerset	55·443	111·509	3,085
Bedfordshire	20·238	39·148	1,117
Cambridgeshire	21·691	47·116	1,231
Cheshire	33·986	66·960	1,900
City of London	20·639	40·820	798
Cleveland	27·037	54·802	1,502
Cumbria	21·151	45·080	1,183
Derbyshire	32·276	66·048	1,825
Devon and Cornwall	51·536	117·436	2,880
Dorset	22·879	52·006	1,287
Durham	24·751	48·589	1,389
Essex	54·851	115·540	2,892
Gloucestershire	20·953	44·611	1,183
Greater Manchester	115·636	248·807	7,057
Hampshire	59·904	124·970	3,202
Hertfordshire	32·973	62·868	1,680
Humberside	36·128	77·396	2,025
Kent	57·435	128·734	3,054
Lancashire	57·873	122·019	3,225
Leicestershire	32·636	67·196	1,827
Lincolnshire	21·547	47·235	1,206
Merseyside	84·622	178·884	4,706
Metropolitan	547·984	1,339·605	28,391
Norfolk	25·345	54·100	1,421
Northamptonshire	20·539	45·499	1,167
Northumbria	63·939	132·826	3,586
North Yorkshire	25·345	51·679	1,414
Nottinghamshire	42·194	82·629	2,344
South Yorkshire	53·967	103·166	3,016
Staffordshire	39·638	82·163	2,211
Suffolk	21·673	48·069	1,216
Surrey	33·255	63·421	1,670
Sussex	56·093	106·178	2,982
Thames Valley	70·893	149·414	3,725
Warwickshire	18·451	39·842	1,016
West Mercia	36·415	77·230	2,024
West Midlands	124·080	250·816	6,958
West Yorkshire	95·027	197·226	5,295
Wiltshire	21·115	46·215	1,114

Correspondence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to respond to the letter of 2 December 1992 from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford regarding prison education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I wrote to the hon. Member on 20 January.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 16 November (HO ref. No. 23833/98) concerning an application for United Kingdom citizenship.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* I wrote to the hon. Member on 14 December.

HMP Blakenhurst

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects HMP Blakenhurst to open; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The contractor's proposals envisaged a six-month start-up period from contract signature on 3 December, but he is striving to open the prison earlier.

HMP Manchester

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations to the proposed market-testing of HMP Manchester.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Legal advice is that TUPE would apply if a private sector company won the contract for operating HMP Manchester. We are currently considering the implications for both staff and the tendering exercise.

Fines

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the crimes for which the maximum fine is determined by statute; and what is the level of the maximum in each case;

(2) if he will list the crimes for which the maximum penalty is £50,000 or over.

Mr. Jack: There is no upper limit on the fine that the Crown court can impose for any offence triable on indictment for which the option of a fine is provided by statute.

The maximum fine which a magistrates court can impose is limited according to the offence committed. Where an offence is triable either in the magistrates court or on indictment the maximum fine is usually £5,000—the maximum fine normally available to magistrates. For summary offences, the maximum fine is specified in statute. In recent legislation, maximum fines are expressed as a level on the standard scale. The current values of these levels are: level 1, £200; level 2, £500; level 3, £1,000; level 4, £2,500; and level 5, £5,000.

Exceptionally, for a small number of offences, magistrates have the power to impose fines in excess of £5,000: the usual maximum for such offences is either £20,000 or £50,000 depending on the offence.

A comprehensive list of offences that fall into the above categories is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Wolds Centre

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all the incidents and disturbances which have occurred at the Wolds centre since 1 December 1992; and if he will order an inquiry.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Twenty incidents at Wolds remand prison were reported to the incident management support unit at Prison Service headquarters between 1 December 1992 and 18 January 1993. Details are given in the table. The Home Office controller based at Wolds monitors the contractor's performance and provides full and regular reports. None of the reported incidents would merit a separate inquiry.

2 December 1992:
Two prisoners who had been hand-cuffed together attempted to run away as they left the cellular vehicle to enter Doncaster Magistrates Court. They were unsuccessful.

8 December 1992:
Cannabis was found in a prisoner's cell during a cell search.

11 December 1992:
After being located in the Segregation Unit a prisoner smashed the sink in his cell. The prisoner threw a piece of piping from the sink at a Custody Officer which hit his knee causing bruising and a cut which was treated in the Health Care Centre.

16 December 1992:
A prisoner was strip-searched after a visit and found to be in possession of cannabis.

17 December 1992:
A prisoner assaulted another prisoner by striking him with his fists causing bleeding to the nose and bruising.

18 December 1992:
A prisoner claims that he was assaulted while seated watching TV. He cannot identify his assailant. The prisoner had recently been taken off Rule 43 at his own request.

20 December 1992:
A prisoner assaulted the Segregation Unit Supervisor while cleaning out his cell. The weapon used was a mop handle. The supervisor had bruises to his forearm.

21 December 1992:
(1) A prisoner punched another prisoner following a disagreement in the gymnasium.
(2) While searching visitors prior to allowing them into the prison a PCO observed a piece of cannabis apparently fallen from a visitor's pocket when removing items from his trousers.

23 December 1992:
A prisoner began kicking his door for attention. When it was opened up he assaulted a supervisor by punching him in the face and ribs.

25 December 1992:
A prisoner was found in possession of a quantity of tablets not prescribed for him. Search took place after social visits. He became violent on discovery and control and restraint techniques were used to remove him to the segregation unit. Tablets were identified as Temazepam (sleeping tablets).

28 December 1992:
Following information received a search took place between the area from the main exercise yard and the segregation unit where a quantity of cannabis and four valium tablets were found in a sock which had been weighted with an orange. It is believed that this had been thrown from the exercise yard in an attempt to land it in the segregation unit exercise yard.

31 December 1992:
When in visits a prisoner three chairs and smashed a fish tank, then produced a wood stick with a nail in the end and assaulted the Duty Security Manager. The DSM was taken to outside hospital for his hand to be X-rayed, but apparently sustained no lasting injury.

1 January 1993:
Prisoners had been given an extension to 0015 hours on 1 January to see in the New Year. 16 Prisoners in F Unit refused to return to their cells and barricaded themselves in the TV room. Prisoners eventually returned to their cells at 0715 hours.

2 January 1993:
(1) A prisoner assaulted another prisoner by striking him with his fist.
(2) A prisoner was assaulted by other prisoners, assailants unknown. Prisoner sustained head injuries. Police were contacted but do not wish to proceed.

4 January 1993:
On arrival at Sheffield Crown Court a prisoner had to be removed from the cellular vehicle. During his removal he assaulted one officer and bit the hand of another officer. No lasting injuries to officers.

7 January 1993:
A prisoner who was the subject of a strip search after visits was found to be in possession of two syringes in his footwear.

13 January 1993:
(1) A prisoner assaulted an officer by grabbing his throat and attempting to kick him. No lasting injury to officer sustained.
(2) A prisoner had been unlocked to use the bathroom. He refused to return to his cell. He spat at, head-butted and scratched an officer. No lasting injuries to the officer sustained.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had about introducing new legislation to deal with juvenile offenders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have had a number of discussions with a wide range of individuals and organisations which have concerned, among other things, the scale of juvenile offending and what might be done about it. For the second part of his question, I refer the hon. Member to the anwer which I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 14 January, at column *794*.

Bosnian Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what advice has been given to local authorities and health authorities regarding co-ordination of services for arriving Bosnian refugees; and what additional finance has been allocated to help them cope with the added burden;

(2) how many Bosnian refugees, either in this country already or expected to arrive in the next six months, have long-term accommodation provided for them;

(3) what agency is taking responsibility for the allocation of Bosnian refugees to communities in the United Kingdom; and how this process is to be financed.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Refugee Council is taking the lead in arranging accommodation in the community for the Bosnian ex-detainees and their families which the Government have agreed to accept at the request of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It is receiving funds from the Home Office for this purpose. The accommodation will be financed through housing benefit payments.

Discussions have been held with the local authority associations, the Housing Corporation and the National Federation of Housing Associations with a view to identifying possible suitable clusters of accommodation in various areas of the country where there is a voluntary organisation support network. No accommodation has as yet been provided under these arrangements, although we understand that some of the Bosnians have left the reception centres to join relatives or friends already living here.

The Government have no plans to provide additional resources to local authorities, but will be funding the Refugee Council to give advice and support to the Bosnians when they move into the community from the reception centres.

The Refugee Council and the British Red Cross are in touch with local health services in the areas where the reception centres are located about possible needs. The Department of Health is considering whether any further advice to health authorities is necessary.

Prisons (HIV)

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what change in instructions has been given to governors of prisons concerning advising their staff as to which inmates are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The last general instruction to governors was contained in circular instruction 30/1991 which was issued in November 1991. The recommended practice is that information about HIV status obtained in a clinical context should be available only to staff with responsibility for the prisoner's health care unless the prisoner consents to wider disclosure in his or her own interest or, exceptionally, such disclosure is deemed necessary to prevent the spread of infection.

New Age Travellers

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will now make a statement of the Government's detailed intentions to implement the measures to tackle problems caused by new age travellers announced by him in October;

(2) what conclusions he has reached from his consultations with chief officers of police and others on the desirability of amending section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend is currently considering proposals, including changes to the law, for tackling the problems presented by new age travellers and "ravers" and will make an announcement shortly.

Immigration

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many clearance visas were granted to *(a)* women and *(b)* men for the purposes of joining a fiancé(e) or spouse in 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Data on entry clearance applications and decisions by category of applicant are only available centrally for the Indian sub-continent. The data that are available for 1992 are given in the table.

Applications granted[1] for entry clearance to the United Kingdom by whether Spouse or Fiancé(e) in the Indian sub-continent 1992

Number of applicants

Period	Applications granted			
	Wives	*Fiancées*	*Husbands*	*Fiancés*
1992				
Q1	1,553	108	513	69
Q2	1,195	76	668	56
Q3	1,287	83	1,376	57
Q4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

n/a not yet available.
[1] Granted initially or on appeal.

Car Insurance

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals for legislation to provide higher penalties for those car owners who do not have valid car insurance.

Mr. Jack: The existing maximum penalty for using a motor vehicle while uninsured against third party risks is a fine of £5,000 together with an obligatory endorsement of the driving licence with six to eight penalty points and a period of disqualification from driving with no upper limit, at the court's discretion. We have no plans to change these provisions which allows courts to impose sentences which reflect the culpability of those who commit this offence.

Disclosure of Convictions

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from magistrates on the effect of the changes on the non-disclosure of previous convictions introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: There is nothing in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 that prevents the disclosure of previous convictions to a court which has convicted an individual of a particular offence; and the Court of Appeal has recently made it clear that it is appropriate for courts to continue to receive antecedent information in the same way as they did before the principal provisions of the Act came into force on 1 October 1992. A number of representations have been received, including some from individual magistrates, about section 29 of the Act which deals with the relevance of previous convictions to the current offence. These matters have recently been clarified in a series of guideline judgments from the Court of Appeal.

Firearms

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many licensed firearms are in private ownership within the Peterlee sub-division; and what were the numbers for each year since 1988.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information received from the Durham constabulary indicates that a total of 1,315 firearms were covered by certificates in force on 15 January 1993 in the Peterlee sub-division—200 firearms, which includes rifles, pistols, large magazine smooth bore guns and specially dangerous air weapons, and 1,115 shotguns.

Information for earlier years is not available.

Public Houses (Licensing)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made into the review of the licensing system of public houses, announced by the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 10 July 1989 in his statement on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of beer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We hope shortly to publish a consultation document inviting comments on a number of

proposals for changes to the liquor licensing law of England and Wales, including possible reform of those aspects of the licensing system referred to in the statement made in July 1989.

Channel Islands (Wartime Occupation)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he plans to take to bring to justice those British citizens who collaborated with the Nazi occupiers of the Channel Islands during the second world war in rounding up Jewish and other people for deportation to concentration camps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The Channel Islands are not part of the United Kingdom, but internally self-governing dependencies of the Crown with their own judicial systems. It is for the islands authorites to consider whether offences under their laws have been committed and to act accordingly.

If evidence is forthcoming of conduct in the Channel Islands during the period of German occupation constituting an offence justiciable in the United Kingdom but not in the Channel Islands themselves, that will be referred to the prosecuting authorities here.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Saudi Arabia (Military Equipment)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he had during his recent visit to Saudia Arabia on the opportunities for the sale of United Kingdom manufactured military equipment to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Heseltine: I had no such discussions.

Coal Stocks

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what powers he has to set a strategic stock of coal; and what factors he takes into account in setting this level.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has exercised the powers under section 34 of the Electricity Act 1989 to direct National Power and PowerGen to hold stocks of coal at power stations against interruptions in coal supplies. In determining the appropriate level of stocks, my right hon. Friend takes into account such matters as the diversity of fuels available for generation and the possible threat to supplies which may arise from one or a combination of factors.

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the total level and value of coal stocks held at power stations.

Mr. Eggar: Coal stocks at power stations at 3 January 1993 totalled 31·5 million tonnes. Valuation of coal stocks at power stations is a matter for the generating company concerned.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the percentage contribution of *(a)* the chemical industry and *(b)* the engineering industry to the GDP of (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) France, (iii) Germany and (iv) Italy in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is published in National Accounts ESA, detailed tables by branch; EUROSTAT relevant copies are available in the House of Commons Library.

Offshore Drilling

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) pursuant to his answer of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *37*, regarding environmental impact assessments prior to drilling in the Celtic sea, what special conditions he has plans to attach to any licences issued for blocks 103/2, 103/3, 103/6, 103/7, 106/25, 106/29, 107/21, 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/19 and 104/21;

(2) what advice he received from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Countryside Council for Wales prior to including each of blocks 103/2, 103/3, 103/6, 103/7, 106/25, 106/29, 107/21, 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/19 and 104/21 in the 14th round of offshore drilling licensing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In considering whether to offer blocks 103/2, 103/3, 103/6, 103/7, 106/25, 106/29, 107/21, 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/19 and 104/21 in the 14th round, officials took account of the concerns of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee—JNCC—and the Countryside Council for Wales—CCW—regarding the ecological status of the area. On balance, the evidence did not justify the exclusion of these blocks from hydrocarbons exploration, but it was agreed that special conditions should be attached to each licence.

These special conditions have been agreed with the Department of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the JNCC, which has consulted the CCW. As part of the special conditions, licensees will be obliged to consult these organisations before undertaking any activity in these blocks. The conditions will reflect the concerns related to each block and to those elements of the environment potentially at risk.

Coal Industry

Dr. Marek: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the access allowed to Alan Oakes and Associates, consultants hired by Clwyd county council, to visit the Point of Ayr colliery for the purpose of assessing the pit's viability.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Consultancy Reports

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place copies of the consultancy reports from Caminus Energy, PIMS Associates Ltd. and Ernst and Young in the Library.

Mr. Eggar: The consultants' reports will be placed in the Library as soon as they are published.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what external financing limit has been set for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for 1993-94.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's external financing limit for 1993-94 will be minus £2·1 million.

Coal Industry

Mr. Janner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on current employment in the coal mining industry.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The total number of people employed by British Coal at the end of December 1992 was 48,700. The total work force at deep mines licensed by British Coal at 30 September 1992—the latest available figure—was 1,683. No figures are held centrally for employees of contractors working at British Coal's own pits and opencast sites or of employment at opencast sites licensed by British Coal.

Electricity

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the criteria agreed in 1990 which triggers compensation payments to the regional electricity companies if they have to take dearer electricity.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The operation of contracts for differences between regional electricity companies—RECs—and the generators, which hedge the RECs against increases in pool prices, is a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Public Houses

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *738*, if he will publish the information his Department holds on the purchasers of public houses under the Supply of Beer (Tied Estates) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 2390); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* As I explained in my answer of 13 January, the statutory undertakings given by the national brewers to provide the Director General of Fair Trading with information to enable him to monitor compliance with the order do not require them to provide details of the purchasers of public houses that are sold. However, my Department is aware of trade press estimates—*Publican*, 11 January 1993—which suggest that since 1989 the number of pubs owned by independent retailers had increased by 8,000 while regional brewers have purchased a further 3,000 outlets.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

High Court Judges

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current establishment of High Court judges; and how many are currently in post.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Following a number of very recent promotions and retirements there are currently 83 High Court judges holding appointment out of a complement of 85, which is also the current statutory limit on their numbers. Steps are being taken to bring that number back to 85 as soon as is practicable.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many sittings in the High Court there were in the last available week; how many were taken by *(a)* High Court judges, *(b)* deputy High Court judges and *(c)* circuit judges, excluding appellate and divisional court sittings.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In the royal courts of justice in London in the week commencing 11 January 1993 there were 253 sittings in the three divisions of the High Court. Of these sittings 147 were taken by High Court judges, 59 were taken by circuit judges sitting as judges of the High Court and 47 were taken by deputies. These figures do not, of course, take account of the substantial number of sittings on High Court business and serious crime undertaken by High Court judges on circuits, for which figures for the week commencing 11 January 1993 are not yet available.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress is being made by the Lord Chancellor's committee on the work, deployment and number of High Court judges; when it is expected to report; and whether the report will be published.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The group of senior judges and officials which has been asked to advise the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice on the work, deployment and numbers of High Court judges met first on 5 October 1992 and has met several times since then. It is hoped that their advice will be received soon. It is unclear yet whether the advice will be in a form which could be published, but as parliamentary and Privy Council approval is required to increase the statutory limit on the number of High Court judges any changes proposed to be made as a result of it would come into the public domain.

Possession Notices

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many *(a)* possession notices and *(b)* suspended possession notices have been served in the latest period of 12 months for which figures are available in the Nottinghamshire area; and what were the corresponding figures for the previous period of 12 months.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Mortgage possession figures are collected by the number of actions entered, suspended orders and orders made. The table shows the information for each county court in Nottinghamshire during 1991 and 1992. The figures do not indicate how many houses have been repossessed through the courts as not all the orders will have resulted in the issue and execution of warrants of possession. At this stage, the 1992 figures are provisional and therefore liable to revision to take account of any late amendments. Figures on mortgage possession actions taken in each county court in England and Wales are published quarterly in an information bulletin which is placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. The figures covering the whole of 1991 and 1992 will be published on 27 January 1993.

Mortgage possession actions entered and orders made in Nottinghamshire county courts during 1991 and 1992

Court	Actions entered		Suspended orders		Orders made	
	1991	1992	1991	1992	1991	1992
Mansfield	922	601	327	261	297	298
Newark	161	124	37	44	75	60
Nottingham	2,235	1,497	693	657	790	613
Worksop	445	340	142	138	203	133
Nottinghamshire County Total	3,763	2,562	1,199	1,100	1,365	1,104

NATIONAL FINANCE

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress each of the 12 EC member states has made in reaching the convergence criteria of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Nelson: Article 109j of the Maastricht treaty gives to the Council the responsibility for determining whether or not a member state has met the necessary conditions for entry to stage 3 of economic and monetary union. The Council is required to make this judgment, taking into account reports from the Commission and European Monetary Institute on the extent to which a member state complies with criteria concerning the relative rate of inflation; the Government's fiscal position; observance of the normal fluctuation margins within the exchange rate mechanism—ERM; and long-term interest rates. In addition, the reports must take account of a number of other factors, including the development of the ecu, the integration of markets, current account positions, and unit labour costs and other price indices.

A protocol attached to the treaty lays down figures for the convergence criteria regarding inflation and long-term interest rates. Another protocol sets out reference values for fiscal criteria which, if breached, might prompt a Commission report to the Council on the fiscal position of a member state—such a report being the basis on which the Council would judge whether or not an excessive deficit existed. However, definitions of the indicators of convergence have not yet been fully standardised and figures are therefore only indicative at this stage.

The current position of each member state, in respect of the convergence criteria, is given in the table. The criterion on participation in the ERM is that a member state has respected the normal fluctuation margins without severe tensions for at least the last two years. In particular, the member state shall not have devalued its currency's bilateral central rate against any other member state's currency on its own initiative for the same period. The following member states have been in the narrow band for at least two years: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

	Latest inflation[1]	Budget balance[2]	General government debt[3]	Longer bond yield[4]
Belgium	2·2	−6·4	132·2	7·5
Denmark	1·4	−2·0	60·6	8·5
France	2·1	−2·2	48·6	7·8
Germany[5]	3·7	−3·2	41·8	7·1
Greece	15·0	−16·1	82·9	n/a
Ireland	2·3	−1·9	101·2	9·4
Italy	4·9	−10·2	102·7	13·4
Luxembourg	2·9	[2]2·6	[3]6·3	7·5
Netherlands	2·9	−2·6	77·0	7·1
Portugal	8·6	−6·1	[3]68·6	[4]9·9
Spain	5·1	−4·9	46·3	12·1
United Kingdom	3·0	−2·8	36·5	8·6

[1] November 1992; percentage change of consumer prices over previous 12 months.
[2] 1991 general government financial balance (as a percentage of GDP).
OECD Outlook (December 1992), except for Luxembourg (EC May 1992).
[3] 1991 gross debt of general government (as a percentage of GDP).
OECD Outlook (December 1992), except for Luxembourg and Portugal (EC May 1992).
[4] Yield on fixed interest government securities on 18 January 1993, except Ireland and Portugal (October 1992).
[5] Inflation and government debt figures are for western Germany.
Source: OECD and Eurostat.

Mortgage Repayments

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many households in *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* the Yorkshire-Humberside region and *(c)* the York area have been helped under the scheme announced by him on 19 December 1991 to provide funding on concessional terms to help borrowers who are not on income support, but who face serious problems in paying their mortgages; and what means have been used to assess the effectiveness of the scheme.

Mr. Nelson: I do not believe that it is possible to single out the specific effect of particular elements in the range of industry and Government measures which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced following my meeting with the mortgage lenders—*Official Report*, 19 December 1991, column *453*.

As for the number of households helped by the package as a whole, one indicator is the latest published figures for possession actions in the county courts in England and Wales which indicate a fall of 16,563—32 per cent.—in the number of actions entered in the third quarter of 1992 compared with the third quarter of 1991. Over the same period possession actions entered in the Yorkshire and Humberside region fell by 1,428—38 per cent.; and in the York and Malton area by 33—22 per cent.

Third World Debt

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps the Government are taking to encourage British banks to cancel a proportion of debts owed to them by third-world countries.

Mr. Nelson: The Government welcome the significant progress made by banks in reaching voluntary arrangements on debt relief with developing countries. The United Kingdom is financing its share of the International Monetary Fund and World bank resources used in support of these arrangements.

Drinks Duty

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he has had on the harmonisation of drinks duties in the European Community; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had with *(a)* his European Community counterparts and *(b)* the Scotch whisky industry and others on the harmonisation of drinks duties in the European Community; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what discussions he has had with representatives of the Scotch whisky industry to discuss excise taxation; what representations he has received on the taxation of Scotch whisky; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: EC Finance Ministers have not discussed drinks duties since the adoption of the rates and structures directives last October. Treasury Ministers have since received many representations from the drinks trade on the subject of United Kingdom duties. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer met a delegation from the Scotch Whisky Association on 14 January to discuss its request for no increase in or revalorisation of the duty on spirits, and a narrowing of the duty differential between spirits and beer and wine. All these representations will be considered in the review of indirect taxation in the run-up to the Budget.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his current estimate of the value of sales of Scotch whisky which would be lost in the event of the abolition of duty free; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Intra-EC duty-free sales of Scotch whisky are estimated to be worth around £50 million a year. We have no details on the value of non-EC duty-free sales of Scotch whisky. No estimates are available for the value of sales that would be lost in the event of abolition of duty-free sales.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide details of *(a)* the amount and *(b)* the value of sales of (i) Scotch whisky and (ii) imported wine in cash and real terms in the United Kingdom for each year since 1979; and if he will list the percentage increase/decrease compared with the previous year.

Sir John Cope: Such information as is available is given in the table. The figures for whisky relate to home-produced mature whisky and whiskey. For wine, the figures relate to heavy, light and sparkling wine, the bulk of which is imported.

(i) Whisky[1]

	Volume of whisky (thousand hectolitres of pure alcohol)[2]	*Year-on-year percentage increase*	*Total expenditure (current market prices) £ million*	*Year-on-year percentage increase*	*Total expenditure (constant 1985 prices) £ million*	*Year-on-year percentage increase*
1984	440·8		1,561		1,635	
1985	461·6	4·7	1,711	9·6	1,711	4·6
1986	456·2	−1·2	1,749	2·3	1,691	−1·1
1987	446·0	−2·2	1,765	0·9	1,650	−2·4
1988	451·8	1·3	1,858	5·3	1,669	1·1
1989	430·2	−4·8	1,862	0·2	1,590	−4·7
1990	413·5	−3·9	1,967	5·6	1,528	−3·9
1991	382·6	−7·5	2,065	5·0	1,419	−7·1

[1] Home produced mature whisky and whiskey.
[2] Released from bond for domestic market.

(ii) Wine[3]

	Volume of imported wine (thousand hectolitres of pure alcohol)[4]	*Year-on-year percentage increase*	*Total expenditure (current market prices) £ million*	*Year-on-year percentage increase*	*Total expenditure (constant 1985 prices) £ million*	*Year-on-year percentage increase*
1984	5,389·0		2,473		2,596	
1985	5,642·7	4·7	2,701	9·2	2,701	4·0
1986	5,901·7	4·6	2,834	4·9	2,788	3·2
1987	6,278·3	6·4	3,131	10·5	2,962	6·2
1988	6,482·5	3·3	3,343	6·8	3,067	3·5
1989	6,669·5	2·9	3,613	8·1	3,166	3·2
1990	6,636·3	−0·5	3,898	7·9	3,132	−1·1
1991	6,653·3	0·3	4,207	7·9	3,105	−0·8

[3] Heavy, light and sparkling wine.
[4] Released from bond for domestic market.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide details of the amount of taxation levied on Scotch whisky compared with that levied against wine for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Firm data on duty receipts are only available for total spirits. Estimates can be made for all home-produced whisky and these are given in the table.

£ millions

	Estimated duty and consequential VAT on whisky/whiskey	Duty and consequential VAT on wines
1979-80	647	417
1980-81	664	449
1981-82	717	581
1982-83	549	582
1983-84	941	716
1984-85	679	745
1985-86	822	789
1986-87	767	801
1987-88	803	843
1988-89	784	902
1989-90	748	910
1990-91	835	984
1991-92	856	1,084

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will show how the rate at which Scotch whisky is taxed has varied compared with the rate at which wine is taxed from 1979 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The information is as follows:—

Percentage change in duty rate

Year	Whisky	Wine of fresh grape 5·5 per cent. to not exceeding 15 per cent. strength
1979	0·0	0·0
1980	13·7	0·0
1981	14·6	16·9
1982	6·4	12·2
1983	5·0	5·8
1984	1·9	[1] −19·9
1985	1·9	8·3
1986	0·0	0·0
1987	0·0	0·0
1988	0·0	4·5
1989	0·0	0·0
1990	10·0	7·7
1991	9·3	9·3
1992	4·5	4·5

[1] Due to duty restructuring

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of duty on a bottle of Scotch whisky in each of the EC member states; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Our latest information is for November 1992 and is as follows:

Excise duty on a 70cl bottle of Scotch whisky

Member state	National currency Cost per 70cl	Sterling Duty per 70cl
Belgium	178·00	3·50
Denmark	102·77	10·77
France	21·85	2·62
Germany	7·13	2·89
Greece	388·22	1·22
Ireland	5·63	5·98
Italy	2,603·32	1·20
Luxembourg	106·29	2·09
Netherlands	8·90	3·20
Portugal	335·82	1·53
Spain	203·00	1·17
United Kingdom	5·55	5·55

Notes:
1. Calculated using exchange rates as at 1 October 1992.
2. In most cases VAT is also charged at the standard rate applicable in each member state.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the annual amount of revenue accruing to the Exchequer in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms from the levying of excise duty on Scotch whisky for each year since 1979.

Sir John Cope: Firm data on duty receipts are available only for total spirits. Estimates can be made for all home-produced whisky and these are given in the table:

£ million

	Estimated duty and consequential VAT on whisky/whiskey	In real terms at 1991-92 prices
1979-80	647	1,475
1980-81	664	1,301
1981-82	717	1,259
1982-83	549	901
1983-84	941	1,476
1984-85	679	1,014
1985-86	822	1,158
1986-87	767	1,047
1987-88	803	1,055
1988-89	784	971
1989-90	748	859
1990-91	835	875
1991-92	856	856

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when a reply will be sent to the letter written on 1 December 1992 by the hon. Member for Walsall, North regarding a constituent.

Mr. Dorrell: I wrote to the hon. Member yesterday; I apologise for not being able to reply earlier.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to receive a report from the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee.

Mr. Lamont: I have today received a report from the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee. It makes recommendations on the treatment in the RPI of council tax and holidays. The full report is being published this afternoon as Cm 2142 and copies are available in the Vote Office.

In due course I will announce my response on the recommendations. The committee has not yet concluded its consideration of the treatment of owner-occupiers' housing costs and new cars.

Non-residents (Tax)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchquer if he will make a statement on the application of the tax deduction at source arrangements to the payment of gross interest to non-residents by deposit-takers.

Mr. Dorrell: The tax deduction at source legislation provides, generally, that individuals who are not

ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, and who make a declaration to that effect, can receive their interest without deduction of tax. However under existing rules a deposit-taker which is not a bank or a building society is required to deduct tax even when a declaration has been made.

We have decided to remove this inconsistency by including legislation in the next Finance Bill to allow these deposit-takers to pay gross interest on the same footing as banks and building societies.

In the meantime, in anticipation of this legislation, and with my agreement, the Inland Revenue will not seek to recover tax from a deposit-taker which has paid gross interest to someone who is not ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom and has provided the necessary declaration.

Germany (Coach Importation)

Mr. Fry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make representations through the European Commission regarding the tax on the temporary importation of coach vehicles to Germany via any border being imposed on vehicles of another EC member state.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* There is some uncertainty surrounding the approach being adopted by Germany to coaches since the abolition of fiscal frontiers on 1 January 1993. HM Customs and Excise are seeking clarification of the situation with the Commission and other member states.

Income Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the increase in incomes since 1979 has gone to the top 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. of the population; and what are the comparable figures for the USA, Japan, Germany and France.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* The data requested in the question are not readily available. However, information for the United Kingdom on changes in income shares and real incomes was contained in replies my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 2 December 1992 at column *100* and the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 7 December at column *506*.

PRIME MINISTER

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's discussions with the Government of Jordan on the efficacy of military intervention in Iraq.

The Prime Minister: Since the invasion of Kuwait we have had frequent discussions with the Jordanians on the situation in Iraq. We have discussed the allies' latest military action in Iraq with Jordanian officials.

EDUCATION

Education Spending

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each education authority, the amount per pupil spent on *(a)* under-fives, *(b)* primary, *(c)* 11 to 16 and *(d)* post-16 education for the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: Available expenditure data cover nursery and primary schools, or secondary schools, as a whole, and cannot be disaggregated between particular age ranges. The latest year for which information on actual expenditure by local education authorities is available is 1990-91. The tables indicate, for each local education authority in England, the average school-based expenditure per pupil in nursery and primary schools and in secondary schools in each year from 1988-89 to 1990-91.

Net institutional expenditure per pupil in nursery and primary schools

	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £
ILEA	1,605	1,835	—
City	—	—	1,950
Camden	—	—	1,710
Greenwich	—	—	1,720
Hackney	—	—	1,900
Hammersmith	—	—	1,970
Islington	—	—	1,770
Kensington	—	—	2,060
Lambeth	—	—	1,840
Lewisham	—	—	1,710
Southwark	—	—	1,850
Tower Hamlets	—	—	1,940
Wandsworth	—	—	1,820
Westminster	—	—	2,110
Barking	1,255	1,360	1,460
Barnet	1,250	1,370	1,550
Bexley	1,100	1,215	1,260
Brent	1,375	1,425	1,670
Bromley	1,165	1,290	1,410
Croydon	1,180	1,200	1,440
Ealing	1,385	1,485	1,690
Enfield	1,110	1,220	1,430
Haringey	n/a	n/a	1,840
Harrow	1,115	1,230	1,480
Havering	1,095	1,155	1,290
Hillingdon	1,195	1,305	1,540
Hounslow	1,270	n/a	1,510
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,175	1,265	1,430
Merton	1,210	1,345	1,750
Newham	1,360	1,445	1,490
Redbridge	1,070	1,150	1,350
Richmond upon Thames	1,180	1,375	1,530
Sutton	1,090	1,215	1,360
Waltham Forest	1,250	1,430	1,570
Birmingham	1,040	1,130	1,260
Coventry	1,065	1,195	1,300
Dudley	1,020	1,085	1,230
Sandwell	1,175	1,275	1,450
Solihull	1,040	1,160	1,240
Walsall	1,200	1,255	1,510
Wolverhampton	1,190	1,320	1,390
Knowsley	1,165	1,235	1,390
Liverpool	1,150	1,225	1,290
St. Helens	1,050	1,170	1,210
Sefton	1,015	1,110	1,260
Wirral	1,070	1,225	1,280
Bolton	1,015	1,130	1,220
Bury	1,080	1,190	1,190
Manchester	n/a	n/a	1,320
Oldham	1,125	1,295	1,370
Rochdale	990	1,170	1,200
Salford	1,085	1,200	1,270

	1988-89 £	1989-90 £	1990-91 £
Stockport	1,035	1,095	1,260
Tameside	1,115	1,235	1,320
Trafford	1,050	1,130	1,170
Wigan	1,025	1,090	1,140
Barnsley	1,065	1,145	1,260
Doncaster	1,175	1,255	1,250
Rotherham	1,125	1,245	1,340
Sheffield	1,230	1,315	1,390
Bradford	1,160	1,275	1,500
Calderdale	1,145	1,140	1,440
Kirklees	1,110	1,205	1,300
Leeds	1,155	1,255	1,430
Wakefield	n/a	n/a	1,340
Gateshead	1,180	1,245	1,390
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,225	1,320	1,520
North Tyneside	1,145	n/a	1,310
South Tyneside	1,150	1,255	1,290
Sunderland	1,005	1,155	1,280
Avon	1,050	1,195	1,320
Bedfordshire	1,115	1,240	1,380
Berkshire	1,030	1,105	1,340
Buckinghamshire	1,065	1,170	1,320
Cambridgeshire	1,005	1,115	1,260
Cheshire	960	1,050	1,260
Cleveland	1,075	1,150	1,230
Cornwall	1,010	1,095	1,190
Cumbria	1,140	1,265	1,340
Derbyshire	1,080	1,235	1,370
Devon	975	1,095	1,310
Dorset	1,020	1,120	1,290
Durham	1,130	1,225	1,370
East Sussex	1,025	1,125	1,240
Essex	1,050	1,150	1,240
Gloucestershire	1,010	1,140	1,200
Hampshire	1,040	1,125	1,260
Hereford and Worcester	1,000	1,145	1,360
Hertfordshire	1,130	1,245	1,340
Humberside	1,155	1,265	1,280
Isle of Wight	1,055	1,120	1,250
Kent	935	1,030	1,120
Lancashire	985	1,090	1,310
Leicestershire	1,085	1,180	1,290
Lincolnshire	1,005	1,110	1,210
Norfolk	1,070	1,160	1,280
North Yorkshire	1,030	1,100	1,230
Northamptonshire	1,005	1,095	1,230
Northumberland	1,090	1,175	1,320
Nottinghamshire	1,115	1,255	1,390
Oxfordshire	1,125	1,205	1,570
Shropshire	1,075	1,160	1,350
Somerset	1,025	1,145	1,230
Staffordshire	1,050	1,155	1,270
Suffolk	1,020	1,120	1,310
Surrey	1,050	1,140	1,340
Warwickshire	1,025	1,140	1,220
West Sussex	1,005	1,145	1,240
Wiltshire	1,045	1,125	1,260

Net institutional expenditure per pupil in secondary schools

	1988-89 £	1989-90 £	1990-91 £
ILEA	2,505	2,725	—
Camden	—	—	2,290
Greenwich	—	—	2,390
Hackney	—	—	2,710
Hammersmith	—	—	2,670
Islington	—	—	2,440
Kensington	—	—	2,900
Lambeth	—	—	2,580
Lewisham	—	—	2,430
Southwark	—	—	2,350
Tower Hamlets	—	—	2,490
Wandsworth	—	—	2,520
Westminster	—	—	2,580

	1988-89 £	1989-90 £	1990-91 £
Barking	1,970	2,200	2,300
Barnet	1,820	1,925	2,110
Bexley	1,685	1,820	1,970
Brent	2,305	2,225	2,360
Bromley	1,770	1,955	2,220
Croydon	2,040	1,935	2,080
Ealing	2,145	2,345	2,580
Enfield	1,715	1,815	2,080
Haringey	n/a	n/a	2,590
Harrow	1,740	1,975	2,320
Havering	1,860	1,990	2,140
Hillingdon	1,870	2,005	2,340
Hounslow	1,895	n/a	2,080
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,905	2,120	2,240
Merton	1,660	1,925	1,990
Newham	2,140	2,310	2,410
Redbridge	1,735	1,855	2,120
Richmond upon Thames	1,645	1,790	1,990
Sutton	1,630	1,750	2,080
Waltham Forest	2,435	2,490	2,650
Birmingham	1,640	1,800	2,050
Coventry	1,940	2,180	2,340
Dudley	1,840	1,915	2,100
Sandwell	1,885	2,120	2,300
Solihull	1,650	1,835	2,080
Walsall	1,885	1,995	2,260
Wolverhampton	1,745	1,970	2,120
Knowsley	1,990	2,105	2,230
Liverpool	1,905	2,060	2,250
St. Helens	1,710	1,965	1,960
Sefton	1,600	1,715	2,030
Wirral	1,750	1,970	2,110
Bolton	1,635	1,795	1,990
Bury	1,730	1,860	1,810
Manchester	n/a	n/a	2,150
Oldham	1,590	1,760	1,940
Rochdale	1,695	2,050	2,140
Salford	1,860	2,140	2,190
Stockport	1,730	1,860	2,030
Tameside	1,660	1,770	1,950
Trafford	1,710	1,920	2,080
Wigan	1,850	2,000	2,100
Barnsley	1,645	1,795	1,820
Doncaster	1,655	1,805	1,860
Rotherham	1,635	1,810	1,960
Sheffield	1,810	1,920	2,150
Bradford	1,605	1,635	1,780
Calderdale	1,665	1,665	2,090
Kirklees	1,620	1,765	1,920
Leeds	1,545	1,715	1,920
Wakefield	n/a	n/a	1,940
Gateshead	1,770	1,865	2,080
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,870	1,980	1,990
North Tyneside	1,785	n/a	1,940
South Tyneside	1,825	2,010	2,140
Sunderland	1,670	1,845	1,930
Avon	1,630	1,795	1,940
Bedfordshire	1,635	1,815	1,880
Berkshire	1,570	1,735	1,950
Buckinghamshire	1,715	1,850	2,050
Cambridgeshire	1,480	1,640	1,880
Cheshire	1,545	1,715	1,950
Cleveland	1,770	1,915	2,090
Cornwall	1,525	1,690	1,890
Cumbria	1,685	1,845	2,030
Derbyshire	1,7[illegible]	1,975	2,110
Devon	1,[illegible]5	1,705	1,950
Dorset	1,490	1,630	1,810
Durham	1,575	1,735	1,990
East Sussex	1,565	1,765	1,980
Essex	1,635	1,800	1,95[illegible]
Gloucestershire	1,545	1,735	1,91[illegible]
Hampshire	1,580	1,790	1,9[illegible]
Hereford and Worcestershire	1,440	1,635	1,8[illegible]0
Hertfordshire	1,740	1,900	2,070
Humberside	1,690	1,765	1,910
Isle of Wight	1,495	1,575	1,760

	1988-89 £	1989-90 £	1990-91 £
Kent	1,475	1,565	1,800
Lancashire	1,620	1,810	1,950
Leicestershire	1,770	1,900	2,090
Lincolnshire	1,505	1,630	1,910
Norfolk	1,585	1,810	1,990
North Yorkshire	1,595	1,760	2,020
Northamptonshire	1,545	1,685	1,800
Northumberland	1,630	1,645	1,810
Nottinghamshire	1,745	1,960	2,220
Oxfordshire	1,660	1,810	2,160
Shropshire	1,690	1,855	2,100
Somerset	1,570	1,745	1,850
Staffordshire	1,610	1,790	1,930
Suffolk	1,485	1,820	2,020
Surrey	1,635	1,675	2,100
Warwickshire	1,635	1,765	1,890
West Sussex	1,530	1,745	1,910
Wiltshire	1,555	1,700	1,890

Notes to tables:
1. Figures are derived from LEAs' returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department for Education. They include school-based spending on salaries and wages, recurrent premises costs, books, equipment and other supplies and services. For 1990-91 they also include unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management schemes. Figures exclude spending on home to school transport, school meals, LEAs' central administration and financing costs of capital expenditure.
2. "n/a" indicates that a return was not received from the LEA. Figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are rounded to the nearest £5, and for 1990-91 to the nearest £10.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each education authority, the amount per pupil spent on special needs education, the total spent on special needs education and the percentage this represents of the total education budget, for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: The latest year for which information on actual expenditure is available is 1990-91. The table indicates, for each local education authority in England, net institutional expenditure per pupil in maintained special schools or receiving education otherwise than at school provided by each local education authority; total net recurrent expenditure on special education; and the percentage this represents of the LEA's total net recurrent expenditure on education. The figures for special education exclude expenditure on pupils with special needs attending primary and secondary schools and on services such as child guidance and educational psychology, as the relevant data are not collected separately.

Local education authority	Net institutional expenditure per pupil £	Net recurrent expenditure special education £'000s	Net recurrent expenditure, special education as a percentage of all education Per cent.
Camden	13,230	5,857	8·9
Greenwich	15,190	13,049	12·7
Hackney	7,920	6,369	6·0
Hammersmith	13,590	4,114	7·2
Islington	11,290	5,065	6·1
Kensington	15,300	2,088	5·1
Lambeth	9,120	12,518	10·3
Lewisham	11,370	8,342	7·6
Southwark	12,900	8,181	7·9
Tower Hamlets	11,090	7,575	7·1
Wandsworth	14,950	9,102	8·8
Westminster	8,390	4,956	6·2
Barking	16,800	3,828	6·7
Barnet	8,590	5,982	6·2
Bexley	7,330	4,796	6·5
Brent	11,170	7,165	6·0
Bromley	8,680	5,754	6·6
Croydon	6,820	4,058	3·3
Ealing	8,820	10,244	7·9
Enfield	10,510	7,822	7·7
Haringey	9,140	5,070	4·9
Harrow	14,120	5,582	7·3
Havering	6,500	3,519	4·4
Hillingdon	9,340	5,965	7·0
Hounslow	8,460	6,876	8·5
Kingston upon Thames	7,520	3,196	6·7
Merton	9,450	4,183	7·0
Newham	11,350	7,001	6·7
Redbridge	7,760	5,624	7·4
Richmond upon Thames	8,440	2,613	5·4
Sutton	6,020	3,811	6·7
Waltham Forest	10,680	6,219	6·7
Birmingham	8,010	25,526	6·6
Coventry	9,040	8,503	6·4
Dudley	7,310	6,456	6·0
Sandwell	5,600	6,699	5·4
Solihull	12,080	4,453	6·3
Walsall	7,630	4,941	4·2
Wolverhampton	7,030	4,588	4·3
Knowsley	6,790	5,091	7·0
Liverpool	5,880	12,648	6·4
St. Helens	6,340	5,124	7·1

Local education authority	Net institutional expenditure per pupil £	Net recurrent expenditure special education £'000s	Net recurrent expenditure, special education as a percentage of all education Per cent.
Sefton	5,370	4,892	4·7
Wirrall	6,750	8,316	6·3
Bolton	6,550	4,909	5·0
Bury	6,130	3,649	5·5
Manchester	8,670	14,738	7·7
Oldham	5,990	4,664	5·5
Rochdale	6,990	5,197	6·0
Salford	7,800	5,379	6·1
Stockport	7,140	6,404	6·3
Tameside	8,250	5,023	6·4
Trafford	6,550	3,709	5·0
Wigan	7,070	7,850	6·6
Barnsley	9,750	2,959	4·0
Doncaster	4,240	4,578	4·2
Rotherham	7,260	7,232	7·6
Sheffield	11,470	10,281	5·5
Bradford	9,950	10,716	5·3
Calderdale	6,480	2,491	3·3
Kirklees	8,200	7,270	4·9
Leeds	6,380	8,665	3·4
Wakefield	5,630	5,828	5·2
Gateshead	8,110	4,549	6·2
Newcastle upon Tyne	9,430	6,597	6·2
North Tyneside	8,520	5,363	7·3
South Tyneside	6,560	2,797	4·4
Sunderland	5,740	5,125	4·8
Avon	7,590	20,867	6·5
Bedfordshire	6,700	11,258	5·6
Berkshire	6,880	16,974	6·7
Buckinghamshire	6,450	15,866	6·8
Cambridgeshire	8,890	12,396	5·4
Cheshire	9,570	22,415	6·5
Cleveland	6,390	11,040	4·7
Cornwall	7,040	5,265	3·4
Cumbria	9,050	5,819	3·3
Derbyshire	8,860	19,722	5·6
Devon	5,590	17,405	5·5
Dorset	4,960	10,179	5·3
Durham	8,470	12,427	5·8
East Sussex	7,650	16,137	8·2
Essex	7,010	30,704	6·1
Gloucestershire	7,590	14,675	8·0
Hampshire	6,250	35,309	7·1
Herefordshire and Worcestershire	5,040	10,869	4·9
Hertfordshire	8,760	23,326	6·5
Humberside	12,310	18,764	5·8
Isle of Wight	4,270	2,062	4·9
Kent	5,360	31,992	6·8
Lancashire	7,760	40,346	7·7
Leicestershire	7,940	13,595	4·1
Lincolnshire	9,250	14,985	8·0
Norfolk	9,480	13,304	5·7
North Yorkshire	8,950	13,987	5·9
Northamptonshire	8,620	13,123	6·4
Northumberland	7,820	5,549	5·0
Nottinghamshire	6,310	17,382	4·7
Oxfordshire	8,420	9,362	4·8
Shropshire	7,880	7,776	5·2
Somerset	13,890	11,962	7·3
Staffordshire	6,720	17,723	5·0
Suffolk	6,170	8,817	4·4
Surrey	6,690	21,942	7·2
Warwickshire	8,120	13,263	7·7
West Sussex	5,740	13,193	6·5
Wiltshire	6,610	11,751	5·9

Note to table

1. Figures are derived from LEAs' returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department for Education.

2. Net institutional expenditure covers the costs of salaries and wages, recurrent premises costs, books, equipment and other supplies and services. It excludes the costs of home to school transport, school meals, LEAs' central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure.

3. Net recurrent expenditure includes all expenditure other than on financing of capital expenditure, less income other than from specific

grants.

4. The variations in the figures between LEAs partly reflect the geographical distribution of different kinds of special schools and partly differences in policies of integration of pupils with special needs into ordinary schools.

Nursery Education

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list in rank order the latest available figures for the percentage of three and four-year-olds in nursery education for each local education authority in England.

Mr. Forth: Estimates of the percentage of three and four-year-olds in maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in maintained primary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1991 were published in column (xvii) of table 1 of statistical bulletin 5/92. A copy of this bulletin is available in the Library.

However, data which have since become available from the 1991 census of population suggest that the estimates of the three and four-year-old population in each local education authority used in bulletin 5/92 are in need of revision in some cases, and therefore that the percentages in column (xvii) of table 1 also need to be revised. The percentages as they stand do not therefore provide a reliable basis for a listing of local education authorities in rank order.

It is however not yet possible to re-calculate the percentages in bulletin 5/92 more accurately, or to update them to 1992, because not all of the population estimates required for this purpose are available on a post-census basis.

Teacher Salaries

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list, for each education authority not in receipt of area cost adjustment, the average teacher's salary for the last year that figures are available;

(2) if he will list, for each education authority in receipt of area cost adjustment, the average teacher's salary for the last year that figures are available.

Mr. Forth: The most recent date for which figures are available is 31 March 1990.

The area cost adjustment is designed to compensate local authorities in London and south-east England for additional employment costs incurred in that region. It is based on evidence of general market earnings levels drawn from the annual new earnings survey.

Some care must be taken in drawing parallels between differentials in average teacher salaries and the area cost adjustment. First, in the field of education, the adjustment compensates for the additional labour costs which apply to all types of staff employed in educational work. While approximately three quarters of total local authority education expenditure is on labour costs, in the current year only half this total expenditure relates to teachers' pay.

Secondly, the average salary figures given below do not necessarily fully reflect the higher costs of employing teachers in the south-east, since in order to attract teaching staff, authorities in that region have generally found it necessary to offer additional incentives, particularly to help with the costs of housing.

With these qualifications, the average teacher's salary was, for education authorities which receive area cost adjustment:

	£
ILEA	16,662
Barking	16,635
Barnet	16,075
Bexley	16,322
Brent	17,059
Bromley	16,581
Croydon	16,522
Ealing	16,781
Enfield	16,116
Haringey	16,692
Harrow	15,982
Havering	16,065
Hillingdon	16,411
Hounslow	16,118
Kingston	16,236
Merton	17,137
Newham	17,233
Redbridge	16,163
Richmond	15,939
Sutton	16,312
Waltham Forest	16,182
Bedfordshire	15,501
Berkshire	15,581
Buckinghamshire	15,283
East Sussex	15,315
Essex	15,513
Hampshire	15,236
Hertfordshire	15,531
Isle of Wight	15,193
Kent	15,492
Oxfordshire	15,453
Surrey	15,639
West Sussex	15,252
Isles of Scilly	15,023

The average teacher's salary was, for local education authorities which do not receive area cost adjustment:

	£
Birmingham	15,489
Coventry	15,520
Dudley	15,079
Sandwell	15,309
Solihull	15,380
Walsall	15,310
Wolverhampton	15,314
Knowsley	15,447
Liverpool	15,531
St. Helens	15,289
Sefton	15,577
Wirral	15,202
Bolton	15,034
Bury	15,373
Manchester	15,672
Oldham	14,898
Rochdale	15,272
Salford	15,348
Stockport	15,350
Tameside	15,256
Trafford	15,379
Wigan	15,526
Barnsley	15,201
Doncaster	15,369
Rotherham	15,198
Sheffield	15,706
Bradford	14,960
Calderdale	15,381
Kirklees	15,182
Leeds	15,421
Wakefield	15,390
Gateshead	15,592
Newcastle	15,428

	£
North Tyneside	15,298
South Tyneside	15,236
Sunderland	15,175
Avon	15,477
Cambridgeshire	15,196
Cheshire	15,477
Cleveland	15,349
Cornwall	15,499
Cumbria	15,409
Derbyshire	15,349
Devon	15,245
Dorset	15,363
Durham	15,399
Gloucestershire	15,264
Hereford	15,496
Humberside	15,531
Lancashire	15,318
Leicestershire	15,434
Lincolnshire	15,484
Norfolk	15,432
North Yorkshire	15,352
Northampton	15,273
Northumberland	15,496
Nottinghamshire	15,472
Shropshire	15,441
Somerset	15,341
Staffordshire	15,530
Suffolk	15,220
Warwickshire	15,542
Wiltshire	15,198

All these figures are average salaries of full-time teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools, including grant-maintained schools.

Dronfield School, Derbyshire

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of the services of the Electoral Reform Society in conducting the ballot on grant-maintained status at the Dronfield school in Derbyshire.

Mr. Forth: The cost of the services of the Electoral Reform Society in conducting the ballot on grant-maintained status at the Dronfield school was £350.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Olner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the cost for the printing and distribution of the pack of information relating to grant maintained conferences for heads and governors, midlands.

Mr. Forth: The conference material for the events to be held in Leicester in February and in Nottingham and Birmingham in March comprised a letter of invitation and a copy of the standard grant maintained information pack. Production costs for the information packs were approximately £5,500. The mailing of invitations and packs fell within the terms of the contract with the departmental dispatch centre and distribution costs cannot be identified separately.

Teachers' Authority

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to the need for further legislation to clarify the legal basis of teachers' authority referred to in the Elton report on discipline in schools.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend does not consider that further legislation would be appropriate.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the terms of reference given to the GAH group of consultants for the report on the national lottery commissioned by his Department.

Mr. Brooke: All the firms invited to tender for the consultancy were sent the following terms of reference.

The Commission *ANNEX A*

1. The Secretary of State for National Heritage intends to introduce a National Lottery to raise funds for arts, sport, the heritage and charities, and for the Millennium Fund, which will finance projects which celebrate and commemorate the turn of the millennium. The Department of National Heritage will require advice on the key determinants of a successful National Lottery in the United Kingdom. To this end, the contractor is asked to provide a report which covers structure, administration and marketing issues, and includes consideration of the following:

2. The determinants of a successful Game.
   - Lotto/instant lotteries;
   - On-line/off-line operations;
   - Frequency of games;
   - Size and range of prizes, and roll-over provision;
   - Retailing strategy.

3. The Secretary of State is concerned that there should be competition between providers of Lottery goods and services to ensure efficient practice. It is envisaged that one contract will be let to co-ordinate and run the National Lottery, but that a competitive environment will be created in the provision of games. The contractor is asked to provide a suitable model to promote competition and efficiency.

4. Creating a competitive environment.
   - Length of contract awarded to primary operator.
   - Separation of services/games offered by sub-contractors.
   - Administrative costs of complex/simple arrangements.

5. Regulatory issues. The contractor is asked to bear in mind the balance to be struck between regulation, innovation, and yield.
   - Identify where either on-line or off-line systems might present opportunities for fraud, and ways of avoiding or minimising those opportunities.
   - Ways of minimising vulnerability to very large, big-spending syndicates.

6. Assessing other economic effects. Some respondents to the consultation have claimed that the introduction of a Lottery will seriously damage the turnover of other industries. Some substitution to the Lottery will undoubtedly take place, but it would be helpful to have an estimate of:
   - The extent to which the Lottery will tap into new markets. Insofar as existing markets are affected (particularly gambling and charitable giving), advice will be needed on possible changes to the current regimes for those activities, with quantified effects as far as possible. The contractor should for the purposes of this exercise assume no changes in the tax regimes for any of these markets.

The Method

7. Given the time constraints, it is not envisaged that the contractor will undertake specific market research for this project but will proceed by modelling, using information already available in the United Kingdom and abroad. Your presentation will need to make clear how you would intend to carry out the commission.

Royal Armouries Museum

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the projected number of visitors to the royal armouries museum being built in Leeds; what is the projected break-even attendance figure; and what

commitment the Government have given to secure the future of the royal armouries in the event of the move not breaking even financially.

Mr. Key: A nationally recognised firm of market researchers has advised that the proposed museum in Leeds will attract well in excess of 1 million visitors per year, and has confirmed this advice recently.

The projected break-even attendance figure is well below half the expected number of visitors.

There is no question of the royal armouries not having a secure future.

Windsor Castle

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Natioal Heritage how much of the £2·50 that members of the public are being charged to view the fire-damaged rooms at Windsor castle will go to its restoration fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Visitors to the state apartments at Windsor castle are currently being charged a reduced admission fee of £2·50 instead of the normal adult charge of £4 because some rooms are temporarily removed from the public route as a result of the fire. Visitors view only in passing the areas damaged by fire. Admission fees continue to be used for the conservation, presentation and administration of the royal collection.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Key: The Department of National Heritage, which came into being in April 1993, has not awarded any contracts to KPMG Management Consultants during the past 12 months. However, on 5 March 1992 the Department of Trade and Industry awarded a contract to KPMG Management Consultants to carry out a review of British Screen Finance Ltd. The Department of National Heritage inherited this contract when responsibility for film industry policy, including British Screen Finance, passed to this Department on 1 May 1992. The final report was delivered in May 1992.

Welsh Television

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the reception of Welsh television services in north east Clwyd; and what has been his response.

Mr. Brooke: Since responsibility for broadcasting policy was transferred to the Department of National Heritage in April 1992, we have received representations about Welsh television services in north-east Clwyd only from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). We have offered advice on how to improve reception of Welsh programmes in some parts of the area.

TRANSPORT

Public Transport Fares, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will update the table of real fares and passenger mileage on London Transport underground and buses given in his answer to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), 22 July 1991, *Official Report*, column *336*.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is given in the table. Figures for bus passenger miles, given in the answer referred to, were on a financial year basis from 1984. London Transport has revised its estimates of passenger miles for the years from 1987-88 to 1990-91, so these data are also shown.

Year	*Million passenger miles London bus services*	*Year*	*Real fares indices (1971 = 100) London bus services*	*London bus and underground*
1987-88	2,646	1991	140	142
1988-89	2,629	1992	146	148
1989-90	2,588	—	—	—
1990-91	2,573	—	—	—
1991-92	2,483	—	—	—

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a real fares index for child fares on *(a)* British Rail, *(b)* Network SouthEast, *(c)* London Underground, *(d)* London Buses and *(e)* London Transport bus and underground services combined for each year since 1971 expressed at 1971 prices.

Mr. Steven Norris: The information available for London Buses, London Underground, and London Transport bus and underground services combined is shown in the table. Comparable figures for British Rail and Network SouthEast are not readily available.

The figures shown in the table are for child ordinary tickets only. They do not include the effect of changes in the price of child season tickets, travelcards and passes, as this information is not available. The figures shown for bus and all London Transport services start in 1976 because the age band covered by child tickets on buses changed during 1975, and consistent data for earlier years are not available.

Real fares indices for child ordinary tickets (1976 = 100)

	Bus	*Underground*	*London Transport Bus and Underground*
1971	—	101	—
1972	—	111	—
1973	—	106	—
1974	—	91	—
1975	—	96	—
1976	100	100	100
1977	96	85	95
1978	90	92	90
1979	87	96	89
1980	109	106	111
1981	105	98	106
1982	102	128	111
1983	112	131	120
1984	107	120	113
1985	134	123	134
1986	129	119	129
1987	124	138	129
1988	141	146	145
1989	165	158	168
1990	152	172	161
1991	171	193	180
1992	189	188	194

Ferries

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the incident threatening the safety of the Stena Sealink ferry Hibernia on the night of 16-17 January.

Mr. Norris: The incident is the subject of an investigation by the Department's marine accident investigation branch. The inspector appointed to carry out the investigation will in due course submit a report to the the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which ferries currently in service and operating from British ports are comparable in design or class to the Jan Heweliusz.

Mr. Norris: There is one ferry operating to British ports that can carry rail freight in a similar manner to the Jan Heweliusz. This is the French-registered ferry Nord Pas de Calais.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what circumstances and under what powers the Irish or British authorities can intervene to prevent the sailing of ferries between Ireland and the United Kingdom because of hazardous conditions.

Mr. Norris: Unless a vessel has weather restrictions placed on its operation, my Department has no powers to prevent the sailing of ferries because of hazardous weather conditions. The decision to sail is ultimately that of the ship's master.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which ferries currently in service and operating from British ports are comparable in design or class to the Stena Hibernia.

Mr. Norris: The Stena Hibernia is typical of the type of ro-ro passenger ferry in service between United Kingdom ports, continental Europe and Ireland, although the design will differ in detail.

London Underground

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details of investment in the London underground system made in 1992-93 and planned for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Norris: Total investment expenditure by London Underground in 1992-93 is currently forecast to be about £680 million. London Transport is still finalising its budget

plans for future years, in light of the autumn statement, but I expect London Underground investment, including provision for the Jubilee line extension and crossrail, to be in the region of £1 billion per annum over the next three years.

Shipping Statistics

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is his best estimate of the number of vessels passing through the Bristol channel daily;

(2) what is his estimate of the average number of vessels passing through St. George's channel each day.

Mr. Norris: My Department does not hold information on the number of vessels passing through the St. George's channel or the Bristol channel daily.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details of the investment made in Network SouthEast in 1992-93 and planned for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Freeman: Around £600 million is being invested in Network SouthEast in 1992-93. Rolling stock, including networkers for Kent link and turbos for Thames and Chiltern, accounts for over half this sum. Other major projects include resignalling schemes on the Great Eastern, London, Tilbury and Southend, Thames, Kent link and Kent coast lines, and Cambridge to King's Lynn electrification. Some of these projects will continue in 1993-94 including the delivery of more rolling stock for Kent link and Thames. However, British Rail has yet to be make final decisions on its detailed investment plans for 1993-94 to 1995-96.

Oil Spills

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is, in both cash and constant prices, the amount of financial support his Department has given to fund research into oil spill clean-ups in each year since financial year 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The expenditure on research into oil spill clean-ups in the years specified was:

Year	*Expenditure*	*Deflated to 1987-88 prices*
	£	£
1987-88	988,938	
1988-89	741,975	691,621
1989-90	737,089	644,687
1990-91	874,603	708,410
1991-92	610,464	462,506
1992-93	[1]830,000	603,197

[1] Estimate.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to the use of napalm to tackle the oil slick resulting from the Braer disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My Department considers all available techniques when dealing with oil pollution at sea in oil spill incidents. Burning the slick would not have been appropriate in the Braer incident due to the location of the vessel and the weather conditions. My Department has also commissioned a research project to review burning as a response option.

Transport Links

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations have been made by his Department to the European Commission's request that a full evaluation should be undertaken of all transport links between the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Mr. Norris: I am not aware of any such request from the Commission.

Planning Appeal, Ealing

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy not to oppose the application or the continuation of the appeal proceedings in the matter of the planning appeal being heard at the Ealing town hall and relating to the access to Norbreck parade, London NW10, from the north circular road, on the grounds that the appellant may not in fact at present own the land in question.

Mr. Norris: The Department's grounds for opposing this application are set out in its proofs of evidence submitted to the public inquiry. These and all other evidence submitted are matters for the inspector to consider before making his recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

WALES

Capital Receipts

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the level of *(a)* housing and *(b)* other capital receipts held by each Welsh district council at the end of the year 1991-92 which they are unable to spend.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: For the year in question under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the capital finance regulations made under the provisions of that Act, a proportion of capital receipts is available for the redemption of debt with the balance being available either for voluntary debt redemption or for new capital spending. Debt redemption, or the holding of receipts set aside for this purpose, reduces or offsets the interest charges that have to be borne by a local authority or its housing revenue account and there are no capital receipts that cannot be used either in that way or for new capital spending.

Accident Trauma Specialists

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many accident trauma specialists have been employed within each health authority area of Wales during each of the last five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information, which relates to consultants in the specialty of traumatic and orthopaedic surgery, is given in the table. It is not known centrally how many of these consultants are accident trauma specialists.

Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery consultants in post as at 30 September (whole-time equivalents)[1]

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Clwyd	4·0	4·0	4·1	4·5	3·9
East Dyfed	3·9	3·9	4·9	4·9	5·9
Gwent	5·8	6·0	5·9	6·9	6·9
Gwynedd	2·4	2·5	2·0	3·0	3·0
Mid Glamorgan	6·0	6·8	6·8	6·8	6·8
Pembrokeshire	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0
Powys	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
South Glamorgan	4·8	5·8	4·9	4·8	4·8
West Glamorgan	7·0	7·0	6·9	6·9	7·6

[1] Excluding locums.

Further Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to launch a review of further education provision for students with learning difficulties and physical disabilities in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Further education is currently a matter for the local education authorities. On 1 April, the Further Education Funding Council for Wales assumes responsibility for planning and funding the sector. In the Secretary of State's guidance letter of 27 May 1992 to the chairman of the funding council he asked that the council ensures that adequate arrangements are in place for assessing the needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and for identifying appropriate provision within further education.

Public Bodies

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated total number of people he has currently appointed to public bodies in Wales; and what is the estimated total annual amount paid to those members appointed by him to public bodies in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The total number of people I have currently appointed to public bodies in Wales is 1,195. Information on the total amount paid to those members appointed is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information on the level of remuneration for each appointment was given in the reply I gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 30 October 1992, at columns *866-908*.

Transport Links

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action has been taken to date by his Department in response to the European Commission's invitation to the United Kingdom to undertake a feasibility study as background to the pilot project on transport links between Holyhead and Dublin.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My officials have been discussing with colleagues in the Department of Transport possible terms of reference for a feasibility study into combined transport links between Great Britain and Ireland.

Ramp Metering

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to introduce ramp metering on motorway and dual carriageway approach roads in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None at this time.

Alcohol Projects

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps will be taken to ring-fence money for residential alcohol projects in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Resources being transferred for residential facilities under the care in the community arrangements will be ring-fenced. The Department will continue to support individual projects aimed at combating alcohol misuse.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what charge is made for replacement hearing aids for adults and children by *(a)* South Glamorgan health authority and *(b)* other health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The National Health Service Act 1977 enables the making of regulations to provide for health authorities to recover the cost of lost or damaged equipment. The National Health Service (Charges for Appliances) Regulations 1974 make such provision. It is for individual health authorities to assess how much to charge for replacing appliances and information on charges made is not held centrally.

Early Retirement

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many employees aged 55 years or over have retired early on grounds of ill-health in Wales in each year since 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available centrally.

Roadworks

Mr. Llywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to issue a code of practice on the reduction of traffic delays around roadworks in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Advice on reducing delays around roadworks is available to highway authorities in Wales.

Special Needs Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much extra money will be allocated for the assessment of support services and placements for students with learning difficulties and physical disabilities in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The allocation of funds to the further education sector will become the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council for Wales from 1 April. The Secretary of State announced on 15 December 1992 the planned funding for further education in Wales from 1993-94 to 1995-96. The Secretary of State has acknowledged that additional costs are involved in making provision for students with special needs and has asked that the funding council take this into account in distributing funds to the FE colleges.

Council Tax

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to set a target time in which valuation tribunals in Wales will complete a council tax valuation appeal.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: When the number of appeals coming forward in 1993 is known, we will agree with the tribunal service and the Valuation Office agency a broad timetable for their disposal. The Government will keep under review the progress of tribunals in disposing of appeals. The time taken to clear individual appeals will vary with the particular circumstances of the appeal. It would not be practicable to set a time within which an individual appeal should be settled.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Official Information

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the statutory provisions restricting disclosure of official information, other than the Official Secrets Acts, which came into force after the publication of the list of provisions in appendix V of the Franks report, Cmnd 5104;

(2) if he will publish a list of the clauses containing provisions bearing upon the disclosure of official information which appear in Government Bills published since 2 April 1990.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on 2 November 1992, at column 55.

ENVIRONMENT

Tenants Cash Incentive Scheme

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount used by each local authority in the United Kingdom, as a percentage of its housing budget, to fund the tenants cash incentive scheme in the last financial year.

Mr. Baldry: The available information for authorities in England operating approved cash incentive schemes in 1991-92 is given in the table. Corresponding data for authorities in other parts of the United Kingdom are the responsibility of the Secretaries of State for the territorial Departments.

Local authority expenditure on cash incentive schemes in England in 1991-92 as a proportion of total housing capital expenditure by local authority

Local authority	*Percentage*
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	
Hambleton	2
East Midlands	
Daventry	1
East Northamptonshire	4
South Kesteven	1
Eastern	
Aylesbury Vale	5
Basildon	5
Castle Point	19
Colchester	11
Dacorum	8
East Hertfordshire	8
Huntingdonshire	1
Luton	6
North Hertfordshire	1
Peterborough	2
Rochford	35
Southend-on-Sea	6
St. Albans	6
Stevenage	5
Three Rivers	2
Watford	4
Greater London	
Barnet	4
Brent	11
Bromley	6
Camden	2
Croydon	13
Ealing	13
Enfield	13
Hackney	3
Hammersmith and Fulham	4
Haringey	5
Harrow	14
Havering	4
Hillingdon	13
Hounslow	12
Islington	8
Kensington and Chelsea	10
Kingston upon Thames	15
Lambeth	4
Lewisham	2
Merton	6
Redbridge	2
Richmond upon Thames	9
Southwark	2
Sutton	19
Tower Hamlets	1
Waltham Forest	5
Wandsworth	9
Westminster	9
South East	
Adur	8
Arun	2
Bracknell Forest	4
Brighton	4
Canterbury	3
Cherwell	3
Chichester	3
Dartford	7
Dover	8
Eastbourne	10
East Hampshire	2
Eastleigh	3
Elmbridge	6
Fareham	7
Gillingham	4
Gosport	6
Gravesham	—
Guildford	1
Hart	9
Hastings	5
Havant	6
Horsham	11
Hove	5
Lewes	1
Maidstone	7
Mole Valley	10
New Forest	3
Oxford	2
Portsmouth	8
Reading	6
Reigate and Banstead	5
Rother	5
Rushmoor	7
Runnymede	4
Shepway	2
Slough	8
Southampton	2
Spelthorne	5
Tandridge	9
Test Valley	4

Local authority	Percentage
Thanet	4
Tunbridge Wells	4
Vale of White Horse	3
Wealden	2
Woking	7
Wokingham	13
Worthing	5
South West	
Bournemouth	2
Carrick	4
Exeter	1
Kennet	—
Mendip	2
Poole	1
Restmorel	—
Stroud	2
Teignbridge	1
Woodspring	1
West Midlands	
Malvern Hills	—
Solihull	—
Stafford	1
Wyre Forest	1

Source: 1992 HIP2 returns submitted by local authorities
'—' = less than ½ per cent.

Disclosure of Information

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have been carried out under section 206 of the Water Industry Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Neither my Department nor the Office of Water Services collect information about prosecutions under the provisions of section 206 of the Water Industry Act 1991. No such prosecutions have been otherwise brought to my attention.

Construction Industry Inquiry

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure representation of client interests in the construction industry inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We are having discussions with several bodies about the representation of public and private client interests in the proposed review. We hope to finalise the arrangements shortly.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the terms of reference of the inquiry into the construction industry will include retention money reform.

Mr. Baldry: The purpose of the proposed review is to consider and make recommendations to the Government, the construction industry and its clients on those matters that cause conflict in the shape of procurement and contracts. The question of retention money is one of many matters that we would expect to be included.

Multi-occupied Houses

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what records local authorities are required to keep on the environmental standard of multi-occupied houses and, specifically, on whether such accommodation has adequate cooking facilities.

Sir George Young: There is no general requirement for local authorities to keep such records. However, a local authority must maintain a register of all notices served under section 352 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. An authority may serve a notice under this section where it considers that the facilities in a house in multiple occupation—HMO—render the house unfit for occupation. The requirement includes adequate facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food.

Local authorities have the power under section 346 of the Act to set up a registration scheme for the HMOs in their area. The Department's model scheme suggests that the register should contain details about each house, including the number of rooms in the house used exclusively as kitchens or sculleries and bathrooms, and the number of sanitary and washing facilities.

Bosnian Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Bosnian refugees have been housed in local authority accommodation; and how much money has been allocated to replacing that accommodation *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the city of Nottingham.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not hold details of the national origins of people allocated accommodation under the homelessness legislation. As the Minister for Housing and Planning, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), announced on 16 November 1992, at column *54*, the Government are making available a special grant for local authorities faced with exceptional costs arising from the influx of refugees from the former Yugoslav republic; the distribution of that grant has not yet been decided.

Pollution Control

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to review the implementation and enforcement of the integrated pollution control system established through the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Integrated pollution control is being phased in between 1991 and 1996. We are satisfied that it is being properly implemented and enforced by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and that its introduction is proceeding according to timetable. It is our policy to keep this, and all other systems for which the Department is responsible, under review.

Composting Units

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to provide financial assistance to *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* farmers and *(c)* private companies in the setting up of commercial composting units.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities, in partnership with the private sector where appropriate, are able to apply for supplementary credit approvals for recycling projects. Private companies which are developing new recycling technologies or processes may seek grants under the ETIS and DEMOS schemes. While my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has the responsibility for providing grants to farmers for works to prevent pollution from agricultural waste, he has no plans to extend these grants to businesses of this type.

Packaging

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his targets for reducing the overall amount of packaging materials used to package goods under the EC directive on packaging and packaging waste.

Mr. Maclean: The Commission's proposal for a directive is still in its early stages. It is not yet clear what the final shape of any directive that is adopted may be. I consider therefore that it is premature for the United Kingdom to set targets now given that the current proposals may be changed substantially during negotiations between member states. We already have a target of recycling 25 per cent. of household waste, a substantial amount of the recyclable proportion of which is packaging materials.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often bed-and-breakfast accommodation, occupied by homeless families, is required to be inspected by an environmental health officer; and what are the provisions under which such an inspection takes place.

Sir George Young: Section 605 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended, requires a local authority to consider the housing conditions in their district in this regard at least once a year. It is for each authority to decide on an inspection programme in the light of circumstances.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been undertaken to establish how many homeless households living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation have refused offers of permanent accommodation since 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has conducted no research on this matter in relation to the period in question.

Local Authority Tendering

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he gives to local authorities involved in placing work out to tender with the private sector concerning the notification of changes by local authorities to the original specification once the original invitation to tender is issued and the tendering process is under way; and if he will list the relevant statutes.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend has not issued any guidance to local authorities on this specific aspect of tendering procedure.

The statutes relevant to public purchasing are:

—for compulsory competitive tendering:

The Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980
The Local Government Act 1988
The Local Government Act 1982
and regulations made under those Acts.

—for more general purchasing, regulations made to implement in the United Kingdom:

(European Economic Community) Directive 71/305/EEC, as amended by 89/440/EEC. (Public Sector Works Directive)
Directive 77/62/EEC, as amended by 88/295/EEC. (Supplies Directive)
Directive 92/50/EEC. (Services Directive)

Architects Registration Council

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to abolish the Architects Registration Council.

Sir George Young: The Department has received the report by Mr. John Warne CB of his review of the Architects (Registration) Acts 1931 to 1969. We are at present considering its recommendations and will make an announcement shortly.

Tyre Dumps

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tyre dumps it is estimated will be subject to the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 when these are introduced on 1 April 1993; and what additional financial provision is to be made to the local waste regulation authorities by his Department.

Mr. Maclean: Under legislation in the Control of Pollution Act 1974, sites used for the deposit of waste tyres must be licensed for that purpose. This will continue to be the case after the introduction of the new waste management licensing system in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, scheduled for 1 April 1993; unless exempt, all waste tyre dumps will be subject to the requirements of this system. However, it is proposed that where the waste tyres are being kept in limited quantities prior to recycling, such storage should be exempted from the requirements.

At the same time as the new licensing system is introduced, a scheme of fees and charges will be made, which will enable waste regulation authorities to recover their reasonable administrative costs incurred in considering licence applications and supervising licensed activities. Thus authorities will be provided with an income in respect of activities which for the most part they already carry out.

Furthermore, resources of £12 million have been set aside for supplementary credit approvals to local authorities for landfill gas and contaminated land remedial works in the financial year 1993-94.

Council Tax

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set a target time in which valuation tribunals in England will complete a council tax band appeal.

Mr. Robin Squire: When the number of council tax appeals arising in 1993 is known, we will agree with the valuation tribunal service and the Valuation Office agency a broad timetable for disposing of them. We will then keep progress under review. Since the time taken to clear

individual appeals will vary with the particular circumstances of the case, it would not be practicable to set a specific deadline for each one.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against the decision, announced on 13 November 1992, to reduce the urban programme for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 97 letters received up to and including 4 January 1993, to which I referred in my answer to the hon. Member of 11 January, at column *655*, either sought clarification or expressed concern about the new arrangements for the urban programme. In reply, we have made clear that there will be a substantial urban programme in 1993-94 amounting to £176 million and that we have demonstrated our continuing commitment to urban regeneration by increasing planned resources for my Department's urban group of programmes for 1993-94 by over £90 million; total spending will be over £1 billion.

Right to Buy

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is available on the recent right-to-buy performance of London authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The right-to-buy performance of London authorities has been monitored by my Department for a number of years. Annual monitoring is carried out of each authority's performance at the end of September, with poor performers submitting additional reports on a monthly basis. Data from the latest survey is given in the table.

I am pleased to report that data for September 1992 show that the number of tenants whose applications are being unduly delayed continues to decline. Across London as a whole delays beyond statutory deadlines have fallen by 60 per cent. from 2,192 to 884. This compares with more than 15,000 delayed cases in March 1989 when the Government's "tenants sanctions" procedures came into effect.

Only two authorities—Hackney and Lambeth—were monitored on a monthly basis in 1992. I am glad to say that the performance of both authorities is now very much better and it has been possible for me to agree that monthly monitoring of Lambeth should cease. Monthly monitoring of Hackney continues, but will also cease if Hackney's improved performance is maintained.

RTB2 and S.125 delays monitoring exercise September 1992

Monthly monitored boroughs	*(1) RTB2 delays September 1992*	*(2) S.125 delays September 1992*	*(3) RTB2 and S.125 delays September 1991*	*(4) RTB2 and S.125 delays September 1992*	*(5) Difference between column 3 and 4*	*(6) Total sales figures 1991-92*
Hackney	1	43	293	44	249	615
Lambeth	11	12	869	23	864	913
Sub Total	12	55	1,162	67	—	1,528
Average	6	28	581	34	—	764
Non-monitored boroughs						
City	2	1	1	3	(2)	53
Barking	1	3	2	4	(2)	431
Barnet	1	1	4	2	2	[1]220
Bexley	0	2	5	2	3	118
Brent	2	7	16	9	7	[1]349
Bromley	0	0	4	0	4	348
Camden	2	6	17	8	9	[1]334
Croydon	0	0	0	0	0	372
Ealing	2	17	23	19	4	[1]481
Enfield	2	15	12	17	(5)	314
Greenwich	15	69	106	84	22	369
Hammersmith	0	77	88	77	11	242
Haringey	9	7	26	16	10	[1]363
Harrow	0	2	58	2	56	138
Havering	0	0	0	0	0	[2]249
Hillingdon	5	39	31	44	(13)	[2]609
Hounslow	2	45	58	47	11	353
Islington	64	42	149	106	43	[1]403
Kensington	2	46	39	48	(9)	[1]120
Kingston	0	7	20	7	13	120
Lewisham	1	18	74	19	55	546
Merton	0	0	0	0	0	214
Newham	33	85	79	118	(39)	[1]340
Redbridge	0	0	0	0	0	205
Richmond	0	13	13	13	0	205
Southwark	55	74	128	129	(1)	[1]582
Sutton	0	13	16	13	3	148
Tower Hamlets	0	0	5	0	5	[1]363
Waltham Forest	2	26	37	28	9	189
Wandsworth	0	1	3	1	2	[1]840
Westminster	0	1	16	1	15	445
Sub Total	200	617	1,030	817	—	10,063

Monthly monitored boroughs	(1) RTB2 delays September 1992	(2) S.125 delays September 1992	(3) RTB2 and S.125 delays September 1991	(4) RTB2 and S.125 delays September 1992	(5) Difference between column 3 and 4	(6) Total sales figures 1991-92
Average	6	20	33	26	—	325
Totals	212	672	2,192	884	—	11,591
London Average	6	20	66	27	—	351

Note:
Brent, Camden, Haringey, Hounslow, Islington, Lewisham, Newham, Richmond, Southwark and Tower Hamlets were monitored up to September 1991.
[1]Incomplete Data. Annual estimates based on available quarterly figures.
[2]Data from 1990-91 returns as figures for 1991-92 not available.
Source: LRH7 monitoring exercise and Cartwright Tables produced by HDS.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the sparsity indicator for standard spending assessments has increased in value against the grant-related expenditure allocation position.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The allowance for sparsity within standard spending assessments follows extensive statistical analysis and the consideration of other evidence provided by local authority representatives. It reflects the Government's current view of the additional costs of providing local services associated with population sparsity.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the standard level of service is defined for the purpose of standard spending assessments; and how this standard is arrived at.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The standard level of service is that which is consistent with the Government's view of the appropriate total amount of revenue expenditure for all local authorities —that is, "total standard spending". This figure takes into account the various pressures on local authority services, any changes in local authority functions or new burdens, and the potential for improved efficiency in service delivery. It also reflects the Government's view of what taxpayers, both locally and nationally, can afford.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what economies of scale are identified within the standard spending assessment formulae.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* Standard spending assessments take account of a wide range of indicators of the physical, demographic, and social characteristics of local authorities. We have no evidence that expenditure needs are affected by the size of an authority in itself, over and above the extent to which size is already reflected in the existing indicators such as population.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account is taken of the distribution of low-paid groups, other than recipients of income support, in calculating standard spending assessments.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* There is no explicit reference within the calculation of standard spending assessments to the distribution of low-paid groups, other than through indicators based on income support claimants. However, the use of the children's and all ages social indices within the calculation of the personal social services and all other services elements of the standard spending assessment reflects the fact that the costs of providing some services are higher in areas with poorer social conditions relative to those with above average social conditions.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each county, London and metropolitan borough the standard spending assessment per person for the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Robin Squire: A table containing the information requested has been placed in the Library. This also includes a column showing standard spending assessments per head for 1992-93 adjusted for changes in function which are consistent with those figures shown in the table placed in the Library in response to a question from the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), *Official Report*, 1 December 1992, column *155*.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* those authorities which have made representations about his local government finance proposals for 1993-94 (i) in writing and (ii) by way of a delegation to Ministers, *(b)* a summary of the points made by each authority, *(c)* the duration of each meeting and *(d)* any ministerial responses to the representations, including any promised changes in relevant notional amounts.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* The tables list authorities which have made representations to myself and other Ministers in my Department on my proposals for the local government finance settlement generally and specifically on my proposals for relevant notional amounts.

I intend to present the settlement reports embodying my decisions to the House shortly. A summary of points made by each authority can only be prepared at disproportionate cost. Records are not made of the duration of meetings. As regards notional amounts, I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 12 November 1992, at columns *962-63*.

Table A—local authorities in England from which representations were received on the proposed local government finance settlement for 1993-94 by the Secretary of

State for the Environment in writing between 26 November 1992 and 18 January 1993 other than those specifically on the subject of notional amounts.

All purpose
Isles of Scilly

Single purpose authorities
Merseyside Fire
West Midlands Fire
South Yorkshire Fire
West Yorkshire Fire
West Yorkshire Police
West Mercia Police

London
Barnet
Brent
Bromley
Camden
Croydon
Ealing
Enfield
Greenwich
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Islington
Kingston upon Thames
Lambeth
Merton
Newham
Redbridge
Richamond upon Thames
Southwark
Tower Hamlets
Wandsworth
Westminster

Metropolitan Districts
Barnsley
Birmingham City
Bradford City
Bury
Calderdale
Coventry City
Dudley
Gateshead
Kirklees
Leeds City
Liverpool City
Manchester City
North Tyneside
Oldham
Rochdale
St. Helens
Sandwell
Sefton
Sheffield City
Solihull
South Tyneside
Stockport
Sunderland
Wakefield City
Walsall
Wolverhampton

Shire Counties
Avon
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cleveland
Cornwall
Derbyshire
Devon
Dorset
Durham
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Hereford
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Norfolk
Northumberland
North Yorkshire
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Shropshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Suffolk
Surrey
Warwickshire
West Sussex

Shire districts
Adur
Alnwick
Ashfield
Basildon
Bath City
Beverley
Blackburn
Blackpool
Blyth Valley
Bolsover
Bournemouth
Braintree
Brighton
Bristol City
Broadland
Burnley
Cambridge City
Caradon
Castle Morpeth
Castle Point
Chelmsford
Cheltenham
Chester City
Chesterfield
Chiltern
Chorley
Christchurch
Colchester
Congleton
Copeland
Crawley
Dacorum
Darlington
Daventry
Derby City
Eastbourne
East Devon
East Dorset
East Hertfordshire
Eastleigh
East Lindsey
East Yorkshire
Ellesmere Port and Neston
Epsom and Ewell
Fylde
Gedling
Glanford
Great Grimsby
Great Yarmouth
Halton
Hambleton
Harborough
Harlow

Harrogate
Hartlepool
Havant
Hertsmere
Hinckley & Bosworth
Holderness
Hove
Hyndburn
Ipswich
Kettering
Kingston-upon-Hull
Kingswood
Lancaster
Leicester City
Lewes
Luton
Macclesfield
Malvern Hills
Mansfield
Mid Bedfordshire
Mid Suffolk
Mid Sussex
Milton Keynes
Newark & Sherwood
Northampton
Northavon
North Cornwall
North Hertfordshire
North Kesteven
North Shropshire
North Warwickshire
Norwich City
Nottingham City
Nuneaton & Bedworth
Oswestry
Oxford City
Pendle
Penwith
Plymouth City
Poole
Portsmouth City
Purbeck
Reading
Ribble Valley
Rochester-upon-Medway City
Rochford
Rossendale
Rother
Rugby
Rushcliffe
Ryedale
Salisbury
Selby
Shepway
Shrewsbury and Atcham
Slough
Southampton
South Derbyshire
Southend-upon Sea
South Lakeland
South Norfolk
South Northamptonshire
South Ribble
South Staffordshire
South Wight
Stafford
Stoke-on-Trent
Stratford-on-Avon
Suffolk Coastal
Surrey Heath
Teignbridge
Tendring
Thamesdown
Thanet
Three Rivers
Tonbridge & Malling
Uttlesford
Wansdyke
Warrington
Watford
Wear Valley
Welwyn Hatfield
West Lancashire
West Lindsey
West Wiltshire
Weymouth & Portland
Windsor & Maidenhead
Wokingham
Woodspring
Worcester City
Wrekin
Wyre
Wyre Forest
York City

Table B—local authorities in England from which representations were received by the Secretary of State for the Environment specifically on relevant notional amounts for the local government finance settlement for 1993-94 in writing between 26 November 1992 and 18 January 1993

Inner London
City of London
Camden
Greenwich
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Lambeth
Lewisham
Southwark (late)
Tower Hamlets
Wandsworth

Outer London
Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Brent
Bromley
Enfield
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hillingdon
Merton
Newham
Richmond

Metropolitan districts
Bury
Manchester
Oldham
Rochdale
Salford
Stockport
Tameside
Wigan
Sefton
St. Helens
Barnsley
Doncaster
Sheffield
Gateshead•
Sunderland
Birmingham
Coventry
Sandwell
Walsall
Calderdale
Leeds
Wakefield

Police authorities
Northumbria

Shire districts
Allerdale
Ashfield
Ashford
Blackpool
Blyth Valley
Bolsover
Boothferry
Braintree

Bridgnorth
Broxtowe
Canterbury
Carlisle
Castle Point
Castle Morpeth
Cherwell
Chester-le-Street
Chesterfield
Chiltern
Christchurch
Colchester
Crawley
Dacorum
Dartford
Daventry
East Hampshire
East Lindsey
East Devon
East Hertfordshire
Eastleigh
Ellesmere Port
Fenland
Forest Heath
Fylde
Gosport
Harborough
Harlow
Harrogate
Hastings
Kettering
Kingston-upon-Hill
Lancaster
Leicester
Leominster
Maidstone
Malvern Hills
Mansfield
Middlesbrough
North East Derbyshire
North Shropshire
North Warwickshire
New Forest
Northampton
Norwich
Penwith
Rochester-upon-Medway
Rother
Rushcliffe
Ryedale
Salisbury
Scarborough
Sevenoaks
South Somerset
St. Albans
Stafford
Tendring
Thurrock
Tonbridge and Malling
Uttlesford
West Lindsey
Warwick
Watford
Waveney
Wealden
Weymouth
Worthing
Wychavon
Wyre
Wyre Forest

Counties

Avon
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cleveland
Cornwall
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
DorsetDurham
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Lancashire
Lincolnshire
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
North Yorkshire
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Shropshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Suffolk
Warwickshire
West Sussex

Table C—Local authorities in England from which representations were made on the proposed local government finance settlement for 1993-94 in person to the Secretary of State for the Environment and his Ministers.

London Boroughs

Barnet
Brent
Camden
Enfield
Greenwich
Hackney
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hillingdon
Kingston-upon-Thames
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton
Newham
Richmond-upon-Thames
Sutton

Metropolitan Districts

Barnsley
Birmingham
Bury
Coventry
Manchester
North Tyneside
Salford
St. Helens
Sandwell
Sheffield
Solihull
Wigan
Liverpool city council

Single Purpose Authorities

Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence
South Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence
West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence
West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence
West Yorkshire Police

Shire counties

Avon
Berkshire
Cambridgeshire
Cleveland
Cornwall
Devon
Dorset
Derbyshire
Gloucestershire
Hertfordshire
Isle of Wight
Lancashire

Lincolnshire
Northumberland
Nottinghamshire
Shropshire
Staffordshire
Surrey
West Sussex

Shire Districts
Adur
Blyth Valley
Bournemouth
Braintree
Copeland
Darlington
Derby
Eastbourne
East Cambridgeshire
East Dorset
Harborough
Harlow
Havant
Lancaster
Lewes
Luton
Malvern Hills
Middlesbrough
Milton Keynes
Northampton
North Cornwall
North Kesteven
Nottingham
Oswestry
Pendle
Portsmouth
Ryedale
South Wight
Stoke-on-Trent
Tendring
Wansbeck
Welwyn Hatfield
Wrekin
Glanford

All Purpose Authority
Scilly Isles

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the requirement of section 67(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for an authority to hold a full council meeting in order to calculate its tax base used in the section 33 calculation of the basic amount of council tax; how many authorities have been obliged to hold special council meetings for this purpose; and what plans he has to seek a change in the requirement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* We have received several representations on this matter. We do not have information on each authority's arrangements for council meetings, which are matters for the authorities concerned. We have no plans to change the requirements for calculating tax bases.

Tower Blocks, Enfield

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received from the London borough of Enfield following publication of the Building Research Establishment's report into unsafe tower blocks in Enfield;

(2) what conclusions he has drawn from the report from the Building Research Establishment into the safety standards of tower blocks in Enfield; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The London borough of Enfield has discussed the Building Research Establishment's initial assessment of consultants' reports with my Department. BRE's current work for the borough follows our long-standing recommendations on the appraisal of high-rise blocks. Any eventual findings will be taken into account when considering the borough's housing investment programme.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statistics he has for the number of disconnections of water supplied to inhabited domestic premises for the year 1990-91 and subsequently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) on 4 November 1992, at columns *234-35*.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the handling method for the proposed dumping of radioactive materials from RAF Sealand accords with the practice embodied in the licence for the tip at Arpley Meadows landfill site in Warrington; what precautions are being taken to prevent the radioactivity leaching into the River Mersey and the surrounding water table; and what measures will be taken to protect those people working at or near the site from possible contamination from radioactive materials.

Mr. Maclean: The draft approval document referred to the use of drums to contain this waste. However, at the request of Cheshire county council and the waste disposal contractor, the approval conditions will be amended to allow this waste to be deposited as a loose damp material. The Arpley Meadows site conditions will then be met.

This site has previously been authorised to receive radioactive waste from other organisations. The very low level of radioactivity present in this waste and the low water solubility of the radioactivity of this waste means that this method of disposal should not present any additional environmental problems. The loose material will be damped down before being deposited to minimise dust emissions from the tipping operation.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what surveys and hazard assessments have been carried out prior to the dumping at the Arpley Meadows landfill site in Warrington and what were their results; and on what grounds authorisation was granted for the dumping of radioactive waste at the site.

Mr. Maclean: The radioactivity and radiological effects of this waste have been assessed as part of the approval procedure. The results of these assessments are that the total radioactivity contained in this waste is less than 100 MBq which is less than the radioactivity contained in the average garden or given off by granite rocks in Cornwall.

Since the RAF, and therefore the Crown, is sending this material for disposal, approval and not authorisation is given for this disposal of waste. This approval has not yet been granted. The proposed grounds for approval are that the material will be deposited as a loose damp material,

that the material will be buried at least 1·5 metres below the surface of the site, that the waste is landfilled at an area within the site specified by the site operator and that the waste is accompanied by a competent person during the transit from the premises to the waste disposal site and during the tipping operation.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total level of radioactivity in the material from RAF Sealand proposed to be dumped at the Arpley Meadows landfill site in Warrington; if he will require the radioactive material to be dumped in sealed containers; how regularly the area will be checked for radioactive leakage and for excessive levels of radioactivity; and what will be considered the maximum safe level of radioactivity at the dump.

Mr. David Maclean: The waste from RAF Sealand contains less than 100 MBq of radioactivity which is expected to be present in building rubble and overalls and will be contained in at most two covered skips. In the draft approval document, reference was made to the use of sealed metal containers. The disposal of such containers can cause problems due to delayed compaction within the waste disposal site and is therefore not now standard practice for the Arpley Meadows site. The waste disposal contractor and the county council have requested that drums should not be used. Considering the level of radioactivy present in this waste, approval for dumping damp loose material from skips was proposed.

It has been recommended that the monitoring of the leachate from this site be incorporated into the HMIP monitoring program for radioactive waste disposal sites. From the assessments which have been carried out, the site operator, the waste disposal contractor and HMIP consider that the proposed disposal of this material to this site is an acceptable and suitable disposal route and location.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the results of the tests on radioactivity at the Arpley Meadows landfill site after the dumping of radioactive material from RAF Sealand; and if he will allow the testing of radioactivity levels by independent bodies at the site after the dumping of radioactive materials.

Mr. David Maclean: The results of tests on radioactivity at the site will be given to the Environmental Planning Department of Cheshire county council. The results from the site monitoring will be made public if the site is incorporated into the HMIP monitoring program—radioactive substances. The decision about testing by other bodies rests with the site operator who controls access to the site.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information his Department has on the duration of the different client groups drawing of supplementary benefit/income support beyond that published in "Social Security Statistics 1992".

Mr. Burt: "Social Security Statistics 1992"—SSS 1992—is based upon data from the May 1991 income support annual statistical enquiry—ASE—which is the most recent information available. Series 12 of the tables within the 1991 ASE give a more detailed analysis of durations of claims than that contained in SSS 1992. Copies of both publications are in the Library.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants and dependants dependent on supplementary benefit/income support there were in each year since 1989; and if he will break down this total of each of the main client groups and express these figures as a percentage of the total.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table.

Numbers of claimants, partners and dependants receiving Income Support, by client group, 1989-91 and percentage of the total

	1989		*1990*		*1991*	
	000s	*Per cent.*	*000s*	*Per cent.*	*000s*	*Per cent.*
Unemployed	2,176	31	1,864	27	2,393	31
of which:						
Claimants	1,216		1,063		1,335	
Partners	353		298		390	
Dependants	607		503		668	
Pensioners	1,868	27	1,953	28	1,820	23
of which:						
Claimants	1,607		1,675		1,575	
Partners	236		250		213	
Dependants	25		28		32	
Disabled	458	7	519	7	596	8
of which:						
Claimants	290		330		375	
Partners	73		76		90	
Dependants	95		113		131	
Lone parents	2,056	29	2,177	31	2,399	31
of which:						
Claimants	756		793		871	
Partners	—		—		—	
Dependants	1,300		1,384		1,528	
Others	465	7	509	7	539	7
of which:						

	1989 000s	Per cent.	1990 000s	Per cent.	1991 000s	Per cent.
Claimants	293		319		331	
Partners	61		67		70	
Dependants	111		123		138	
Totals	7,023	100	7,022	100	7,747	100
of which:						
Claimants	4,161		4,180		4,487	
Partners	724		691		763	
Dependants	2,138		2,151		2,497	

Notes:
1. *Source:* Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiries May 1989-91.
2. All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. Figures, including percentages, may not sum due to rounding.

Water Charges

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *70*, what plans he has to extend the system of direct payments to water companies by DSS offices for claimants;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *70*, if he will list those DSS offices which currently do not make direct payments for benefit claimants to water companies; and if he will make a statement;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *70*, if he will list those DSS offices which currently make direct payments for benefit claimants to water companies; and if he will make a statement;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *70*, if he will list for each DSS regional office the number of people who meet the criteria in paragraph 7 of schedule 9 of the Claims and Payments Regulations 1987 and have direct payments made to the water companies by the DSS.

Mr. Burt: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 14 December 1992 at column *72*.

War Pensions

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total value of war pensions paid to war pensioners living within the boundary of the Barnsley metropolitan borough council, together with a breakdown of the number of pensioners receiving pensions at the various rates.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefits Agency (Correspondence)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the Benefits Agency replied to the letter of the hon. Member for Caernarfon, of 18 August 1992, addressed to him; what assessment he makes of the speed with which such letters are answered; and if he now makes it his practice to answer letters from hon. Members directly rather than referring them to the Benefits Agency.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Member wrote two letters on 18 August 1992 about the claims to disability living allowance—DLA—of his constituents. The chief executive of the Benefits Agency, Mr. Bichard, replied to one on 9 December 1992 and the other on 18 December 1992. The claims in both cases had been resolved in September 1992. While apologising for the delays in replying, Mr. Bichard explained that this was because of the high level of correspondence on DLA in recent months.

Ministers have agreed with Mr. Bichard an average response rate of 20 working days from receipt of Members' letters and the agency has taken steps to achieve this target as soon as possible. Ministers will continue to refer Members' letters on social security benefits relating to operational matters to the relevant chief executive to reply under the arrangements which apply to all executive agencies.

Benefit Reductions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to alter the reduction in social security benefits resulting from failure to pay contributions or receive credits for periods of four weeks or less.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* We have no plans to change the contribution conditions relating to the contributory social security benefits.

Civil Servants (Bicycles)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the current conditions on which civil servants in his Department are granted salary advances to enable the purchase of bicycles for home-to-office travel; if he will make a statement on the current conditions in each agency of his Department; what plans he has to change the conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Staff in junior grades in the Department, including its executive agencies, may apply for an advance of salary up to a limit of £100, repayable over 12 months, for the purchase of a bicycle for home to office travel. Advances are available to officers with at least two months service, other than casual employees, up to and including the executive officer grade or its equivalent.

The Department is currently considering how to take up the freedom, announced by my hon. Friend the Financial Security to the Treasury on 16 December 1992, at columns *285-86*, to decide its own rules on the size of advance, eligibility and repayment.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims to date for the disability living allowance have been completed *(a)* with the assistance of telephone calls and *(b)* with the assistance of visits made by the forms completion service staff in the disability benefits centres.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply, 27 October 1992, c. 751-52]:* The chief executive has written further to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 20 January 1993:

I wrote to you on 27 October in reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social security concerning the number of people claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) who had help completing their claim forms either with a telephone call or a visit from the Forms Completion Service staff of the Disability Benefit Centres.

I should explain that the figures provided include numbers for assistance given for DLA *and* Attendance Allowance. We are unable to provide the figure for DLA only as you requested.

Please accept my apologies for any confusion that this may have caused. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

HEALTH

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on how many NHS beds within all regional health authorities are funded by commercial sponsors, charitable and philanthropic organisations.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not collected centrally. Successive Governments have encouraged voluntary financial support for the national health service at local levels. This can include bed sponsorship arrangements, but is often provided in ways which cannot be directly related to beds. The sums involved are welcomed as an additional source of revenue for the NHS but nationally are small in comparison with central funding.

Drug Prescribing

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *412*, what has been the annual increase, in percentage terms, of the cost of the indicative prescribing scheme for NHS doctors in 1991-92 compared with the previous year; and if she will give the figure in real terms, deflating by the price index for NHS medicines.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available because the indicative prescribing scheme for general practitioners only came into effect in April 1991.

Overseas Adoption Helpline

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many inquiries have been received by the overseas adoption helpline since the statement of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), on Bosnian orphans in early January; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what is the current response time on the overseas adoptions helpline; and if she will make a statement;

(3) how many inquiries have been answered by the overseas adoption helpline since it was set up; and if she will make a statement;

(4) what representations she has received about the level of service from the overseas adoption helpline.

Mr. Yeo: The overseas adoption helpline began operating on 11 May 1992. It had received 1,500 telephone calls by 13 January 1993, 450 of which were received between 4 and 13 January. Callers are currently being advised that a response may take two weeks. I have received no written representations about the level of service except for the letter from my hon. Friend of the 13 January which has recently been received in my office.

Provider Units (Contracts)

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken by her Department to monitor the cessation of contracts with provider units from health authorities in England in the current financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The management of national health service contracts at local level is for district health authorities and provider units, with regional health authorities taking an overview.

Laparoscopic Surgery

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what records are centrally held on laparoscopic surgery which has not been properly executed.

Mr. Sackville: Data are not collected centrally. We have, however, allocated £42 million to the hospital and community health services this year for medical audit and this is being used to improve and assure high standards of patient care. Some of this money is being used to support the Royal College of Surgeon's confidential comparative audit services which includes a study of laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

Dentistry

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to announce her conclusions on the Bloomfield review on the future system for the remuneration of dentists.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Nigel Evans) on 18 January at column *98*.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate her Department has made of the total fixed capital in the hands of the dentists in Cornwall and of the return on that capital over the last five years;

(2) if she will publish the assumptions used by her Department when seeking to estimate the fixed costs of a dental practice in different parts of England.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have made no such estimates. Average national health service dental practice expenses in Great Britain are estimated each year by the Dental Rates Study Group and full reimbursement of these costs to dentists on an average basis is included in dental fees.

The return on capital is one of the factors that the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration takes into account when recommending target average net income for dentists.

Cystitis

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in England and Wales were recorded as having suffered from cystitis in 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The incidence of this condition is not routinely recorded centrally. In 1981-82 the third national morbidity survey showed that in England and Wales 8·5 men per thousand and 43·8 women per thousand received treatment for cystitis.

Mental Illness

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many mental illness hospitals in England and Wales are planned to be closed by 1997; and what will be the resulting loss of beds;

(2) how many mental illness hospitals in England and Wales are planned to be closed in 1993; and how many bed spaces will thereby be lost.

Mr. Yeo: The information is not held centrally. The provision of services for the mentally ill in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many places were provided in the community for schizophrenic patients in 1991 and 1992; and how many will be provided in 1993.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not available centrally.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the contracts awarded by her Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Sackville: Five contracts have been awarded to KPMG Management Consultants by the Department in the past 12 months they are

1. Personal Social Services Information Strategy Unit Costs;
2. Market Testing Programme for Department of Health;
3. Decision Support System for Departmental London Office Accommodation Strategy;
4. Implementation of Community Care Act—independent sector involvement in community care planning;
5. Third Wave Hospital Trusts—financial assessment.

Romanian Adoption Committee

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when the Romanian adoption committee is to close; and for what reason it is closing;

(2) what effect the closure of the Romanian adoption committee will have on the processes of the adoption of Romanian orphans by British couples.

Mr. Yeo: The Romanian Committee for Adoptions has informed officials that there are no moves to close the operations of the committee.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the names of those general practices which have indicated interest in becoming a third or fourth wave fund-holding practice in the Bexley and Greenwich health authority area and the Dartford and Gravesham health authority area; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The South East Thames regional health authority is responsible for the management of the general practitioner fund-holding scheme in these areas. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. P. W. Barker, the RHA chairman, for details.

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the general practices which are fund holding in the Hemsworth constituency.

Dr. Mawhinney: The management of the general practitioner fund-holding scheme in Hemsworth is the responsibility of the Yorkshire regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Sir Bryan Askew, for details.

Community Social Care

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those local authorities which bid successfully for funding to develop independent community social care initiatives, together with the initiatives proposed by each authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The social services authorities invited to take part in this initiative, together with an outline of their proposals, are:

Barnsley
The build up of a new range of independent care provision with the aim of securing at least a 20 per cent. share of the home care market within three years.

Cambridgeshire
The appointment of two Home Care Development Managers to help new providers assess the market and to test out new ideas.

Camden
Setting up an Independent Sector Development Team to develop a mixed economy of domiciliary care.

Devon
The establishment of Rural Outreach Projects to provide new services for younger people with physical or sensory disabilities who live in rural areas.

Essex
The build up of new services for older people from a range of existing bases in a rural area (the "Dengie project").

Gloucestershire
The appointment of a Development Officer to work with independent providers to establish new services for older people and for those with learning disabilities.

Hammersmith and Fulham
The development of a commercially sound community care agency to create, and deliver, a portfolio of services for black elders and their carers.

Lewisham
A joint project with Lewisham College to introduce a course in domiciliary care and enterprise skills for those who want to establish themselves as small local community care businesses.

Liverpool
The development of secure links with the independent sector, and to oversee a range of new ideas for older people and those with learning disabilities.

Newham
The development of new community care services for ethnic minority communities.

North Yorkshire
The development of local non-residential care to complement the expected reduction in demand for residential and nursing home care.

Richmond upon Thames
The appointment of an independent Organisations Coordinator to develop opportunities for, and a range of, home and respite care.

Rochdale
The appointment of a Development Officer, to be based with local Age Concern, to establish a new 24 hour help service, based on a network of existing private care homes, for older persons who are mentally ill.

Sandwell
The development of practical support services in inner city areas for those with dementia and for black elders without live-in carers.

Shropshire
The establishment of a Social Care Enterprise Agency to help the independent sector develop to the point where it can provide the range and quality of services which statutory authorities need to purchase.

The response to this initiative was encouraging—more than 100 bids—which shows the importance authorities rightly attach to developing the range of day and domiciliary services available locally.

Nicotine Patches

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review the procedures for licensing tobacco substitute patches and other products to prevent them from being sold prior to the licence being granted; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am satisfied with the licensing arrangements in place for the licensing of medicinal products. Any unlicensed product on sale, which is brought to the attention of the Medicines Control Agency as making medicinal claims, will be investigated by its enforcement unit.

Juveniles (Secure Units)

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average weekly cost of a juvenile stay *(a)* in care and *(b)* in a secure unit in 1992; and how the figure is calculated.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many secure places in children's homes are provided by each local authority.

Mr. Yeo: Information about the cost per week for children in care in England is set out in the table for the two main categories of placement.

The average cost is derived from the revenue expenditure 1990-91 divided by the average of the numbers of children in care at 31 March 1990 and 1991 under each accommodation heading.

Information about the costs for children accommodated in secure units in the form requested is not collected centrally.

Expenditure by local authorities in England on care 1990-91

Accommodation	*Average cost per child per week £*
Foster placements	102
Community homes	536

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's policy for providing secure accommodation for persistent juvenile offenders.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The Government are currently looking urgently at the adequacy of arrangements for dealing with a small minority of juvenile offenders who appear to be responsible for a disproportionate amount of recorded crime attributed to their age group. This review includes consideration of the need both for new powers for the courts and for new secure facilities.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bananas

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether it will be permissible under the proposed banana regime for retailers to import bananas directly;

(2) to what extent the position of the independent distributor has been safeguarded in the proposed banana regime.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Council has agreed the main provisions of a common regime to govern banana imports. Further provisions, including the precise basis for the distribution of licences where these will be required, have yet to be determined.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when claim forms for hill livestock compensatory allowance payments will be made available to farmers in north Yorkshire.

Mr. Curry: Claim forms and explanatory notes for the 1993 hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme are currently being sent to farmers in north Yorkshire who applied under the 1992 scheme.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the *(a)* actual and *(b)* real values of hill livestock compensatory amounts in each year since 1981.

Mr. Curry: This information is contained in tables 16 and 17 of the statistical data prepared for the 1992 "Autumn Review of the Economic Conditions in the Hills and Uplands" a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Wool

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the level of guaranteed price per kilo of wool in each of the last five years and the assessed level of guaranteed price per kilo of wool in each of the last five years and the assessed level of guaranteed price in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: The wool guarantee price for the 1992 and five previous clip years was:

Year	*Price p/kg*
1992	117
1991	120
1990	125
1989	129
1988	129
1987	129

Agricultural Training Board

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the Agricultural Training Board.

Mr. Curry: The recent industry consultation on the future status and operation of the Agricultural Training Board produced no firm consensus in favour of either the new proposals or for retaining the status quo. Agriculture Ministers are considering, in consultation with the board, the best way to proceed taking into account the needs of the industry and the funding available. My right hon. Friend expects to make a statement during February.

Set-aside Land

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration has been given by his Department to the possibility of using set-aside land for the purposes of producing vegetable-based biodiesel.

Mr. Curry: Oilseeds may be grown for biodiesel production both on arable land, with the benefit of the oilseed area payment and, where growers can contract to supply a processor, on set-aside land with the benefit of the lower set-aside payment.

Agricultural Returns

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 23 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *531*, if he will allow farmers to submit information to his Department in acres rather than hectares.

Mr. Curry: Most forms and returns submitted to this Department require the use of hectares. However, on certain returns, such as the agricultural and horticultural census return, information can be submitted in acres rather than hectares. This option is shown on the form or return concerned or in the explanatory note associated with it. Hectares are, however, gradually replacing acres as the only acceptable measurement on most such returns and there are no plans to reintroduce the use of acres for these purposes.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his best estimate of the number of fishing vessels daily fishing in the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas areas VIIa, VIIg and VIIf.

Mr. Curry: Surveillance aircraft record all fishing vessels seen in the area patrolled. Those records relate to all fishing vessels, of whatever nationality, spotted by the aircraft within British sea fisheries limits at the time of the patrol. The records do not necessarily include very small fishing boats working close inshore.

The following shows the number of fishing vessels recorded in the areas listed on one day in each month during 1992:

Month	*VIIa*	*VIIf and g*
January	206	30
February	61	37
March	101	44
April	88	76
May	95	47
June	103	61
July	128	54
August	93	66
September	104	43
October	125	48
November	52	41
December	91	49

There are many factors which will affect the numbers of vessels fishing on any particular day. Such factors include availability of fish, weather and the seasonality of fisheries.

Public Access

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many public access agreements have been concluded in England in each of the last three years in respect of Forestry Commission holdings sold to the private sector; and what percentage of total sales these figures represent.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The arrangements for securing continued public access to woodlands sold by the Forestry Commission were introduced in October 1991. Seven of the woodland areas considered under these arrangements have been sold so far, of which one was subject to an access agreement. This represents 14 per cent. of the sales concerned.

NORTHERN IRELAND

United States Government (Discussions)

13. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had about Northern Ireland with members of the incoming Clinton Administration.

17. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has planned with representatives of President Clinton regarding the United States policy on Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There have been no such meetings yet, but I hope to meet members of the new Administration in the coming months.

Housing (Grant Application Form)

14. Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what examination has been given to the grant application form of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Atkins: The design of the forms required for the renovation grants scheme is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive which is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the scheme.

However, I understand from the chief executive that the initial grant application form, known as a preliminary inquiry form, has recently been redesigned as a feature of the new grants scheme introduced to Northern Ireland on 1 October 1992 under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

Civil Liberties

16. Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations on civil liberties he has received from international human rights organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have received a number of representations from organisations with an interest in human rights, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. I am, of course, wholly committed to the protection of civil liberties throughout the community in Northern Ireland, where they have been inexcusably denied to so many people by the action of terrorists.

Security

18. Mr. Molyneaux: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham).

Unemployment

19. Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: At 17 December 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 105,420 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland, representing 14·4 per cent. of the work force.

Investment (Londonderry)

20. Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures are being taken to attract investment in Londonderry.

Mr. Atkins: The attraction of inward investment to high unemployment areas, including Londonderry, is a priority task for the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, which, through its offices at home and overseas, ensures that the many advantages which such areas offer are brought to the attention of potential investors. The IDB is grateful for the valuable support it receives from local business men and other community leaders. The success of this partnership was evident in the announcement last month by Seagate Technology that it intends to establish a high-tech project which will create 500 new jobs in Londonderry. This very welcome news follows recent announcements of investment by other major international companies which will create in excess of 450 more jobs.

Londonderry

21. Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures are being taken to regenerate the Londonderry economy.

Mr. Atkins: The Londonderry area benefits from the many measures currently being undertaken by Government to promote economic development throughout Northern Ireland. The Department of the Environment's Londonderry development officer provides a clear focus for all forms of regeneration in the area, including the Londonderry initiative. Furthermore, both the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit have Londonderry regional offices. The IDB has been successful in attracting 955 new jobs and £48 million in new investment to the area in 1992.

Bangor Hospital

22. Sir James Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to give the people of Bangor and surrounding areas the right to decide the future of Bangor hospital.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the management of services at Bangor hospital rests with the Eastern health and social services board. In June 1992 the Eastern board issued for consultation a paper entitled "Framework for General (Acute) Hospital Services within the Eastern Board Area". Comments and representations were invited from a broad range of interested groups and individuals including local MPs, district councils and health and social services councils. Since the consultation period ended on 30 September the board has been considering all the responses it has received, including those representative of the views of the people of Bangor. The board will issue a "Statement of Purchasing Intent", taking account of all the views and comments expressed, in the very near future.

Irish Republic (Discussions)

23. Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to meet representatives of the Government of the Irish Republic in the near future in order to discuss matters relating to the current economic, social and political circumstances of Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

25. Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to meet the Irish Prime Minister to discuss co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) earlier today.

Electricity Interconnector

24. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had regarding the electricity interconnector between Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: Apart from my discussions with the hon. Member on 13 October, I have had discussions with Commissioner Millan and the chairman and board of NIE plc. In my discussions I stressed the strategic importance of securing European Community grant assistance.

School Meals

26. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment has been made of the administrative costs for the school meals programme.

Mr. Hanley: The administrative costs of the school meals service are included in the headquarters costs of education and library boards and are subject to annual assessment and review by the boards.

Northern Ireland Electricity plc

27. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the flotation of Northern Ireland Electricity plc.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are committed to the floatation of NIE plc at the earliest suitable opportunity.

Inward Investment

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what efforts are being made to promote investment from abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) earlier today.

Disabled People

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration has been given to the provision of financial support for disabled people below pensionable age in Northern Ireland so that they may benefit from the alarm call system provided for elderly disabled people.

Mr. Hanley: Where help with an alarm call system is not available from any other source, a non-repayable community care grant from the social fund may be made available to disabled and other vulnerable people receiving income support. Each case is decided on its merits by a social fund officer.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many 24-hour alarm call systems have been provided by health boards to disabled people below pensionable age in Northern Ireland; how many are planned for provision in the future; and what assessment has been made of how many such people might benefit from such a system.

Mr. Hanley: The total number of emergency alarm systems currently provided by health and social services boards to disabled people under pensionable age is 77. The number of people who might benefit from such a system and the number of alarms to be provided in the future will depend on assessments of the needs of individual disabled persons by health and social services boards.

Travellers

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the extension of the Race Relations Act to Northern Ireland will cover Ireland's travelling people.

Mr. Hanley: On 16 December 1992 my right hon. and learned Friend published a consultative document which seeks views on the scope for legislation on racial discrimination and on any additional action which the Government might take to further promote equity of treatment for ethnic groups. The document also seeks views on whether the traditional Irish travelling community should be recognised as an ethnic group and specifically covered by any proposed race legislation for Northern Ireland.

School Examinations

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he proposes to take to ensure that pupils in Northern Ireland are able to enjoy the same choice of public examination syllabuses as is available to pupils in England and Wales.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) on 15 December 1992, at column *165*.

Further Education

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he intends to take to ensure that the Southern Education and Library Board complies with the recommendations of the Fair Employment Commission regarding recruitment practices for lecturers in institutions of further education.

Mr. Hanley: The board has reaffirmed its support for the principles and practices of fair employment and intends to review its procedures in relation to the recruitment of temporary and part-time staff in its further education colleges. It is expected that the board will soon reach agreement with the Fair Employment Commission on the terms of a voluntary written undertaking to this effect.

Railways

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the condition of Northern Ireland's rail system; and what proposals he has for privatisation.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for the maintenance of railways in Northern Ireland rests with Northern Ireland Railways. I am advised by the managing director that, arising from several recent studies, the company has undertaken a complete review of the railway system including the permanent way, signalling and level crossings; bridge works; rolling stock and maintenance facilities; and stations and passenger amenities. Substantial improvements will flow from the two major

capital projects which are currently under way, namely the upgrading of the Belfast/Dublin rail link and the construction of the cross-harbour rail bridge in Belfast. The latter includes provision for new depot maintenance facilities. A programme to upgrade 22 level crossings on the Londonderry line is already well advanced and the company has comprehensive plans to upgrade the remainder of the rail system by the late 1990s. This will include replacement of rolling stock for use on short-haul services within Northern Ireland. Facilities for passengers at stations will also be improved to meet the company's obligations under its passengers charter launched in November 1992.

In accordance with the commitment in the citizens charter for Northern Ireland, the Government commissioned a study into the scope for introducing a private element into the management and operation of Northern Ireland Railways. The report has been received and is under consideration.

Fair Employment

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases have been brought against *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* other public bodies, alleging religious and political discrimination, since the establishment of the Fair Employment Tribunal, indicating the local authority and public body concerned, the nature of the allegation and the tribunal's decision.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* Since the establishment of the Fair Employment Tribunal until 31 December 1992, 52 cases have been brought against local authorities and 237 cases against other specified public authorities. The details, in chronological order of registration, are as follows:

(A) Local authorities

Local authority	*Nature of allegation*	*Tribunal decision*
Fermanagh District Council (DC)	Dismissal	Dismissed
Banbridge District Council	Non-appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Dungannon District Council	Non-appointment	Dismissed
North Down Borough Council (BC)	Non-promotion	Allowed
Moyle District Council	Non-appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Castlereagh Borough Council	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
Castlereach Borough Council	Non-promotion	Awaiting hearing
Belfast City Council (CC)	Non-promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	Allowed
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	Allowed
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	Allowed
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	Allowed
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	Allowed
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	Awaiting hearing
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	Awaiting hearing
Belfast City Council	Non-promotion	Awaiting hearing
Limavady Borough Council	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
Larne Borough Council	Non-appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Limavady Borough Council	Non-promotion	Allowed
Limavady Borough Council	Non-appointment	Awaiting hearing
Belfast City Council	Non-appointment	Dismissed
Armagh	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
Dungannon DC	Non-Appointment	Settled
Castlereagh BC	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
Belfast CC	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Belfast CC	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Ballymena BC	Non-Promotion	Allowed
Newtownabbey BC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Belfast CC	Harassment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Coleraine BC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Lisburn BC	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
Lisburn BC	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Belfast CC	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Cookstown DC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Magherafelt DC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Belfast CC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Limavady BC	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Belfast CC	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
Belfast CC	Victimisation	Awaiting hearing
Belfast CC	Victimisation	Awaiting hearing
Strabane DC	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
Ballymena BC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Newtownabbey BC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Ards BC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Newry and Mourne DC	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
Derry CC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Derry CC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Omagh DC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Ballymena BC	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Strabane DC	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
Belfast CC	Harassment	Awaiting hearing.

(B) Other public authorities

Public authority	*Nature of allegation*	*Tribunal decision*
North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB)	Non-Appointment	Dismissed
Department of Agricultue for Northern Ireland (DANI)	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Civil Service Commission (NICSC)	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Post Office	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
British Broadcasting Commission (BBC)	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Ulsterbus Ltd.	Non-Appointment	At hearing
Northern Health and Social Services Board (NHSSB)	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
Southern Health and Social Services Board (SHSSB)	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)	Non-Promotion	At hearing
Department of the Environment (GB)	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE)	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Court Service	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB)	Non-Appointment	Allowed
Commissioners of Customs and Excise	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
Post Office	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Fire Authority for Northern Ireland	Harassment	Dismissed
NHSSB	Non-Promotion	Settled
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NIHE	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
NHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NIHE	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Western Health and Social Services Board (WHSSB)	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Railways	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
BBC	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Fire Authority for Northern Ireland	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NEELB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Police Authority for Northern Ireland (PANI)	Harassment	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Victimisation	Awaiting hearing
Northern Ireland Railways	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
NEELB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NHSSB	Non-Promotion	Settled
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Post Office	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland (DOE NI)	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Railways	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Railways	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Railways	Dismissal	Dismissed
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)	Non-Promotion	Dismissed
NEELB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NHSSB	Non-Promotion	Settled
DHSS	Non-Promotion	Dismissed
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Airports Ltd	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Sports Council for Northern Ireland	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Post Office	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Settled
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Settled
Department of Economic Development (DED)	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
SHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
DOE NI	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
DOE NI	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
DOE NI	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
DOE NI	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NIE	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB)	Non-Appointment	Dismissed
Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB)	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Commissioners of Customs and Excise	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DANI	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DED	Harassment	Dismissed following withdrawal
BELB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
BELB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing

Public authority	*Nature of allegation*	*Tribunal decision*
Fire Authority for Northern Ireland	Dismissal	Dismissed followed withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NEELB	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Post Office	Dismissal	Dismissed
DED	Refusal to provide funds	Dismissed following withdrawal
DED	Refusal to provide funds	Dismissed following withdrawal
DED	Refusal to provide funds	Dismissed following withdrawal
DED	Refusal to provide funds	Dismissed following withdrawal
DED	Refusal to provide funds	Dismissed following withdrawal
DED	Refusal to provide funds	Dismissed following withdrawal
DED	Refusal to provide funds	Dismissed following withdrawal
DED	Refusal to provide funds	Dismissed following withdrawal
DED	Refusal to provide funds	Dismissed following withdrawal
WHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NIHE	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
NIHE	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
NEELB	Victimisation	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
NEELB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NEELB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Board of Inland Revenue	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
DOE NI	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Post Office	Non-Appointment	Dismissed
NIHE	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Railways	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Southern Education and Library Board (SELB)	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Northern Ireland Railways	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Fire Authority for Northern Ireland	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NIHE	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
BBC	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Railways	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Western Education and Library Board (WELB)	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
BELB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
PANI	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Northern Ireland Railways	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
WHSBB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
SHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
SELB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Arts Council for Northern Ireland	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB)	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Dismissed
WHSSB	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
PANI	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
SELB	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
DHSS	Dismissal	Settled
DOE NI	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
NICSC and DHSS	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Milk Marketing Board for Northern Ireland	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Northern Ireland Railways	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
NIHE	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
DANI	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Discrimination in conferring a qualification	Preliminary decision—allowed (case at Court of Appeal)
DOE NI	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Local Enterprise Development Unit	Non-Appointment	Dismissed

Public authority	*Nature of allegation*	*Tribunal decision*
NIHE	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Fair Employment Commission	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
Arts Council for Northern Ireland	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Commissioners of Customs and Excise	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
Arts Council for Northern Ireland	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
NHSSB	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
NEELB	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
NIHE	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Promotion	Dismissed following withdrawal
WELB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
SEELB	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
NHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
WELB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
WELB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Post Office	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Harassment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Post Office	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Fire Authority for Northern Ireland	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
NIHE	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
WELB	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
NIE	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
NIE	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
SELB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
WELB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Ministry of Defence (MOD)	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
SELB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
Ulsterbus Ltd.	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
Post Office	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
SEELB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
SEELB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DHSS	Dismissal	Dismissed following withdrawal
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
NHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NIE	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Dismissed following withdrawal
DOE NI	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
BBC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
NIE	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DED	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
NIE	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
MOD	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
PANI	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
NIE	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
DOE NI	Non-Promotion	Dismissed
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
PANI	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Northern Ireland Railways	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
WHSSB	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing
SHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
EHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing

Public authority	Nature of allegation	Tribunal decision
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Arts Council for Northern Ireland	Harassment	Awaiting hearing
WHSSB	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
SEELB	Dismissal	Awaiting hearing
NICSC	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
MOD	Non-Appointment	Awaiting hearing
Enterprise Ulster	Non-Promotion	Awaiting hearing

SCOTLAND

NHS Trusts

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish guidelines on how hon. Members should deal with constituency inquiries and complaints relating to a hospital trust; what changes he envisages from the arrangements prior to such hospitals becoming trusts; what rights of appeal are open to hon. Members who are dissatisfied with the initial responses; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It remains the responsibility of health boards to determine the health needs of those in their area, to secure services to meet those needs and to monitor the services provided. Inquiries on these issues should be raised with the health board concerned. Issues about specific services being provided by a trust should be raised with the chairman of the trust. While my right hon. Friend will continue to exercise close scrutiny of the NHS in Scotland through the management executive, we are confident that chairmen of both health boards and trusts will endeavour to be as helpful as possible to hon. Members with whom, I am sure, they will want to foster good relations. I hope this will be reciprocated.

Legal Aid and Advice

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average legal aid cost of a Court of Session proof day.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. In 1991-92 the average legal aid cost of a case in the Court of Session was £2,834.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *780*, what proportion of the population of Scotland he estimates will be eligible for legal aid from April;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *780*, what proportion of the population of Scotland he estimates will be eligible for legal advice and assistance from April;

(3) what proportion of the population of Scotland is currently eligible for legal advice and assistance;

(4) what proportion of the population of Scotland is currently eligible for legal aid.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Given the variations over time in individual's circumstances it is not possible to estimate with any precision the proportion of the adult population eligible for legal aid.

Analysis of data from the family expenditure survey suggests that in Scotland the percentage of households which would be eligible for civil legal aid under the proposed changes to eligibility criteria would be in the range of 45 to 55 per cent. with between 20 to 30 per cent. free of contribution. Similar figures would apply to advice and assistance. This represents a reduction of between 5 and 10 per cent. of the households currently eligible in financial terms.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount he expects to be saved from the current legal advice and assistance budget, as a result of the proposed changes to the legal advice and assistance system in each of the next five financial years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The purpose of the proposed changes announced on 16 November is to ensure the continuation of reasonable access to legal aid for the most needy, while at the same time taking action to control the rate of growth in legal aid expenditure. The proposed changes are expected to reduce forecast expenditure on the legal advice and assistance system by around £3 million and £4 million in 1993-94 rising to around £5 million in 1997-98. Total expenditure on legal aid will, however, continue to increase and in financial year 1995-96 it is expected to be 40 per cent. higher than the planned expenditure for the current year.

Health Service

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members and chairpersons of each health board in Scotland and the annual scale of remuneration payable to each at 1 January.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested in respect of the health board chairpersons and members who receive remuneration for their membership is as follows:

	Annual remuneration £
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	
Chairman	
Mr. R. R. Reid	17,700
Members	
Mr. N. M. Faccenda	5,000
Mrs. M. A. Foggie	5,000
Dr. J. Moffat	5,000
Mrs. E. S. Lander	5,000
Mrs. J. C. Le Roux	5,000
Mr. C. H. Parker	5,000
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board	
Chairman	
Mr. W. S. Fyfe	14,835
Members	
Mr. J. Cahill	5,000

	Annual remuneration £
Mr. I. B. Valentine	5,000
Mr. J. W. G. Donaldson	5,000
Mrs. A. Dunbar	5,000
Dr. K. G. Fegan	5,000
Mr. J. H. Greene	5,000
Borders Health Board	
Chairman	
Dr. D. H. Pringle	11,960
Members	
Dr. D. W. Cameron	5,000
Lady Sanderson	5,000
Mr. R. A. Stewart	5,000
Mr. D. A. G. Kilshaw	5,000
Miss M. Marshall	5,000
Mr. J. P. Metcalfe	5,000
Dumfries and Galloway Health Board	
Chairman	
Mr. J. A. McIntyre	11,960
Members	
Mrs. V. M. I. Jardine-Paterson	5,000
Mr. W. Seright	5,000
Mr. W. I. Wilson	5,000
Mr. H. S. McFadzean	5,000
Mrs. J. D. Tulloch	5,000
Dr. A. P. D. Wilkinson	5,000
Fife Health Board	
Chairman	
Mrs. A. H. Ferguson	14,835
Members	
Mrs. S. L. Aitken	5,000
Dr. C. J. Ingram	5,000
Mrs. M. Steedman	5,000
Dr. A. C. A. Alexander	5,000
Mr. F. J. R. Craig	5,000
Mr. G. M. Thomson	5,000
Forth Valley Health Board	
Chairman	
Mrs. J. I. D. Isbister	14,835
Members	
Mr. K. Harding	5,000
Mr. P. A. Joynson	5,000
Mr. C. S. R. Stroyan	5,000
Mr. E. T. M. Bell-Scott	5,000
Dr. G. B. Hasting	5,000
Mrs. K. A. Smith	5,000
Grampian Health Board	
Chairman	
Dr. C. A. Macleod	20,180
Members	
Professor D. Ogston	5,000
Mr. N. Thornton-Kemsley	5,000
Mrs. J. G. A. Wisely	5,000
Mrs. C. A. Ferguson	5,000
Greater Glasgow Health Board	
Chairman	
Sir Thomas J. Thomson	25,140
Members	
Rev. R. D. M. Campbell	5,000
Mrs. A. Gilchrist	5,000
Professor R. M. Mackie	5,000
Mr. P. W. Holst	5,000
Mr. W. C. McCreath	5,000
Mr. A. Scobbie	5,000

	Annual remuneration £
Highland Health Board	
Chairman	
Mr. J. D. M. Robertson	14,835
Members	
Mr. D. J. Mackay	5,000
Mr. C. Neilson	5,000
Mrs. S. G. H. Stone	5,000
Mr. J. G. Ligertwood	5,000
Mrs. A. MacPherson	5,000
Mrs. C. Thomson	5,000
Lanarkshire Health Board	
Chairman	
Mrs. B. M. Gunn	17,700
Members	
Mrs. A. S. Hinshalwood	5,000
Mr. R. J. Logan	5,000
Mr. J. Thomson	5,000
Dr. W. Criggie	5,000
Mr. I. L. Livingstone	5,000
Mr. J. P. Robison	5,000
Lothian Health Board	
Chairman	
Dr. J. W. Baynham	22,660
Members	
Professor R. C. B. Aitken	5,000
Mrs. G. Barton	5,000
Mr. G. S. Millar	5,000
Mr. J. A. Campbell	5,000
Mr. R. Findlay	5,000
Mrs. M. B. M. Knox	5,000
Orkney Health Board	
Chairman	
Mr. J. Leslie	7,200
Members	
Captain M. Gunn	2,000
Mrs. E. B. Kerr	2,000
Dr. J. S. Walker	2,000
Mr. J. Flett	2,000
Mr. E. M. Gibson	2,000
Mr. J. Rendall	2,000
Shetland Health Board	
Chairman	
Mrs. F. B. Grains	7,200
Members	
Mrs. T. A. Leslie	2,000
Dr. M. D. Hunter	2,000
Mr. J. Telford	2,000
Mrs. M. U. Colligan	2,000
Squadron Leader B. P. Gregson	2,000
Mr. R. L. Johnson	2,000
Tayside Health Board	
Chairman	
Mr. J. C. MacFarlane	20,180
Members	
Mrs. S. H. Fallon	5,000
Rev. L. E. Luscombe	5,000
Professor R. E. Olver	5,000
Rev. K. Campbell	5,000
Mr. D. W. M. Davidson	5,000
Mr. R. J. Jarvis	5,000
Western Isles Health Board	
Chairman	
Mrs. M. A. MacMillan	7,200

	Annual remuneration £
Members	
Mr. J. H. Downie	2,000
Mr. A. W. Hay	2,000
Mr. A. Matheson	2,000
Dr. S. M. Brydon	2,000
Mrs. C. R. MacAskill	2,000
Mr. J. A. Harrison	2,000

MV Braer

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has finalised the arrangements for the bridging fund to assist local businesses in Shetland affected by the recent incident involving the MV Braer.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to announce that agreement has been reached on the operation of the bridging fund which I announced in my statement to the House on 11 January.

The bridging fund is designed to help in particular the farming, fishing and fish-farming industries in Shetland, and prevent economic hardship to primary producers facing temporary cash-flow difficulties pending the settlement of compensation claims. It is of course without prejudice to the Government's view that the polluter must pay.

After consultation with Shetland Islands council, the shipowner's insurers—the P and I Club—and the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund—IOPC fund—it has been agreed that requests for advances from the bridging fund should be made through the "single door" of the Braer claims office in Lerwick. Claims from businesses which qualify under this scheme and which are, in the view of the club and the IOPC fund, likely to receive compensation in due course will be passed to the islands council, which will make the payment from the bridging fund. The Scottish Office will now pay an initial grant of £1 million to the council to enable it to start meeting claims. Further payments to the council will be made as claims arise. In due course, when each compensation claim is settled, the amount of the advance will be paid back to the bridging fund.

I currently intend that payments will be available until 31 March 1994, but this date may be varied, in particular if there is a continuing need for the scheme, or if it becomes clear that the flow of compensation settlements is sufficient to meet continuing needs.

I am glad that the Government have been able to take steps to prevent the people of Shetland from suffering economic hardship at this very difficult time for them, and I am grateful for the co-operation of the council, the shipowner's insurers and the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund in putting together these arrangements so quickly.

Royal Scottish Academy

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to review the 1910 agreements whereby the Royal Scottish Academy uses the Royal Scottish Heritage Building for its diploma show;

(2) what representations he has had about better value for money in relation to funds disbursed by the Scottish Office to the Royal Scottish Academy, in relation to the building on the Mound;

(3) whether he will make arrangements for experts from the Scottish Office to examine and assess the state of the roof of the Royal Scottish Academy and the state of the fabric of the building;

(4) whether he permits the use of Government indemnity for exhibits within the Royal Scottish Academy; and what assessment he has made of the security and environmental controls for pictures for which Her Majesty's Government are responsible, displayed in the Royal Scottish Academy;

(5) how much public money from his vote went to the Royal Scottish Academy in 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* No Scottish Office funds are paid direct to the Royal Scottish Academy. Responsibility for the management of the building rests, under the provisions of the National Galleries of Scotland Act 1906, with the trustees of the national galleries of Scotland who receive grant-in-aid from the Scottish Office to carry out their functions. Details of expenditure on individual buildings have been recorded only since the financial year 1990-91 since when the following sums have been spent by the national galleries of Scotland specifically on the Royal Scottish Academy building:

	£
1990-91	66,091
1991-92	153,194
[1]1992-93	45,131

[1]to date

This expenditure has covered the costs of minor maintenance works; rates, heating and lighting and other running costs; and works related to exhibitions.

My right hon. Friend has acknowledged for some time that the fabric of the building is in need of repair. Once the future shared use of the building has been clarified in the light of arrangements laid down in the National Galleries of Scotland (Appropriation of Buildings) Order 1910 and he has received firm proposals from the national galleries of Scotland on the exact nature of the works required, he will consider what resources can be provided and on what timescale. We would expect the national galleries of Scotland to base proposals for building works on a thorough examination of the building by appropriate professional advisers.

The Government indemnity scheme enables the Government to underwrite the risk of loss of, or damage to, art objects loaned for the public benefit. Under section 16 of the National Heritage Act 1980, an indemnity is given only where appropriate arrangements are made for the safety of the object while it is on loan. These considerations would apply in the case of any painting to be exhibited in the Royal Scottish Academy for which an indemnity was sought.

Defective Housing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list houses and house types situated in the Burnfoot housing scheme in Hawick supplied to his Department by Roxburgh district council in March 1984 which had been identified by the local authority as being eligible for assistance under the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* In 1983 district and islands councils were asked by the Scottish Office to give details of the number of houses in their ownership belonging to types later designated as defective. They were not asked for the location of such houses within their districts. Roxburgh district council said that it owned 21 houses of the single-storey Orlit type, 50 Whitson-Fairhursts and 119 Crudens.

The owners of such houses would be eligible for assistance under the housing defects legislation only if they were bought before 26 April 1984 or, in certain circumstances, in the 12 months thereafter.

Angus Hospitals

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what consultations he, his colleagues or Scottish Office officials have had with Tayside health board on the future of *(a)* Stracathro hospital, *(b)* Arbroath infirmary and *(c)* other hospital services in Angus.

Mr. Stewart: *[holding answer 17 December 1992]*: Representatives of Tayside health board have met Scottish Office officials in order to discuss the board's local health strategy. As a matter of course during these discussions, the future of acute services in Tayside were talked about. However, it will only be when the board has the results of its review and public consultation that detailed discussion on individual hospitals will take place.

EMPLOYMENT

Euroform Programme

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list details of *(a)* how many bids her Department has received for funding from the Euroform programme, *(b)* how many of these bids have been accepted, *(c)* how many have been refused, *(d)* the total value of the bids that have been refused and *(e)* the total value of funding allocated to the United Kingdom from the Euroform programme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Department has received 328 bids under the first two rounds of applications for the Euroform programme. Of these, 156 projects have been approved, while 172 projects were refused. The approximate cost of unsuccessful applications was £4·6 million.

A further 211 bids have been received as a result of a third call for applications following the allocation funds by the European Commission.

The Department has responsibility for Great Britain only, for which the total value of funding allocated under Euroform is £25·5 million. Northern Ireland has a separate allocation of funds.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria her Department uses when assessing bids for funding from the Euroform programme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under Euroform, projects are selected by a partnership committee comprising representatives from the sectors which apply for funding, the European Commission and the Employment Department.

Taking account of the priorities identified in the operational programme, the committee agreed a list of 10 key areas against which to score individual projects. These were:

(i) the depth and quality of the transnational partnership(s);
(ii) the contribution to be made by the project to less-developed regions;
(iii) the innovatory nature of the project;
(iv) whether the project would provide value for money;
(v) the qualifications which would be developed and acquired;
(vi) the relevance of the project to the needs of the labour market and whether the project would facilitate geographical and occupational mobility;
(vii) whether systems were in place for the administration and management of the project;
(viii) that the project could not have taken place without assistance from Euroform and that the outcomes could be developed for subsequent use in other contexts;
(ix) whether the project built on links with other European Community programmes;
(x) whether the project was clearly targeted had clearly stated and quantifiable objectives.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list for each month since January 1990 the provisional and revised figures for United Kingdom seasonally adjusted unemployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table gives the information requested.

United Kingdom seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment
(Thousands)

	Provisional	*Latest revised*
1990		
January	1,611·4	1,619·6
February	1,610·1	1,616·5
March	1,603·6	1,597·0
April	1,605·6	1,596·0
May	1,611·0	1,600·4
June	1,617·1	1,611·0
July	1,629·1	1,623·9
August	1,653·9	1,651·8
September	1,666·7	1,681·7
October	1,702·7	1,723·6
November	1,762·4	1,777·2
December	1,843·5	1,853·1
1991		
January	1,888·5	1,893·6
February	1,977·2	1,985·7
March	2,092·7	2,089·2
April	2,175·1	2,166·6
May	2,244·2	2,232·2
June	2,301·0	2,292·9
July	2,368·1	2,362·5
August	2,428·2	2,422·5
September	2,460·6	2,458·1
October	2,472·9	2,477·1
November	2,513·0	2,517·7
December	2,546·0	2,551·2
1992		
January	2,604·1	2,607·1
February	2,647·3	2,644·9
March	2,652·3	2,652·7
April	2,695·3	2,695·3
May	2,716·6	2,715·7
June	2,722·7	2,724·3
July	2,753·4	2,760·1
August	2,807·5	2,811·1
September	2,843·3	2,843·4
October	2,867·6	2,867·8
November	2,908·9	2,912·7
December	2,973·5	n/a

Defence Employment, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the defence industries in Hampshire in each year since 1987.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* Defence industries are not identifiable from the standard industrial classification used to compile employment statistics.

Training Schemes, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were taking part in Government-sponsored training schemes in Hampshire in each year since 1987; and if she will express these figures as a proportion of the total number of people registered as unemployed in Hampshire in each of those years.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* The information requested is not available. Detailed historical information about numbers on Government-sponsored training schemes is not held centrally. People on Government training schemes are not included in the monthly unemployment figures.

DEFENCE

Northern Ireland

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British troops are currently stationed in Northern Ireland; and how many of these are currently serving in other countries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently some 19,000 service men deployed in Northern Ireland. None of them is serving in other countries.

Fuel Cores

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the used fuel core currently stored at the naval reactor test establishment Dounreay was removed from the reactor; when it is planned to transport the used core to Sellafield; and by what means.

Mr. Aitken: The used fuel core at the naval reactor test establishment, Dounreay, comprises elements removed from three different naval reactors between 1984 and 1987. The material has been analysed as part of the continuing programme of used naval fuel post-irradiation examination. The core will be removed to Sellafield when a suitably licensed mode of transport is available.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where and how a used fuel core is currently stored within the naval reactor test establishment Dounreay.

Mr. Aitken: The used fuel core is held safely in a dedicated core pond within the establishment.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number and location of military incidents requiring search-and-rescue helicopter response in the area defined by longitudes 7° W and 3° W and latitudes 50° 25°V N and 53° N, together with the name of the military establishments which responded to each incident, since 1987.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The table gives the number of military incidents requiring search and rescue helicopter response, together with the name of the military establishment which responded, in the area defined for the period in question:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*Total*
Brawdy	17	13	5	9	7	6	57
Chivenor	16	14	8	7	8	6	59
Culdrose	7	1	2	3	7	5	25
Portland	—	—	2	—	—	—	2
Valley	2	2	7	2	4	2	19
Other Royal Navy	1	—	—	—	—	1	2
Other	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Total	43	30	24	21	26	21	165

Other Royal Navy = Royal Navy helicoptor from HM Vessel.
Other = Shannon Coastguard helicopter.

Information on the location of each of the incidents could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Proof and Experimental Establishments

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's employees and permanent contractors currently work at Eskmeals, Shoeburyness and Pendine proof and experimental establishments.

Mr. Aitken: The figures for Ministry of Defence employees at the beginning of the year were as follows:

	Service	*Civilian*
Eskmeals	12	66
Shoeburyness	24	92
Pendine	12	56

The numbers employed by the contractors at these establishments are a matter for them.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the expenditure by his Department at each of the proof and experimental establishments at Eskmeals, Shoeburyness and Pendine in 1990-91, 1991-92 and projected for 1992-93.

Mr. Aitken: It is not possible to produce figures on a directly comparable basis for the three years in question because of changes in the Department's accounting practice.

Subject to this proviso, the details are as follows:

			£ million
	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Eskmeals	3·2	5·5	6·6
Shoeburyness	8·1	11·7	14·0
Pendine	3·6	4·8	7·3

Sea Survival

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average sea surface temperature in each of the 12 months of the year in sea areas Lundy, Fastnet and Irish sea; and what is the estimated survival time of a normally clothed person immersed in water at each of those temperatures.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The readily available information is set out in the table:

Month	Temperature (C)	Survival time (hours)
Winter (February)	8-9	2·5
Spring (May)	9-11	3·5
Summer (August)	14-16	In excess of 5
Autumn (November)	9-12	3

Job Losses

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of his Department's jobs lost as the result of closure or cut at his Department's bases and establishments in each of the counties of England and Wales and regional authorities in Scotland in 1990-91, 1991-92 and projected for 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 based on announcements made to date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of Ministry of Defence United Kingdom-based civilians has reduced from 141,372 in April 1990 to 137,793 as at 1 December 1992; a reduction of 3,579 posts. Since the introduction of the new management strategy we no longer hold manpower details by establishments centrally. To produce a full listing to show every post would involve disproportionate cost and effort. Major changes—involving over 50 posts—announced to date, excluding the Defence Research Agency, include those listed. Numbers given for civilian post losses/gains do not mean that all those concerned will be made redundant as alternative defence uses may be found in the case of partial or full closure of units.

County	Establishment	Decision/Proposal	Losses/Gains	Financial years
Avon	Central Services Bath[1]	Rundown	121	1994-95
	Naval Support Command	Increase	(500)	1994-95
	Procurement Executive[2]	Increase	(4,100)	1995-96
Berkshire	RAF Greenham Common/Welford	Closure	120	1992-93
Buckinghamshire	USAFE Air Station	Closure	56	1993-94
Cambridgeshire	RAF Hospital Ely	Closure	68	1992-93
	RAF West Raynham	Closure	57	1994-95
	RAF Wyton – Support Command	Increase	(1,000)	1993-97
Cheshire	RPO/MRO Chester[1]	Closure	182	1995-96
Cumbria	NATO Depot Broughton Moor	Closure	89	1992-93
Devon	MRO/RPO Exeter[1]	Closure	260	1995-96
	RNAD Ernesettle	Rundown	318	1995-96
Dorset	Portland Naval Base[1]	Closure	475	1995-96
Durham	RNSD Eaglescliffe	Transfer out	182	1994-95
Gloucestershire	RAF Innsworth	Increase	(100)	1994-95
Greater Manchester	APO Ashton Officers ACCS[1]	Closure	116	1995-96
Hampshire	RNDRD Blackbrook Farm	Closure	96	1991-92
	HMS Mercury – RN Signals	Closure	56	1993-94
	FMRO Portsmouth[1]	Reduction in capacity	414	1993-94
	Portsmouth – 2nd Sea Lord	Increase	(125)	1994-95
Hereford and Worcester	RAF Hereford[1]	Closure	140	1994-95
Hertfordshire	RAF Stanbridge	Closure	110	1994-95
Humberside	RAF Church Fenton	Closure	52	1992-93
Kent	Junior Leaders Regiment	Closure	106	1991-92
	OASC Biggin Hill	Closure	58	1992-93
	Junior Infantry Battalion	Closure	60	1992-93
	33 EOD Regiment[1]	Transfer Out	60	1993-94
Leicestershire	RPO/MRO Leicester[1]	Closure	179	1995-96

County	Establishment	Decision/Proposal	Losses/Gains	Financial years
London	Various units and locations	Transfer out and closures	6,000	1992-96
	MS, PB, AODO Stanmore[1]	Closure	123	1995-96
Merseyside	42 District Workshop	Closure	148	1992-93
Norfolk	RAF Swanton Morley	Closure	210	1994-95
North Yorkshire	41 District Workshop	Closure	182	1992-93
	RAF Catterick – Regiment Depot	Transfer Out	85	1993-94
	11 Signal Regiment	Closure	51	1993-94
	AA College Harrogate	Closure	122	1993-94
	RAF Harrogate	Closure	1,000	1994-96
	MRO/RPO York[1]	Closure	270	1995-96
Nottinghamshire	RAF Newton[1]	Partial closure	139	1994-95
Oxfordshire	RAF Abingdon Station HQ[1]	Closure	134	1992-93
Shropshire	RAF Cosford – No. 2 School[1]	Increase	(110)	1994-95
Somerset	Yeovilton	Increase	(100)	1993-94
Suffolk	RAF Bentwaters/Woodbridge	Closure	307	1993-94
	RAF Wattisham	Partial closure	141	1993-94
Warwickshire	Junior Leaders RA Bramcote	Closure	90	1993-94
Wiltshire	RAF Kemble	Closure	314	1992-93
	RAF Hullavington	Closure	60	1993-94
	RNSD Copenacre	Rundown	753	1993-94
	HQDT Upavon[1]	Transfer in	(111)	1993-94
	RAF Upavon – HQ 1 GP[1]	Transfer out	86	1993-94
	RAF Chilmark – 11 MU	Closure	229	1995-96
	A & AEE Boscombe Down	Rundown	177	1995-96
Scotland	Naval Base Rosyth	Rundown	746	1995-96
	APO/RPO Glasgow[1]	Increase	(700)	1995-96
Wales	RAF Brawdy	Closure	82	1992-93
	39 District Workshop	Closure	39	1992-93
	AA College Chepstow	Closure	172	1993-94
	RNAD Trecwn	Closure	436	1995-96

[1] Still under consultation with the MOD trades unions.
[2] Staff relocating to North Bristol from various units and locations in London, Bath and along the South Coast.

Trident

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the cost of the Trident programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The current estimate of the total project cost of the Trident programme is £10,676 million, if all expenditure, including payments already made, is brought up to current prices and a common exchange rate of £1=$1·74, as assumed in the long-term costing of the defence programme. If payments already made are expressed at the prices and exchange rates actually incurred, the equivalent estimate is now £9,596 million. Expenditure on the Trident programme to 31 August 1992 represented some 60 per cent. of the overall estimate.

The revised estimate of £10,676 million represents a small real cost reduction of £18 million compared to that announced last year, after allowing for the effects of inflation and exchange rate variations. The increase in cash terms is £158 million. The reduction in real terms since the original 1982 Trident II estimate, including the savings resulting from the decision to have United Kingdom missiles processed in the United States facility at Kings bay, Georgia, now stands at some £2·8 billion.

The proportion of the programme to be undertaken in the United Kingdom has increased from 72 per cent. to 74 per cent.

The Select Committee on Defence previously asked that when announcing the annual revised estimate, I should report on the state of the project as a whole. I am pleased to say that the Trident programme remains on schedule to enter service in the mid-1990s. There has been no slippage in the in-service date since the decision to purchase Trident II was announced in March 1982. I am, as in previous years, sending to the Chairmen of the Public Accounts Committee and of the Select Committee on Defence a more detailed report covering the points on which the Select Committee on Defence sought advice. I am also placing a copy of this report in the Library of the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 22 January 1993

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Service

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 12 January, *Official Report*, column *693*, what are the criteria on which the performance of the chief executive of the prison service agency will be assessed for eligibility for the performance bonus.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For the period up to 31 March 1993 the performance of the director general will be assessed wholly on a qualitative basis. Thereafter, when the agency comes into being, his performance will be assessed on the basis of both qualitative and quantitative measures, the nature and balance of which are still to be settled.

Uniformed Police Officers

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many uniformed police officers were employed by each police authority in Wales for each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table:

Police strength[1]—Wales—1979 to 1992

Year As at December	Dyfed-Powys Numbers of officers	Gwent Numbers of officers	North Wales Numbers of officers	South Wales Numbers of officers
1979	918	958	1,271	3,025
1980	929	973	1,290	3,068
1981	925	963	1,288	3,082
1982	930	969	1,303	3,096
1983	924	962	1,275	3,082
1984	922	957	1,281	3,106
1985	924	971	1,251	3,064
1986	929	973	1,268	3,099
1987	929	977	1,307	3,120
1988	927	989	1,304	3,114
1989	934	1,000	1,332	3,118
1990	936	1,001	1,339	3,123
1991	944	995	1,343	3,142
1992 (October)	966	1,008	1,369	3,182

[1] Police strength varies from year to year according to wastage and recruitment patterns.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to include the recent proposals of high street retailers in his consultations on the reform of Sunday trading laws; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend is referring to the proposals for reform which have been drawn up by Marks and Spencer plc and other leading high street retailers. I met representatives of the traders on 3 November 1992 to discuss the proposals. At this stage we have no plans to include the model as one of the options to be put before the House.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from high street retailers on the reform of Sunday trading legislation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 20 October 1992, we have received 83 written representations from retailers on this issue.

Police Force (Civilian Employees)

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civilians have been employed by each police authority in Wales for each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table:

Strength of Civilians in Wales 1979 to 1992

Year as at 31 December	Dyfed Powys	Gwent	North Wales	South Wales
1979	194	206	319	866
1980	194	213	320	855
1981	195	214	325	855
1982	198	216	328	888
1983	204	228	351	892
1984	208	233	373	899
1985	210	232	401	905
1986	198	236	382	956
1987	209	241	385	1,009
1988	215	252	388	1,015
1989	234	250	423	1,082
1990	243	290	439	1,111
1991	250	304	444	1,079
1992[1]	268	318	459	1,076

[1] Until October.

Unlicensed Drivers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people over the age of 17 years have been caught driving without having passed a recognised driving test within each police authority area during each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jack: The following table sets out the number of prosecutions for offences of "driving without licence or

causing or permitting to drive without licence" and "provisional licence holders not accompanied by qualified person" committed by persons 17 years old and above in each police force area in England and Wales for each of the years 1987 to 1991. Similar information for earlier years is not readily available.

Number of prosecutions for offences committed by persons aged 17 years and over

England and Wales *Number of offences*

Police force	*Driving without licence or causing or permitting to drive without licence or provisional licence holder not accompanied by qualified person*				
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Avon and Somerset	3,896	4,471	4,485	4,749	6,040
Bedfordshire	1,933	2,056	1,842	2,110	1,834
Cambridgeshire	1,492	1,476	1,536	1,795	1,621
Cheshire	2,086	2,113	2,116	2,402	2,381
Cleveland	1,795	1,828	1,854	1,950	2,319
Cumbria	1,555	1,634	1,328	1,290	1,815
Derbyshire	2,683	2,523	2,525	2,700	2,189
Devon and Cornwall	3,647	3,571	3,582	3,742	4,292
Dorset	1,514	1,644	1,928	1,993	2,092
Durham	1,886	1,784	1,839	2,272	2,116
Essex	3,165	3,370	3,506	3,153	3,539
Gloucestershire	1,665	1,886	1,641	1,639	2,001
Greater Manchester	7,842	8,936	9,256	10,242	11,306
Hampshire	3,870	4,471	4,573	4,158	4,241
Hertfordshire	1,653	1,659	1,884	2,111	2,382
Humberside	1,765	2,160	2,185	2,154	2,080
Kent	3,248	3,576	3,998	3,577	3,125
Lancashire	4,588	4,834	5,413	5,059	5,067
Leicestershire	2,956	3,210	3,030	3,209	4,236
Lincolnshire	1,274	1,383	1,547	1,663	1,184
London, City	383	535	536	461	486
Merseyside	4,742	4,940	5,985	6,437	7,939
Metropolitan	11,129	11,592	10,614	8,653	19,605
Norfolk	1,296	1,184	1,279	1,151	1,094
Northamptonshire	1,401	1,661	1,913	2,058	2,483
Northumbria	4,139	4,075	4,385	6,232	8,050
North Yorkshire	1,184	1,323	1,381	1,424	1,772
Nottinghamshire	2,914	2,704	2,882	3,210	3,245
South Yorkshire	4,802	4,343	4,126	3,856	3,943
Staffordshire	2,327	2,530	3,053	3,193	3,164
Suffolk	1,218	1,236	1,361	1,335	1,464
Surrey	1,446	1,605	1,800	1,777	2,087
Sussex	3,356	4,496	4,868	4,913	4,984
Thames Valley	3,702	4,340	4,376	5,658	5,867
Warwickshire	1,126	1,290	1,652	1,483	1,352
West Mercia	2,730	2,870	3,155	3,465	3,327
West Midlands	9,080	10,704	11,034	11,192	12,539
West Yorkshire	6,151	5,829	5,831	7,036	6,831
Wiltshire	894	1,004	1,149	1,314	1,577
Dyfed Powys	845	820	1,041	1,058	1,317
Gwent	1,829	1,747	1,606	1,581	1,493
North Wales	1,910	2,058	2,397	2,396	2,521
South Wales	5,899	7,174	6,749	7,002	6,812
Total	129,016	138,645	143,241	148,853	169,812

Ainsty Lodge, Wetherby

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many convictions for *(a)* burglary, *(b)* assault, *(c)* offences against property, *(d)* taking vehicles without the owner's consent, *(e)* driving without a licence and *(f)* dangerous driving have been recorded in each of the last five years against residents of Ainsty Lodge, Wetherby;

(2) in respect of how many offences residents of Ainsty Lodge, Wetherby have been *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted in each of the last five years;

(3) what proportion of crimes suspected to have been committed in England by juveniles in each of the last five years are suspected to have been committed by persons in the care of local authorities;

(4) how many offences residents of Ainsty Lodge in Leeds have committed while on bail in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not collected.

Criminal Justice System (Costs)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason it was decided to provide each member of every justices' bench in England and Wales with a copy of the relevant volume of his Department's analysis of the costs of the criminal justice system, 1992; and what were the costs of this exercise including the cost of multi-colour printing.

Mr. Jack: Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 requires the Home Secretary to publish information annually to assist those engaged in the administration of criminal justice to become aware of the financial

implications of their decisions. It was decided to provide magistrates with individual volumes to ensure that they had personal access to this important information.

The total cost of printing, producing and distributing the volumes was £124,290, or £2·54 per copy.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list, by county, in England and Wales the number of confirmed cases of BSE for the month of December 1992.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is available in the Library of the House.

Farmers (Medicines)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines are used by his Ministry when determining whether a vet can sell medicine to a farmer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Medicines Act 1968 and its subordinate legislation sets the legal framework for the sale of and supply of medicines. This provides for a veterinary surgeon to prescribe medicines for use on animals under his or her care. Within those requirements, decisions on whether to sell medicines to farmers are a matter for the judgment of the individual veterinary surgeon.

BST Products

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has received from the Medicines Commission concerning BST products.

Mr. Gummer: The Medicines Commission has advised me that the BST products manufactured by the companies, Lilly Industries Ltd. and Monsanto SA/NV, meet the medicines licensing criteria of safety, quality and efficacy. I have told the companies that the United Kingdom position in forthcoming Committee on Veterinary Medicinal Products discussions will reflect this advice. However, no product licences under the Medicines Act may be issued so long as the licensing moratorium agreed by the European Community's Council of Ministers remains in force.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress to establish new environmentally sensitive areas; and what management commitments and financial remuneration he is proposing.

Mr. Gummer: Pursuant to the answer given on 2 December 1992 at columns 224-25, I am today laying before both Houses of Parliament the six designation orders providing for the introduction of six new environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) in England. These new ESAs are:

Avon Valley;
Exmoor;
Lake District;
North Kent Marshes;
South Wessex Downs; and
South West Peak.

Information packs giving details of the areas covered, scheme conditions and payment rates are being placed in the Libraries.

I am delighted to be able to introduce these new ESAs which will add some 426,000 hectares to the 387,000 hectares currently within ESAs in England. The new areas contain some of our most beautiful countryside and important wildlife areas. I am confident that like the existing schemes, they will play a significant part in the conservation and enhancement of landscapes, special habitats and features of historic interest.

Details of the new schemes are being sent to farmers in each area and applications to join them should be lodged with the Ministry's regional service centres before 31 March.

I will shortly be issuing for consultation our proposals for the introduction of a further six new ESAs which we plan to launch next winter. I will also be announcing the conclusions of my review of the existing schemes in the Breckland, Clun, North Peak, Suffolk river valleys and the Test valley.

Fallen Stock

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers in Wales have developed small-scale incinerators and waste disposal units to deal with fallen stock in each year since 1990; and what financial assistance was granted by his Department for such schemes in each year.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been asked to reply.

My Department does not provide financial assistance for the provision of incinerators and waste disposal units. No information as to the numbers of such facilities is held centrally.

EDUCATION

Class Sizes

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will outline the maximum numbers of pupils per classroom laid down by his Department in accordance with best practice policy in *(a)* infant schools, *(b)* primary schools and *(c)* secondary schools, in England and Wales.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not issue guidance on the maximum number of pupils per classroom. The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 prescribe the overall minimum teaching areas to be provided for maintained and grant-maintained schools in England and Wales. These areas are based on the total number of registered pupils at the school and their age range. The apportionment of teaching space within the overall area available is a matter for local determination.

National Union of Students

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes he proposes to make to the status of the National Union of Students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: In the light of the Department's consultations on student unionism, my right hon. Friend is considering proposals for reform, which he plans to announce in the near future.

Schools Capacity

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will outline the criteria by which his Department currently calculates the total pupil capacity in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in England.

Mr. Forth: Our recent survey of the capacity of primary and secondary schools was calculated on the basis of two different measures: for primary schools capacity was calculated *(a)* using the more open enrolment (MOE) formula set out in annex D of the Department's circular 6/91, and *(b)* by multiplying the standard admission number of the school by the number of year groups. For secondary schools the capacity was calculated *(a)* by using the more open enrolement (MOE) formula set out in annex A of the Department's circular 11/88, and *(b)* (for pupils aged under 16) by multiplying the standard number by the number of year groups. Both circulars are available in the Library.

Careers Officers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many university and polytechnic careers officers there were in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and how many there are today.

Mr. Boswell: Information on careers officers in the former polytechnics is not held centrally. The table shows numbers of careers and appointments officers employed by institutions within the Universities Funding Council sector.

Year	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*
1980[1]	252	13	265
1985	230	1	231
1989[2]	217	29	246

[1] The first year for which this information was collected.
[2] The latest year for which this information is available.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give for each grant-maintained school the number of permanent pupil exclusions in the academic year 1991-92 and for each previous year back to and including the final academic year in which the school was local authority maintained.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on 5 November 1992 at col. *345*.

Teacher Training

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about future levels of recruitment to teacher training courses.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is pleased to note the buoyant level of recruitment to initial teacher training courses in 1991 and 1992. He is however concerned that if the present pattern of recruitment continues it is likely to lead to an over-supply of teachers trained for primary schools, whereas secondary schools may face teacher shortages as pupil numbers rise during the 1990s. In advising the Higher Education Funding Council for England of intake targets for initial teacher training for the period 1993-1996 the Department has therefore proposed that they should fund a reducing number of places for primary school training and increasing numbers for secondary education. He has also asked the council to consider how it might help to tilt the balance of recruitment to primary school training towards applicants holding science, technology and mathematics qualifications, while containing overall numbers.

A copy of the official letter to the council dated 7 January has been placed in the Library of the House. I understand that the Welsh Office has written in similar terms to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

SOCIAL SECURITY

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Miss Widdecombe: The following contracts have been awarded to KPMG Management Consultants by the Department of Social Security during the 1992-93 financial year:

Development of the Contributions Agency's Customer Education Project—(6 January 1992 to 30 June 1992).

Review of the Contributions Agency Performance Appraisal System—(21 April 1992 to 30 September 1992).

Development of the Contributions Agency's Customer Education Pilot Projects—(15 October 1992 to July 1993).

Promotion to Grade 5 Job Analysis Project—(25 November 1991 to 31 May 1992).

Service Delivery Market Testing Project in the Information Technology Services Agency—(21 January 1993 to 21 April 1993).

Market Testing Project in the Information Technology Services Agency

Methodologies Evaluation in the Information Technology Services Agency—(1 April 1992 to 31 July 1992).

Market Testing Project in the Information Technology Services Agency—(6 January 1993 to 30 September 1993).

War Pensions

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the local authorities which operate *(a)* a total disregard, *(b)* a partial disregard and *(c)* no disregard, other than the statutory minimum of war pensions for housing and community charge benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested, as reported by local authorities in the financial year 1990-91, is in the following tables.

Local authorities operating a total disregard scheme for both war disablement and war widows' pensions

Aberconwy
Allerdale
Angus[1]
Arfon
Arun
Ashford
Banff and Buchan[1]
Bassetlaw
Berwickshire[1]
Blackpool
Borders[2]
Bracknell
Braintree
Brentwood
Broxbourne
Burnley
Calderdale
Carlisle
Castle Point
Ceredigion
Chelmsford
Cherwell
Chiltern
Clackmannan[1]
Clydesdale[1]
Congleton
Cotswold
Craven
Cumbernauld (D.C.)[1]
Cumnock and Doon[1]
Dacorum
Daventry
Dumbarton[1]
Dundee[1]
Ealing
East Devon
East Hertfordshire
East Kilbride (D.C.)[1]
East Lothian[1]
East Yorkshire
Edinburgh[1]
Elmbridge
Epsom and Ewell
Ettrick and Lauderdale[1]
Fife[2]
Forest of Dean
Gillingham
Glasgow[1]
Gloucester
Gordon[1]
Grampian[2]
Guildford
Halton
Hammersmith
Harlow
Hartlepool
Hertsmere
Hinchley and Bosworth
Hounslow
Huntingdon
Inverclyde[1]
Ipswich
Isle of Scilly
Islwyn
Kensington and Chelsea
Kincardine and Deeside[1]
Kirklees
Lambeth
Langbaurgh
Lewes
Lichfield
Livingston (D.C.)[1]
Lochaber[1]
Luton
Aberdeen[1]
Amber Valley[3]
Annandale[1]
Argyll-Bute[1]
Ashfield
Badenoch[1]
Basingstoke
Bearsden and Milngavie[1]
Birmingham
Blaenau Gwent
Boston
Bradford
Brent
Brighton
Broxtowe
Caithness[1]
Cardiff
Carrick
Central[2]
Charnwood
Cheltenham
Chesterfield
Christchurch
Clydebank[1]
Colwyn
Copeland
Coventry
Crewe and Nantwich
Cumbernauld (Kils.)[1]
Cunninghame[1]
Dartford
Delyn
Dumfries and Galloway[2]
Dunfermline[1]
East Cambridgeshire
East Dorset (Wimb.)
East Kilbride[1]
Eastleigh
Eastwood[1]
Eden
Ellesmere Port
Epping Forest
Erewash
Falkirk[1]
Forest Heath
Gedling
Glanford
Glenrothes[1]
Glyndwr
Gosport
Great Yarmouth
Hackney
Hamilton[1]
Harborough
Harrow[3]
Hereford
Highland[2]
Horsham
Hove
Hyndburn
Inverness[1]
Irvine (D.C.)[1]
Islington
Kennet
Kilmarnock[1]
Kingswood
Kyle and Carrick[1]
Lancaster
Leicester
Lewisham[3]
Liverpool
Llanelli
Lothian[2]
Macclesfield
Maidstone
Mansfield
Melton
Merton
Midlothian[1]
Mid Sussex
Mole Valley
Montgomery
Motherwell[1]
Neath
Newbury
Nithsdale[1]
Northavon
North Cornwall
North East Fife[1]
North Kesteven
North Tyneside
North West Leicestershire
Nottingham
Ogwr
Perth and Kinross[1]
Purbeck
Redbridge
Reigate and Banstead
Rhuddlan
Richmond-upon-Thames
Rochford
Rossendale[3]
Roxburgh[1]
Rushcliffe
Rutland
Sandwell
Scunthorpe
Sefton
Sevenoaks
Skye and Lochalsh[1]
Solihull
South Bucks
South Derbyshire
South Holland
South Lakeland
South Oxfordshire
South Shropshire
South Tyneside
South Wight
Staffs. Moorlands
Stewartry[1]
Stirling[1]
Stoke on Trent
Strathkelvin[1]
Suffolk Coastal
Sutton
Tameside
Tandridge
Tendring
Tewesbury
The Wrekin
Tower Hamlets
Tweeddale[1]
Wakefield
Waltham Forest
Wansbeck
Watford
Wellingborough[4]
West Lothian[1]
West Oxfordshire
Wigtown[1]
Windsor and Maidenhead
Wokingham
Woodspring
Wycombe
Maldon
Medina
Mendip
Mid Bedfordshire
Mid Suffolk
Milton Keynes
Monklands[1]
Moray[1]
Nairn[1]
Newark
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Northampton
North Bedfordshire
North East Derby
North Hertfordshire
North Shropshire[3]
North Warwickshire
North Wiltshire
Nuneaton
Orkney
Peterborough
Radnor
Redditch
Renfrew[1]
Richmondshire
Rochester on Medway
Ross and Cromarty[1]
Rother
Rugby
Rushmoor
Salford
Scottish Homes[1]
Sedgefield
Selby
Shetland
Slough
South Bedfordshire
South Cambridgeshire
Southend on Sea
South Kesteven[4]
South Northants
South Ribble
South Staffordshire
Southwark
Spelthorne
St. Albans
St. Helens
Stockport
Stratford on Avon
Stroud
Sutherland[1]
Swale
Tamworth
Tayside[2]
Test Valley
Thanet
Three Rivers
Trafford
Vale of White Horse
Walsall
Wandsworth
Wansdyke
Waverley
Western Isles
Westminster
West Wiltshire
Winchester
Wirral
Wolverhampton
Worthing

Local authorities operating a total disregard scheme for war disablement pensions only

Bath
Blackburn[5]
Bromley
Cambridge
Doncaster
Blaby
Bolton
Bury
Corby
Dudley[5]

East Staffordshire
Grimsby
Havering
Newport
Ribble Valley[5]
South Somerset[5]
Stockton on Tees
Torfaen
Vale Royal[5]
Exeter
Hambleton
Middlesbrough
Oldham
Southampton[5]
Stevenage
Torbay
Tunbridge Wells
York

Local authorities operating a total disregard scheme for war widows' pensions only

Castle Morpeth
Kirkaldy[1 6]
Thurrock[6]
Chester
Monmouth[6]

Local authorities operating a partial disregard scheme for war pensions

Adur
Barking[8]
Beverley
Breckland
Camden
Chichester
Crawley
Derby[7]
Dover
Fareham
Hastings[10]
Holderness
Knowsley
Lliw Valley
Meirrionnydd
North Dorset
Poole
Preseli
Reading
Rhondda
Scarborough
South Pembrokeshire
Teignbridge
Tonbridge and Malling[7]
Wealden
Wigan
Aylesbury Vale
Barnet
Bournemouth
Bromsgrove
Canterbury
Chorley
Darlington[7]
Derbyshire Dales
East Hampshire
Fenland
Havant
Kingston upon Thames
Lincoln
Malvern Hills
New Forest
Penwith[9]
Portsmouth
Preston
Rochdale
Salisbury
South Norfolk
Swansea
Thamesdown[7]
Vale of Glamorgan
West Norfolk
Worcester

Local authorities not operating a local scheme for war disablement and war widows' pensions

Alnwick
Babergh
Barrow-in-Furness
Basildon (D.C.)[1]
Bexley
Bolsover
Brecknock
Bristol
Cannock Chase
Carmarthen
City of London
Colchester
Croydon
Derwentside
Durham
Easington
East Lindsey
Enfield
Gateshead
Greenwich
Harrogate
High Peak
Kerrier
Kingston-upon-Hull
Leominster
Merthyr Tydfil
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
North Devon
Norwich
Alyn and Deeside
Barnsley
Basildon
Berwick-upon-Tweed
Blythe Valley
Boothferry
Bridgnorth
Broadland
Caradon
Chester-le-Street
Cleethorpes
Corby New Town[1]
Cynon Valley
Dinefwr
Dwfor
Eastbourne
East Northampton
Fylde
Gravesham
Haringey
Hart
Hillingdon
Kettering
Leeds
Manchester
Mid Devon
Newham
North Norfolk
Oadby and Wigston
Oswestry
Pendle
Port Talbot
Rhymney Valley
Runnymede
Ryedale
Sheffield
Shrewsbury and Atcham
South Herefordshire
St. Edmundsbury
Sunderland
Taff-Ely
Teesdale
Torridge
Uttlesford
Warrington (D.C.)[1]
Waveney
Welwyn Hatfield
West Dorset
West Lindsey
Weymouth and Portland
Wrexham Maelor
Wyre
Ynys Môn
Oxford
Plymouth
Restormel
Rotherham
Rural Wales[1]
Sedgemoor
Shepway
South Hams
Stafford
Strathclyde[2]
Surrey Heath
Taunton Deane
Telford[1]
Tynedale
Warrington
Warwick
Wear Valley
West Devon
West Lancashire
West Somerset
Woking
Wychavon
Wyre Forrest

[1] Denotes those authorities responsible for Housing Benefit only.
[2] Denotes those authorities responsible for Community Charge Benefit only.
[3] Denotes those authorities responsible for both benefits but who operate a scheme for Housing Benefit only.
[4] Denotes those authorities responsible for both benefits but who operate a scheme for Community Charge Benefit only.
[5] Denotes those authorities who operate a scheme to fully disregard war disablement pension *and* part of war widows' pension.
[6] Denotes those authorities who operate a scheme to fully disregard war widows' pension *and* part of war disablement pension.
[7] Denotes those authorities who operate a scheme to partially disregard war disablement pension only.
[8] Denotes an authority which operates a scheme to partially disregard war pensions for Housing Benefit only.
[9] Denotes an authority which operates a scheme to fully disregard war pensions for Housing Benefit rent rebates and partially disregard war pensions for Community Charge Benefit.
[10] Denotes an authority which operates a scheme to fully disregard war pensions for Community Charge Benefit and partially disregard war pensions in Housing Benefit.

Migrants, Greater London

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list *(a)* by borough, *(b)* by district health authority and *(c)* by country of origin, the number of migrants from Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan currently resident in Greater London and claiming any type of social security benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that details of the country of origin of benefit recipients are not recorded routinely and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Matters concerning district health authorities are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Invalid Care Allowance

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many unsuccessful claims were made for invalid care allowances in the past 12 months, and if he will publish a breakdown of refusals according to *(a)*

non-receipt of the appropriate benefits by the cared for person, *(b)* claimant earning more than the weekly ICA earnings limit, *(c)* claimant caring for less than 35 hours a week, *(d)* claimant over 65 years of age and *(e)* claimant in receipt of an overlapping benefit.

Mr. Scott: In the 12 months to 31 December 1992 there were 20,840 unsuccessful claims to invalid care allowance. The breakdown of refusals requested is in the table.

Category	*Number*
(a)	11,339
(b)	1,388
(c)	56
(d)	1,972
(e)	2,569

The balance of refusals were for reasons other than those mentioned by my hon. Friend.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to reply to the application by Mr. Keith Pownall of 20 August 1992 on behalf of his wife Valerie Pownall for invalid care allowance and the higher rate of attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of invalid care allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Bob Cryer, dated 21 January 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Mr. Keith Pownall's applications for Invalid Care Allowance (ICA) and for higher rate Attendance Allowance (AA) made on behalf of his wife Mrs. Valerie Pownall.

I can confirm that decisions were made on 17 August 1992 on Mr. Pownall's ICA claim and on 19 January 1993 on his wife's AA claim. Mr. and Mrs. Pownall have been notified of both decisions. I have replied to you separately and in greater detail about the case.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Young People (Benefits)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people aged 16 and 17 years in Birmingham not in employment, not on a youth training scheme and not in full-time education are receiving benefit.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 21 January 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people aged 16 and 17 years in Birmingham not in employment, not on a YT scheme and not in full time-education are receiving benefit.

The complete range of information you requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I have, however, detailed below the number of successful applications as a result of the hardship provisions, and these are outlined below. It should be noted that a direction to pay in these cases normally lasts for an eight week period, therefore, some of the applications successful in November may no longer be currently receiving benefit.

District	*November 1992*	*December 1992*
Birmingham Chamberlain	13	12
Birmingham North West	19	10
Birmingham Heartlands	16	16
Birmingham South East	9	12
Birmingham South West	31	19
Totals	88	69

The number of successful applications do not equate to the number of customers as some customers may have made more than one application. The above information has been supplied by the Severe Hardship Claims Unit.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. A copy is also being placed in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are on income support within the Seaham and Peterlee agency areas; and what were the comparable numbers each year since 1988.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. John Cummings, dated 20 January 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people are on Income Support within the Seaham and Peterlee agency areas; and what were the comparable numbers each year since 1988.

The complete range of information you requested is not available. This is because statistics of a local nature are destroyed at regular intervals in accordance with standing instructions. I have listed below the latest available data which shows the number of recipients at a given point in time rather than for a given period.

Date	*Seaham*	*Peterlee*
November 1989	3,040	6,782
November 1990	3,300	7,111
November 1991	3,143	7,348
November 1992	3,518	8,003

This information has been obtained from the Income Support Management Information System.

I hope you find this reply helpful. Copies of this letter will be placed in the library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Advance Corporation Tax

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the effects of advance corporation tax on British overseas investment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received a number of representations about advance corporation tax. My right hon. Friend drew attention to the issue in his last Budget statement.

Tobacco Industry

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money the United Kingdom contributed to the European tobacco-growing industry in the last financial year.

Sir John Cope: Member states' contributions go to fund the EC budget as a whole; no breakdown can be given of contributions to individual sections of the budget.

Written Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the advisory cost limit for answering written parliamentary questions in each year since 1980; what was the percentage increase in *(a)* constant and *(b)* actual terms in each year; when he next plans to uprate the limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The table is as follows:

Advisory cost limit for answering written parliamentary questions

Year		Percentage increase since preceding change	
		(a) At constant prices[1]	(b) Actual
	£	Per cent.	Per cent.
1980[2]	50	—	—
1981	50	—	—
1982	200	53·0	300·0
1983	200	—	—
1984	200	—	—
1985	200	—	—
1986	200	—	—
1987	200	—	—
1988	250	20·0	25·0
1989	250	—	—
1990	250	—	—
1991	250	—	—
1992	400	45·0	60·0

[1] Indexed by GDP deflator.
[2] Unchanged since 1965.

The advisory cost limit was last increased on 14 January 1992 at column *546* and this followed a major review of costs in 1991.

The current level of £400 was fixed as a multiple of eight times the average marginal cost so that only cases of exceptionally high cost might be affected and to avoid the need for frequent small increases.

The limit may be increased from time to time in future when costs or policy suggest the need for a change.

VAT and Excise Duty

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the combined level of VAT and excise duty on beer, wine, spirits and cigarettes in each member state of the European Community.

Sir John Cope: The following table sets out details of the VAT rate and duty rate applied by each member state to typical excise products in November 1992. The combined level of VAT and excise duty can be calculated only with reference to the retail price. Information is available on the retail price of the most popular price category of cigarettes in the different member states and this has been used to calculate the total tax on cigarettes. It is not possible to arrive at an equivalent price for the main types of alcoholic drinks however, since neither average prices for most popular price category prices are available.

Tax on excise products in November 1992 based on exchange rate on 1 October 1992[1]

Member state	Beer		Wine		Spirits		Cigarettes			
	VAT rate	Duty per pint	VAT rate	Duty per 75cl bottle	VAT rate	Duty per 70cl bottle	VAT rate	Duty MPPC packet of 20	Total tax on MPPC	MPPC price
	per cent.	£	per cent.	£	per cent.	£	per cent.	£	£	£
Belgium	19·5	0·08	19·5	0·22	19·5	3·50	12·0	1·23	1·43	1·85
Denmark	25·0	0·19	25·0	0·51	25·0	10·77	25·0	1·88	2·46	2·88
France	18·6	0·01	18·6	0·02	18·6	2·62	22·0	0·84	1·11	1·48
Germany	14·0	0·03	14·0	nil	14·0	2·89	14·0	1·15	1·39	1·92
Greece	18·0	0·05	18·0	nil	18·0	1·22	18·0	0·28	0·38	0·63
Ireland	21·0	0·52	21·0	1·63	21·0	5·98	21·0	1·42	1·85	2·45
Italy	19·0	0·09	9·0	nil	19·0	1·20	19·0	0·63	0·81	1·13
Luxembourg	15·0	0·02	6·0	0·09	15·0	2·09	15·0	0·85	1·03	1·40
Netherlands	17·5	0·09	17·5	0·22	17·5	3·20	17·5	0·80	1·02	1·47
Portugal	16·0	0·06	5·0	nil	16·0	1·53	16·0	0·73	0·88	1·12
Spain	15·0	0·02	15·0	nil	15·0	1·17	15·0	0·20	0·25	0·40
United Kingdom	17·5	0·24	17·5	0·94	17·5	5·55	17·5	1·35	1·70	2·27

[1] The date used as reference point for exchange rates in European Community Directives.

Personal Wealth

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the most recent estimates of personal wealth per capita in each region and nation within the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1990, the most recent year available, the average marketable wealth as defined in section 11 of Inland Revenue Statistics 1992, for the United Kingdom adult population, was £38,100 per head. I regret that more disaggregated figures are not available.

Treasury Running Costs

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a breakdown of the expenditure under sub-head A1 of the vote for class XVIII, vote 1, HM Treasury running costs, for 1991-92.

Mr. Nelson: The main elements of expenditure under subhead A1 of class XVIII vote 1 for 1991-92 is as follows:

	£
Pay and related expenditure	32,669,000
Accommodation	12,116,000
Other	8,792,000
	53,577,000

EC Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lamont: I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Economic and Finance Council of the European Community in Brussels on 18 January.

The Council discussed the economic situation in the Community and national measures to promote recovery in its biannual multilateral surveillance exercise. Ministers agreed that, with the EC economy now in recession, member states should step up their efforts to promote growth and reduce unemployment and that they should strengthen the co-ordination of their economic policies. Wage restraint and healthier public finances with an increased emphasis on investment would help to create the conditions for lower interest rates across Europe. These principles are all consistent with measures I announced in my autumn statement.

The Commission will be contacting member states to discuss their economic plans in order to offer a general picture of the action member states are taking at the next meeting of ECOFIN.

The Council was given a brief presentation by the Commission and the President of the European Investment Bank (EIB) of their plans to follow up the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council by establishing the new European investment fund and EIB lending facility. All member states stressed the need to bring both new facilities into operation as soon as possible.

The Council adopted a proposal for a balance of payments loan for Italy of 8 billion ecu (approximately £6·3 billion). This loan will be paid in four tranches conditional upon Italy's meeting its targets for reducing its budget deficit.

The Council also made a statement welcoming the decision of the new Irish Government to maintain the existing parities of the Irish punt within the ERM.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people aged between 16 and 18 years in the Walsall travel-to-work area are unemployed.

Mr. McLoughlin: In October 1992 there were 973 unemployed claimants aged between 16 and 18 years in the Walsall travel-to-work area.

Changes to the benefit regulations in September 1988 coincided with the extension of a guaranteed YTS, now YT, place to all those aged under 18 not in full-time education or employment, which meant that those who declined an offer of a YTS place were no longer entitled to benefit. However, there are still a small number of under 18-year-olds entitled to benefit due to special circumstances, such as severe hardship or by virtue of their being orphans.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people now registered as unemployed in the Greater London area have been out of work for periods of up to three months, six months, nine months, one year, two years and three years or longer.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is contained in the following table and can also be obtained from the NOMIS database system in the Library.

Duration of unemployment in the Greater London region (October 1992)

Duration of unemployment	*Number of claimant unemployed*
Up to 3 months	126,008
Up to 6 months	197,933
Up to 9 months	255,145
Up to 1 year	292,619
Up to 2 years	390,604
Up to 3 years	421,186
Over 3 years	26,445

Note: Claimant unemployment figures by duration are available on a quarterly basis for the months of January, April, July and October and are not adjusted for seasonal influences.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were registered as unemployed in the Tooting constituency on 11 January.

Mr. McLoughlin: On 12 November 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 4,893 male and 1,898 female unemployed claimants in the Tooting parliamentary constituency. These figures are on the unadjusted basis.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the registered job vacancies at employment centres in the Tooting constituency on 11 January.

Mr. McLoughlin: On 6 November 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 76 unfilled vacancies at jobcentres covering Tooting parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in part-time work in the United Kingdom, and as a percentage of the working population, in 1979, 1985 and at the most recent available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information is as follows:

Part-time workforce in employment in Great Britain seasonally adjusted

	Part-time workforce in employment	*Part-time workforce in employment as percentage of the workforce*
	(000's)	*Per cent.*
June 1978	4,632	18
September 1985	5,526	20
September 1992	6,633	24

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women under the age of 21 years were registered as unemployed in the London borough of Wandsworth on 12 January.

Mr. McLoughlin: Unemployment figures by age are available only on a quarterly basis and are based on particular age bands. In January 1992, the latest available date, there were 561 male and 301 female unemployed claimants aged under 20 years in the London borough of Wandsworth.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of *(a)* men of 65 years and *(b)* women of the age of 60 years in full-time employment in the United Kingdom at the latest available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: Results from the spring—March to May—1992 labour force survey show that in the United Kingdom 23,000 men aged 65 years and 40,000 women aged 60 years were in full-time employment.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are his Department's plans for the future of TVEI and its future funding.

Mr. McLoughlin: The technical and vocational education initiative is a 10-year programme, running from 1987 to 1997, in which education authorities participate for up to seven years. The Department is working closely with authorities on the development of their plans for assimilating the lessons of TVEI as they leave the programme. The impetus of the initiative will be further carried forward through the implementation of the national curriculum, the introduction of general national vocational qualifications and the impact of training and enterprise councils on education.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many health and safety inspectors are currently employed in permanent duties in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of inspectors permanently employed by the Health and Safety Executive based in Scotland at 1 January 1993 was 156.

Note: Figure given is for full time equivalent staff.

Trainees

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of trainees on employment training, including those on employment action for each month since the beginning of the programme.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the following tables.

Table 1
Employment Training—in Training—September 1988—March 1990

	Great Britain
1988	
September[1]	48,000
October[1]	67,000
November[1]	92,000
December[1]	108,000
1989	
January[1]	131,000
February[1]	158,000
March[1]	176,000
April	185,000
May	189,000
June	194,000
July	203,000
August	204,000
September	208,000
October	209,000
November	212,000
December	208,000
1990	
January	207,000
February	209,000
March	210,000

[1] Excluding trainees transferred from Community Programme who continued to receive CP wages.

Source: ET Telephone Census.

Table 2
Employment training—in training
April 1990 to December 1992

	Great Britain
1990	
April	210,000
May	208,000
June	199,000
July	191,000
August	185,000
September	184,000
October	190,000
November	194,000
December	199,000
1991	
January	197,000
February	203,000
March	197,000

	Great Britain
April	171,000
May	157,000
June	146,000
July	137,000
August	131,000
September	128,000
October	134,000
November	139,000
December	142,000
1992	
January	139,000
February	146,000
March	149,000
April	140,000
May	130,000
June	127,000
July	120,000
August	113,000
September	113,000
October	122,000
November	129,000
December	129,000

Source: Employment Service.

Table 3
Employment Action
October 1991 to December 1992

	Great Britain
1991	
October	210
November	2,324
December	4,710
1992	
January	5,797
February	10,609
March	14,444
April	17,576
May	19,772
June	21,446
July	23,296
August	24,602
September	25,787
October	28,116
November	29,703
December	30,614

Source: Employment Service.

Workplace Safety

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she is taking to implement the requirements of European Council directive 92-57 of 24 June 1992 concerning safety and health requirements at temporary or mobile work sites; what requirements are laid down for regulatory action; and what further parliamentary action may be necessary.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Commission has already published a consultative document on proposed new Construction (Design and Management) Regulations and an approved code of practice to implement the main requirements of the temporary or mobile construction sites directive. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. A further consultative document will be issued later this year to implement the technical requirements of annex IV of the directive. These documents effectively set out the requirements for regulatory action.

Both sets of implementing regulations proposed by the HSC would be made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and laid before the House and in the usual way subject to negative resolution. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will be responsible for implementation of the fire safety aspects of the directive.

Employment Action

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the money allocated for employment action for 1991-92 was spent; and what is the estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: In 1991-92 32 per cent. of the money allocated for employment action was spent. Current Departmental forecasts estimate that 85 per cent. of the 1992-93 provision will be spent and it is planned to reduce the cash limit accordingly in the spring supplementary estimate due to be published at the end of January 1993.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much it will cost to refurbish the Health and Safety Executive head office at Baynards House; what the cost would be of relocating staff to *(a)* east London, *(b)* Bootle or *(c)* any other new location away from London which has been considered; and if she will make it her policy that the refurbished building should meet the highest possible health and safety standards.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive is considering relocating its London head office in 1994, when the leases on its existing London headquarters buildings expire. A study of the scope for relocation out of London was carried out in 1988. This concluded that those headquarters functions based in London need to remain there. Various London options are now under consideration. Information on each of these and their costs is commercially sensitive and therefore confidential. Any building chosen will have to meet fully the standards of current health and safety legislation.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the terms of reference of the study team on market testing in relation to the functions of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive; if she will list the members of the study team and their remuneration in each case; whether any members of the study team have outside interests inconsistent with this role; and what will be the total cost of the study.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked the Health and Safety Commission to consider the feasibility of applying market testing to those areas of the Health and Safety Executive's activities not covered by their existing market testing programme, but not including advice and assistance to the Commission.

A study is being undertaken by the director general of the Health and Safety Executive. The other members of the study team were a consultant from Touche Ross and an assistant secretary from HSE. The director general and the assistant secretary are remunerated at civil service rates. I regard the consultant's remuneration as commercial in confidence.

I am confident that there are no conflicts of interest involved. I cannot give the total cost because at this stage the eventual extent of the study is uncertain.

Mr. A. J. Linehan

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the question from the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish of 9 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *730*, whether the role of Mr. A. J. Linehan has now been clarified; and whether it conforms to civil service guidelines.

Mr. McLoughlin: An application has been received under the normal civil service rules and is being considered. It is not the practice to give information about the outcome of individual cases.

Job Creation

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what specific proposals she has for stimulating job creation in rural areas.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government work primarily through the Rural Development Commission to promote enterprise, economic diversity and employment in rural areas in England. Acting through the employment service and training and enterprise councils, my Department has a range of facilities and programmes available to people in rural areas, to help equip them for work and increase their skills.

Social Workers

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of qualified social workers *(a)* in employment and *(b)* unemployed, for the last three years for which figures are available;

Mr. McLoughlin: The labour force survey provides estimates by occupation according to the standard occupational classification in which social workers are grouped with probation officers. The numbers in employment in this group in spring 1991, spring 1992 and summer 1992 were estimated respectively to be 96,000, 125,000 and 125,000, not seasonally adjusted.

Estimates at these periods for the numbers previously employed in this group who were unemployed, according to the International Labour Organisation definition, are all below 10,000. No comparable information for this occupational group is available for earlier years.

Foreign Workers

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information she has on the numbers of *(a)* non-United Kingdom EC nationals, *(b)* non-EC nationals from commonwealth countries and *(c)* non-EC nationals from non-commonwealth countries which are (i) currently working in the United Kingdom part-time, (ii) currently working in the United Kingdom full-time, (iii) currently unemployed and not claiming benefit and (iv) currently registered as unemployed and claiming benefit.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest available estimates for the United Kingdom are given in the following table.

Foreign nationals: in employment by whether working full/part time, and ILO unemployed by whether claiming benefit: United Kingdom, spring 1992 (not seasonally adjusted).

Thousands

	In employment		*ILO unemployed*[1]		
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*[2]	*Claiming benefit*	*Not claiming benefit*	*Total*[3]
EC Nationals	322	95	418	29	19	51
Commonwealth nationals	240	60	304	30	26	55
Non-Commonwealth nationals	161	41	203	23	15	38

[1] Unemployed based on the internationally agreed ILO definition. Such respondents are also classified in the LFS according to whether or not they reported receiving unemployment related benefits. Note these estimates are not available from the Employment Department's monthly claimant count.
[2] Includes a small number of persons in employment who did not state whether their employment was full or part time.
[3] Includes a small number of ILO unemployed persons who did not state in the survey whether or not they were claiming benefit.
Source: Labour Force Survey.

Young People, Birmingham

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of people aged 16 and 17 years in Birmingham are *(a)* on a youth training scheme, *(b)* in full-time education and *(c)* in employment.

Mr. McLoughlin: A total of 20·6 per cent. of people aged 16 and 17 years are currently on a YT scheme in Birmingham. 54·1 per cent. are in full-time education and 24·8 per cent. are in employment.

Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of qualified psychiatric nurses, *(a)* in employment and *(b)* unemployed for the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that estimates of numbers of people in this specific occupation are not available.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what efforts are currently made by her Department to inform disabled people of their rights under section 9 of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 22 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the information provided to disabled people about section 9 of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Under section 9 of the 1994 Act an employer (with twenty or more employees) has a duty to employ a quota (3%) of registered disabled people. It is not an offence to be below Quota but in such circumstances employers must obtain a permit before engaging someone who is not registered as disabled. In addition under section 9 of the Act, an employer (with twenty or more employees) may not discharge a registered disabled person without reasonable cause if immediately after the dismissal, the employer does not employ a Quota (3%) of registered disabled people. Registration as a disabled person is voluntary.

Disabled jobseekers may be made aware of the registration provisions of the Act and their consequent rights in the course of interviews with my people or through the leaflet 'Advice on Joining the Disabled Persons Register' which is available in all my Jobcentres. I enclose a copy of the leaflet for your information.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Working Conditions

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what discussions she has had with representatives of EC member states and the European Commission on the proposed Council directive on the application of the laws of the member states relating to certain employment relationships with regard to working conditions; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what discussions she has had with representatives of the EC member states and the European Commission on the proposed Council directive relating to certain employment contracts and employment relationships involving distortions of competition; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There have been no discussions on this draft directive since January 1991.

Post-graduate Training

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money has been invested in post-graduate training in each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not available in the form requested.

Graduates (Unemployment)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the rate of unemployment among graduates in each year since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Results from the labour force survey show that, for graduates of working age in Great Britain, unemployment rates on the internationally agreed ILO definition, were as follows:

Spring of each year	*ILO unemployment rate per cent.*
1984	4·1
1985	3·8
1986	4·1
1987	3·6
1988	2·9
1989	2·3
1990	2·2
1991	3·4
1992	4·0

Note: Consistent estimates are not available for years prior to 1984.

Employment Definitions

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current definitions of *(a)* part-time employee and *(b)* temporary worker used by his Department; what changes have been made in this definition since 1979; and what plans she has to change this definition.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The most widely used employment definitions occur in the context of the Department's statistical surveys.

The employer-based surveys classify part-time employees as those who normally work thirty hours a week or less. These surveys do not distinguish between temporary workers and other categories of employee.

The household-based labour force survey has two methods by which part-time employees can be defined. The usual way is by whether or not the respondents consider themselves to be in part-time employment. The alternative classifies as part-time those working 30 hours or less per week. For the purposes of this survey, temporary workers are those who have an understanding with their employer that their jobs are of fixed duration or that their employment will cease when another condition —for example, the return of an employee who has been temporarily replaced—is met.

The definitions have not changed since 1979 and there are no plans to alter them.

Employment Training

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those referred to employment training by the Department of Employment did not arrive; and what percentage of those who start a scheme completed their training in (i) Wales, (ii) the valleys programme area and (iii) the United Kingdom, for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information about the percentage of those referred to employment training by the Employment Department who did not arrive is not available in the form requested. The total number of people who took part in and subsequently completed employment training for Great Britain, Wales and the valleys initiative area is shown in the following table. The table also shows the percentage of those people referred by the employment service who actually started on employment training for Wales and Great Britain in the year ended March 1992. Some people referred will have withdrawn their application, for example because they have taken up a job; others will have been advised to seek

alternative help after assessment. These people will have arrived but not started. Information on the referral to start ratio for the Valleys Programme area is not readily available in the form requested and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Employment training
Great Britain, Wales and Valleys Initiative Area
April 1991 to March 1992 leavers who completed agreed training

	Per cent.
Great Britain	55
Wales	55
Valleys initiative area	47

Percentage of those referred by the employment service to ET who actually started
April 1991 to March 1992

	Per cent.
Great Britain	32
Wales	38

WALES

Old People

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the activities arranged in Wales to date by his Department to mark the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has commissioned and supported Age Concern Wales to arrange a programme of events to mark the Year, which was formally launched on 11 January. A steering group has been set up to act as the focal point for discussion of ideas, consideration of proposals for events and activities and recommendation of projects and priorities for Wales during the Year. Further information is available from Age Concern Wales.

Consultant Mineralogist

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now take steps to appoint a consultant mineralogist for Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is no present intention to make such an appointment.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning the number and estimated cost of bids made by Welsh local authorities for European regional development fund support for projects during 1993-94; and what provision he has made for supplementary credit approval for them.

Mr. David Hunt: The invitation to bid for European regional development fund support under the Welsh structural funds programmes for the calendar years 1992 and 1993 attracted a total of 1,200 outline applications from all potential sponsors, including local authorities, with an estimated grant potential of some £290 million. These bids represented a considerable overbid against the total resources of some £120 million available to the Welsh programmes, and the monitoring committees charged with implementing the programmes are undertaking a selection process to identify those projects which should be supported from the funds available.

I will be making the necessary provisions to enable SCAs to be issued to match in full that element of an authority's expenditure from 1 April 1993 which is reimbursed by European regional development fund grants.

Mental Handicap Nurses

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his current estimates for *(a)* the number of mental handicap nurses in Wales who will retrain in 1993-94 as general or psychiatric nurses and *(b)* the level of resources allocated by his Department to assist in this process.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The employing health authority or trust has responsibility for ensuring that any such retraining needs are met. No specific central funding is available for this purpose.

Environmental Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to require schools in Wales to publish information on the teaching of environmental education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have no plans to require schools to publish such information. The Office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales published "Environmental Education in the Schools of Wales 1992" on 11 January. I understand that local education authorities have been sent sufficient copies to distribute to all schools.

Local Government

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what studies he has undertaken to establish the cost-effectiveness of a unitary system of local government in Wales; and if he will publish as much information as he has.

Mr. David Hunt: I commissioned Touche Ross Management Consultants to produce a report on the financial implications of a move to a system of unitary authorities. The report was published in March 1992 and a copy is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what investigation he has undertaken to establish the transitional costs of the reorganisation of Welsh local government; and what plans he has to publish his findings.

Mr. David Hunt: I have commissioned Touche Ross Management Consultants to undertake a study of the transitional costs of Welsh local government reorganisation.

I plan to publish the report and place a copy in the Library of the House.

Hearing-impaired Children

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement upon the future development of specialist educational provisions for hearing-impaired children under the unitary authorities in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Special education, including provision for children with hearing impairment, will continue to be treated as a matter of high priority under the new structure of local government. Local education authorities will retain responsibility for identifying and assessing children with special educational needs and making and maintaining statutory statements, as necessary, and for arranging the special educational provision specified. It is anticipated that it will be open to authorities to join together to share specialised services, such as those for hearing-impaired children, if they wish.

Mental Handicap Nurses

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has, for each health authority in Wales for 1993-94, for the number of *(a)* mental handicap nurses staying in their current roles, *(b)* mental handicap nurses transferring to general or psychiatric nursing and *(c)* mental handicap nurses leaving the profession.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Responsibility for identifying future needs for mental handicap nurses within the NHS rests with employing authorities and trusts. This should be done through the workforce planning system in conjunction with the county joint planning teams set up under the auspices of the mental handicap strategy.

KPMG management consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG management consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has awarded the following contracts to KPMG management consultants over the past 12 months.

Financial and risk appraisal on applications for NHS Trust status.
Review of new production and process Research and Development in Wales.
Assessment of the future of the in-house computer bureau.
Evaluation of the agent authority (roads) accounts database.

National Garden Festival

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide figures to show the outturn at *(a)* 1988-89 prices, *(b)* 1991-92 prices and *(c)* cash prices for the urban programme in the valleys programme area, excluding expenditure on National Garden Festival, for each year from 1988-89 to 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: Urban programme outturn expenditure (in £ million) in the valleys programme area, excluding the National Garden Festival, since 1988-89 at *(a)* 1988-89 prices, *(b)* 1991-92 prices and *(c)* cash prices is:

	(a)	(b)	(c)
1988-89	11·44	14·07	11·44
1989-90	12·57	15·47	13·40
1990-91	12·47	15·34	14·35
1991-92	11·12	13·68	13·68
1992-93	N/A	N/A	N/A

Accident Treatment Service

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to launch a review of accident treatment service in the national health service in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None at present, though health authorities are assessing these services as they develop their local strategies for health.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to issue new guidelines to Welsh health authorities concerning the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Guidance will be issued as soon as practicable following consideration of legal advice on this issue.

Special Needs Education

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ring-fence all funding for special needs education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Resources to local authorities are not hypothecated to particular services. It is for authorities themselves to decide how much to direct to education, including special education, in the light of local priorities and circumstances. Specific grant is available to local education authorities under the grants for education support and training programme (GEST) for the training of teachers of children with sensory impairments and severe learning difficulties and other support for children with special needs. Special purpose grant for development is available to fund grant maintained schools for all activities supported at LEA level by the GEST programme.

Nursery Education

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the percentage of children aged under five years attending maintained nursery schools or classes in each Welsh county in each year since 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The percentage of children attending maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in each local education authority is shown in the table.

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan
1979-80	23	23	26	25	39	17	26	51
1980-81	26	24	29	22	38	20	27	52
1981-82	27	26	29	21	43	20	30	54
1982-83	33	27	31	24	42	17	30	53
1983-84	36	25	32	21	39	20	28	53
1984-85	36	25	32	18	40	23	26	49
1985-86	36	26	32	16	39	18	29	48
1986-87	42	26	34	27	45	32	30	55
1987-88	42	26	35	23	45	28	30	57
1988-89	44	28	36	18	43	32	30	56
1989-90	43	27	36	22	44	29	30	55
1990-91	45	27	37	16	43	26	30	53
1991-92	46	28	35	15	40	23	30	60

Archive Service

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has regarding the future funding and organisation of the archive service in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My plans for the archives service will be set out in the White Paper which I shall be publishing shortly.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the future and status of the archive service in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received a number of such representations; copies of these, together with representations on other matters, are in the Library of the House. I am giving careful consideration to the points put to me.

Welsh Language Bill

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much extra finance the Government expect to give to Welsh local authorities to implement the provisions outlined in the Welsh Language Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The financial implications of the Welsh Language Bill will be taken into account in determining the local government revenue settlement in future years.

Criggion Quarry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the future of Criggion quarry on Breidden hill, Montgomeryshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Oil Pollution, Cardigan Bay

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many incidents of oil pollution off Cardigan bay have been reported in each year since 1973; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Figures relating specifically to Cardigan bay are not held centrally. Since 1980, details of all reported oil spills around the United Kingdom coastline have been provided, on a regional basis, in the annual reports of the Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea (ACOPS). Copies of the reports are held in the Library of the House.

Printing Costs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *323-24*, on how many occasions since 1988 disciplinary action has been taken against civil servants responsible for his departmental printing expenditure; in which financial year; and on how many occasions and on what dates such disciplinary action has involved *(a)* suspension on full pay, *(b)* suspension without pay, *(c)* summary dismissal and *(d)* criminal charges.

Mr. David Hunt: There has been one such case of disciplinary action. The officer was suspended on full pay on 6 March 1992, without pay on 11 March 1992 and dismissed on 30 April 1992. Criminal charges are a matter for the police.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *323-24*, for what proportion of Welsh Office policy printing work inclusive of typesetting and graphic design the Central Office of Information is now responsible; and if he will make a statement on the changes in the relationship between HMSO, the Central Office of Information and the Welsh Office introduced since March 1992 in the responsibility for placing contracts.

Mr. David Hunt: Approximately two thirds.

In 1991 the Welsh Office, in reorganising its systems for handling paid publicity and in the interests of value for money, transferred much of this work to the Central Office of Information; in 1992 it transferred the rest.

The Central Office of Information's relationship with HMSO is a matter for them. The relationship between the Welsh Office and HMSO is subject to similar value for money considerations as its paid publicity handling, and since 1991 it has been the same as that between the Welsh Office and any other contractor.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *323-24*, what estimate he has made of the proportion and amount of his Department's total annual contract expenditure on printing, publicity and stationery placed with firms outside Wales in each full financial year since 1988, and for the first half of 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *323-24*, for what proportion of his Department's general stationery and miscellaneous printing contract work, inclusive of typesetting and graphic design, the Central Office of Information is currently responsible; and if he will make a statement on the changes in the responsibility for Welsh Office printing contracts between his Department, HMSO and the Central Office of Information in the last 12 months.

Mr. David Hunt: The Central Office of Information is not responsible for the Department's general stationery and miscellaneous printing contract work including typesetting and graphic design. There have been no changes in the relationship between the Department, HMSO and the Central Office of Information regarding printing contracts in the last 12 months.

Since September 1991 the Department's printing contracts have been awarded entirely on the basis of competitive tendering.

ENVIRONMENT

Nitrous Oxide

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the total amount of nitrous oxide emitted from *(a)* coal-fired power stations and *(b)* gas-fired power stations, in the latest available year.

Mr. Maclean: In 1991, the latest year for which the information is available, emissions of oxides of nitrogen from coal-fired power stations in England and Wales totalled 620 kilotonnes. Similar figures for gas-fired power stations are not available.

Derelict Land

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what figures he has for the amount of derelict land in England; and what studies he has made into the cost of reclaiming it.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 1988 survey of derelict land in England recorded 40,500 hectares of derelict land as at 1 April 1988.

Ove Arup consultants are currently researching the cost effectiveness of a sample of hard end use derelict land grant schemes for the Department.

The cost effectiveness of derelict land grant schemes intended for environmental/recreational end uses has already been studied and is reported in the 1989 HMSO publication "Cost Effective Management of Reclaimed Derelict Sites".

Ecolabelling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are being made in the United Kingdom for the launch in June of the EC-wide ecolabel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The European Commission recently announced that the Community ecolabelling scheme would be formally launched in June. The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board is responsible for administering and promoting the scheme nationally and I have therefore asked the board to reply to the hon. Member direct with more information on the arrangements they will be making for the launch.

Urban Regeneration Agency

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff are intended to be employed by the urban regeneration agency; and what is its budget for the first three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: It will be for the agency to assess the staff resources it requires to deliver its work programme. The agency's budget will incorporate the existing resources of the three programmes it is taking over, including the additional resources for English Estates' work in the coalfields which were announced by the President of the Board of Trade on 19 October. We anticipate that these elements will total to £268 million in 1993-94, rising to about £300 million in 1995-96. These figures depend in part upon the level of receipts raised from the sale of assets.

Children (Temporary Accommodation)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the numbers of children currently living in temporary accommodation, broken down by age and accommodation type.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not available centrally.

Aggregates

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which is the base forecast used in the preparation of the tables option I and option II on pages 19 to 20 respectively of his Department's report "Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England and Wales-Revision of MPG6 Policy Issues Paper".

Mr. Baldry: Option 1 in the policy issues paper is derived from the views expressed about future demand by the regional aggregates working parties (RAWPs) in their regional commentaries which were published in 1992. The RAWPs took into account the long term projections of primary aggregates demand produced in 1991 by ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd. Option II reflects the Government view that between 6,500 million tonnes and 7,000 million tonnes of aggregates may be needed between 1992 and 2011 and was informed by the long term projections of demand for primary aggregates prepared by ECOTEC last year.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the statistical basis for the statement on page 20 of his Department's report "Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England and Wales-Revision of MPG6 Policy Issues Paper" that option II envisages that land won resources in England and Wales identified in the regional commentaries are reduced by an overall level of 20 per cent. during the period of the guidelines.

Mr. Baldry: The option was prepared on the basis of a judgment about the level of supply from land won sources

of primary aggregates that would be consistent with meeting the Government's objectives for a sustainable aggregates policy.

Waste Management

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts have been made by his Department to date to enforce section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The offence in section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 of treating, keeping or disposing of controlled waste in a manner likely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to human health was brought into force on 1 April 1992.

Enforcement of this section is a matter for others, principally waste regulation authorities.

Combe Down Mines

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the effect of the forthcoming EC landfill directive on the remedial works in the Combe Down mines, Bath.

Mr. Maclean: The latest draft of the EC directive on the landfill of waste is currently being substantially revised by the European Commission to take account of amendments considered by the European Parliament at its October plenary session. The proposal will be subject to detailed consideration by the Council of Ministers once it is given priority by a member state holding the presidency. The directive is unlikely to be adopted for a considerable time and it is too early to anticipate what impact its provisions will have on the proposals for remedial works in the Combe Down mines, Bath.

Interim Development Orders

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the areas of the United Kingdom still subject to interim development orders granted before 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Interim Development Order mineral permissions were granted between July 1943 and I July 1948 and preserved by successive planning acts. In relation to the area they cover in England and Wales I refer the hon. Member to my replies on 16 December to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). The position in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to give local planning authorities the power to revoke interim development grants without having to pay compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Government took steps in the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 to deal with interim development order permissions. These can be updated by the imposition of modern environmental conditions which do not attract compensation provided they are consistent with the guidance in MPG9. I have no plans for further measures to deal with such permissions. My Department has recently completed a wide ranging consultation exercise on options for dealing with the problems of old mineral permissions generally and I hope to consult on detailed proposals for change later this year.

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications and correspondence his Department has received since November 1992 on the new thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

David Maclean *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* Since November 1992 my Department has received approximately 55,000 items of correspondence concerning the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional criteria for standard spending assessments are being considered; and what consultation he will introduce to improve the standard spending assessment system.

Mr. Robin Squire: Standard spending assessments (SSAs) already include a wide range of indicators which are updated and refined every year in the light of new data and evidence. In preparation for the 1994-95 settlement, a number of indicators and formulae will be looked at again in the light of the full results from the 1991 census. These include the indicator for additional educational needs and the all ages social index. We will also be considering the possibility of introducing measures of sparsity and density based on census enumeration districts, and of including a factor to represent day visitors. All of this analysis will be fully discussed with local authority representatives. We consider that the present arrangements provide the opportunity for full and widespread consultation and there are no plans for change.

TRANSPORT

Route Guidance Systems

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how his Department proposes to utilise route guidance systems for drivers on the motorway and trunk road systems in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Part II of the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Act 1989 provides enabling powers under which commercial operators may seek licences for such systems.

Travel Information

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action is currently undertaken by his Department to enable improved dissemination of information between the motorway and non-motorway network management authorities to travel information centres and the media's travel information service.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The computerised national lane closure bulletin, which is distributed fortnightly to motoring organisations and the media, provides accurate and timely information about planned lane closures on the strategic network of motorways and other trunk roads.

This system and the information it contains will be developed further as demands for information are identified. Under the EC collaborative programme (DRIVE), the Department is sponsoring research into driver information technology.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department, including agencies, awarded the following commissions to KPMG Management Consultants:

- Trial of project management software for Road Programme Directorate.
- Assistance in formulating the Department's data communications needs.
- Development of an implementation Strategy for Pavement Management.
- Development of an information Strategy for the Vehicle Inspectorate.
- Options study for locating data on trunk roads network.
- Advice on DVOIT privatisation.

Driving Tests

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assistance is currently provided by his Department to help those with reading and/or writing difficulties to complete the written part of the driving test.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Current driving tests do not include a written examination. I shall shortly be considering a broad range of options for testing drivers' knowledge, including the possibility of a written theoretical test, in the light of responses to a consultation paper issued recently by the Driving Standards Agency on the implementation of the second EC driving licence directive. If a written test were to be introduced, the requirements of those with reading or writing difficulties would be taken into account.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* applications and *(b)* actual driving tests were taken in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years; and if he will indicate the proportion of successfully completed driving tests in each instance.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The number of applications received, tests conducted, and the proportion successfully completed for car, motorcycle, heavy goods vehicle and bus tests in Great Britain for the last 10 years are shown in the table.

Year	Car and Motorcycle			Heavy Goods Vehicles and Buses		
	Applications Received	Tests Conducted	Pass Rate per cent.	Applications Received	Tests Conducted	Pass Rate per cent.
1982-83	1,783,700	1,966,909	48	42,256	42,991	55
1983-84	1,905,035	1,867,244	49	43,714	42,674	55
1984-85	1,944,019	1,723,232	49	47,985	47,109	56
1985-86	2,026,972	1,910,103	49	53,841	53,195	55
1986-87	2,091,450	2,015,386	49	67,402	65,725	53
1987-88	2,017,759	2,036,465	51	78,756	76,461	54
1988-89	1,956,238	2,050,064	52	92,695	88,704	53
1989-90	1,953,386	2,030,473	53	106,147	99,183	51
1990-91	1,984,355	1,975,879	53	95,526	96,514	51
1991-92	1,862,382	1,886,146	53	80,039	71,704	51

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total amount of revenue generated from driving test charges in the United Kingdom during each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The total revenue generated from driving test fees in Great Britain during each of the last 10 years is shown in the following table.

Financial year	Heavy goods vehicles and buses (£000)	Cars and motorcycles (£000)	Total (£000)
1982-83	1,912	24,846	26,758
1983-84	Not available	Not available	[1]30,332
1984-85	2,945	28,972	31,917
1985-86	3,314	29,365	32,679
1986-87	Not available	Not available	[1]35,857
1987-88	3,294	31,801	35,095
1988-89	3,900	34,269	38,169
1989-90	4,638	38,306	42,944
1990-91	4,684	38,450	43,134
1991-92	3,596	39,805	43,401

[1]The financial information on tests was not separately analysed for 1983-84 and 1986-87.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many applications have been made for driving tests in each police authority area in Wales in each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many people took driving tests in each police authority area in Wales in each of the last 10 years; and how many tests were successfully completed in each instance, in numbers and as a proportion.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Statistics for driving tests are not collected by police authority area and it is therefore not possible to provide the information requested.

Section 56 Grants

223. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the date, amount awarded and brief descriptions of each project where application for a section 56 grant under the Transport Act 1968 has been successful; if he will list each unsuccessful application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1985, when such grants became available for large new public transport infrastructure projects, the following grants have been awarded.

Project	*Date approved*	*Grant £ million*
Merseyrail safety work	March 1989	0·3
Manchester Metrolink light rail scheme	October 1989	53·0
South Yorkshire Supertram light rail scheme	December 1990	[1]65·0
Ivanhoe Line heavy rail restoration scheme	January 1992	[1]5·0

[1] Provisional figure.

In addition grant of £0·75m was approved in October 1991 for development work on the plans for Midland Metro Line One, a proposed light rail scheme.

Five unsuccessful applications have been made: Merseyside centralised signalling system, Manchester to Blackpool electrification, trolleybuses in West Yorkshire, Halifax bus station, and the extension of the Tyne and Wear Metro to Newcastle airport. Credit approvals were however provided for three of these projects.

We are prepared to grant-aid worthwhile schemes subject to the availability of resources.

Railways (Severe Weather Damage)

296. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what financial assistance will be available to British Rail to help with the cost of repairing damage to Scottish railway lines caused by the recent severe weather.

Mr. Freeman: The cost will qualify for support through the public service obligation grant.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how often ships carrying radioactive waste will be passing Cardigan bay and the west Wales coast in 1993; how many ships are involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We have no information to suggest that there have been any such shipments in 1993 to date or that there will be any during the remainder of this year.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current regulations regarding tankers carrying radioactive waste off Cardigan bay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Radioactive waste must be carried in accordance with the requirements of the Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods and Marine Pollutants) Regulations 1990.

Oil Tankers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to implement new safety regulations for oil tankers travelling off Cardigan bay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department has no plans to implement new and further safety regulations for oil tankers travelling off Cardigan bay. However these matters are within the terms of reference of the Lord Donaldson inquiry announced by my right hon. Friend to the House on 11 January. In the meantime, we are exploring the possibility of introducing interim measures for tanker operations around the United Kingdom.

A5 Bypass

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when in 1993 the public inquiry into the A5 bypass of Dunstable will begin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The need for a public inquiry will depend on the weight and nature of objections to the draft orders which we are aiming to publish this autumn. Any inquiry would be held during 1994.

Motoring Offences (Unadopted Roads)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the *(a)* motoring offences which apply on unadopted highways and *(b)* motoring offences which apply only on adopted highways;

(2) if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the law to ensure that all drink driving legislation applies in circumstances where the road is unadopted.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* The definition of "road" used in the Road Traffic Act 1988, in relation to England and Wales, includes any highway and any other road to which the public has access. Road traffic offences, including the drink-drive offences, therefore apply on all highways, whether adopted or not, and on certain other roads. The drink-drive offences and the offences involving dangerous or careless driving also extend to public places other than roads.

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway there are in the United Kingdom and what percentage is illuminated by overhead lights.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* There are 1,996 miles of motorway in the United Kingdom of which 1,692 miles are in England. Approximately 30 per cent. of the length of motorway in England is lit.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Thai Boxing

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many representations he has received to ban Thai boxing; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have not received any representations from sporting or other authorities to ban Thai boxing. The Sports Council has however met representatives of various Thai boxing and kick boxing bodies to discuss possible recognition of the activity. They are currently awaiting a unified response from these bodies before considering the issue further. At present, Thai boxing and kick boxing are not recognised by the Sports Council for purposes of grant aid or other services.

National Lottery

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what opportunities were given by his Department or the GAH group of consultants to *(a)* individuals, *(b)* private companies and *(c)* foreign Governments to express their willingness to have the information supplied to him published; and what number of each category indicated such willingness;

(2) how many invitations his Department or the GAH group issued to *(a)* individuals, *(b)* private companies and *(c)* foreign Governments requesting information towards his Department's report on the national lottery which were declined; and what was the reason given in each case;

(3) if he will publish a table showing the total number of *(a)* individuals, *(b)* private companies and *(c)* foreign Governments supplying information to the GAH report which he has contacted requesting permission to publish (i) those parts of the report which do not contain commercially sensitive information and (ii) the report in full; on what dates, and by which method, each request was made; and what further action he intends to take with remaining numbers in each category to pursue permission to publish (1) those parts of the report which do not contain commercially sensitive information and (2) the report in full;

(4) how many *(a)* individuals, *(b)* private companies and *(c)* foreign Governments were consulted by the GAH group of consultants or his Department in compiling his Department's report on the national lottery; and how many in each category requested to him in advance of supplying information that their evidence be treated as commercial in confidence.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* The GAH group consulted publicly available documents and reports from lotteries throughout the world, and sought supplementary information by means of a questionnaire, after promising that both the approach and the answers would remain confidential, and that the ensuing report would not be published. Twenty-seven state lotteries responded to the confidential questionnaire. In one instance the assurance of confidentiality was not considered sufficient for the lottery operator to venture any information at all. Much of the information provided is commercially confidential to the operators concerned.

I have not contacted the respondents to re-open the original assurance of confidentiality. Unanimous consent would be necessary for the report to be published, and in many cases the respondents have made it clear from the start that they would under no circumstances allow the information they provided to be made public.

DEFENCE

Hawk Aircraft (Indonesia)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 12 January, *Official Report*, column 749, to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), whether the details of the sale of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia will be included in the UN register of arms sales; and if the entries in the register will be available for inspection in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: A sale of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia would be included in the UN register of conventional arms transfers. The British contribution to the register will be placed in the Library of the House.

Private Rented Accommodation

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF personnel at *(a)* RAF Valley and *(b)* RAF Chivenor were accommodated in rented private sector property in December 1992; and what was the total cost to his Department of that accommodation in each case.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of RAF personnel accommodated in rented private sector property at RAF Valley and RAF Chivenor and the total costs of that accommodation to the Department were as follows:

(a) *RAF Valley*
- (i) December 1991—Nil.
- (ii) December 1992—26 airmen and 10 officers, at a cost of £7,425.

A modernisation programme of officers' married quarters at RAF Valley will be completed in August 1993, after which there will be no need for officers to be in rented private sector property.

(b) *RAF Chivenor*
- (i) December 1991—6 Officers, at a cost of £2,650.
- (ii) December 1992—40 airmen and 11 officers, at a cost of £20,959.

Provision of married quarters to accommodate the above numbers at RAF Chivenor is currently being investigated.

Flight Training

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many days were lost due to poor weather conditions in each year since 1987 at *(a)* RAF Valley, *(b)* RAF Chivenor, *(c)* RAF Brawdy and *(d)* Pembrey weapons range.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The percentage of training time lost when weather conditions were unfit for flying training at RAF Valley, RAF Brawdy and RAF Chivenor during these periods is as follows:

	RAF Valley per cent.	*RAF Brawdy* per cent.	*RAF Chivenor* per cent.
1987	26·5	12·7	8·7
1988	20·8	8·8	5·6
1989	16·5	8·9	4·1
1990	16·8	7·1	6·9
1991	24·0	10·0	6·9

Similar information for RAF Pembrey Sands is recorded as per cent. of range time lost due to weather conditions, as follows:

	per cent.
1987	20
1988	16
1989	11
1990	11
1991	16

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department's internal audit committee completed its review of the ending of flight training at Brawdy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No audit into the ending of flight training at RAF Brawdy has been undertaken. The station was, however, visited as part of a wider audit of the management controls governing the closure of Ministry of Defence establishments, and this work is expected to be completed in the spring.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF pilots based at RAF Valley for advanced weapon training have had to carry out part of that training at RAF St. Evel in 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

United States Naval Facility

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the annual costs to his Department of the support and servicing of the United States naval facility at Brawdy in *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92 and the estimated costs for (i) 1992-93, (ii) 1993-94 and (iii) 1994-95.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Until the end of flying training at Brawdy in August 1992 support for the United States naval facility at RAF Brawdy was included in the overall running costs of the station. Figures for 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The cost for 1993-94 is estimated to be £4·6 million. It is not yet possible to provide an estimate for 1994-95.

Allowances

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the levels of allowances paid to military personnel serving in *(a)* Germany, *(b)* former Yugoslavia and *(c)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The allowances paid to military personnel depend not only on their location but on their rank, job and personal circumstances, including whether they are married or not. It is our general policy that normal rules on allowances apply wherever personnel are serving. These rules include the payment of local overseas allowance to personnel deployed outside the United Kingdom to cover, where appropriate, the additional costs associated with living in the country concerned. Troops deployed from Germany to the former Yugoslavia continue to receive a significant element of the LOA, 70 per cent. for married personnel and 40 per cent. for single personnel, in recognition of their continuing financial commitments in Germany. In recognition of the conditions under which they are serving we have introduced a special welfare package which includes free two-way aerogrammes and an allowance towards the cost of telephone calls for all troops based in the former Yugoslavia. Personnel deployed to Northern Ireland also receive a number of special allowances, for example, in respect of meals and telephone calls.

Exercise Long Summer

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *630-31*, if he will give details of the outsize load required to be moved for Exercise Long Summer in 1992, and the type of civil aircraft chartered for this purpose.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The payload consisted of two Chinook helicopters, associated equipment and spares. The task was carried out by an Antonov aircraft chartered through Heavylift Cargo Airlines Ltd.

Air Charter Budget

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *630-31*, if he will set out the total sum allocated in Supply Estimates in 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93, and to be allocated in 1993-94 to the air charter budget, and the arrangements for its central management.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total sums allocated to air charter in supply estimates were as follows:

	£ Million
1990-91	13·415
1991-92	13·212
1992-93	16·096

The figure for 1993-94 has yet to be agreed. Operations and finance for air charter are centrally managed by a group captain, the deputy director of movements (RAF), based in London. Contracts are placed competitively by contracts staff based in Glasgow.

Exercise Medman

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *630-31*, if he will set out the nature of Exercise Medman in 1990, 1991 and 1992, and the reasons for its change in prioritisation within the Air Charter budget.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Exercise Medman is an all-arms battlegroup exercise, using live ammunition, held at the British Army training unit, Suffield, Canada. The units due to take part in the exercises in 1990 and 1991 were those most likely to be subsequently deployed in support of operations in the Gulf. It was considered essential that the forces in question train in Canada and, as the RAF air transport force was already fully committed, central funding for air charter was provided.

"Capture of Rudolf Hess"

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the oral answer by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of 3 June 1992,

Official Report, column 823, if he will release for public perusal the files bearing the title "Capture of Rudolf Hess" between May and July 1941 ref. no. WO 199/3288A and B.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Both files are already available for perusal at the Public Record Office. File WO 199/3288A was released to the public domain in 1977 and WO 199/3288B in January 1992.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the operating costs of providing Sea King search and rescue helicopter coverage at RAF Boulmer and RAF Leconfield for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what are the estimated costs for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Tankers

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what monitoring has been carried out by his Department of tanker traffic passing through the Minches; what results are available from that monitoring; what resources and facilities are utilised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence agreed in 1991 that MOD support vessels operating in the area would report to the Stornoway coastguard on an opportunity basis sightings of laden tankers transitting the Minches. Records have not been kept of any reports made under this arrangement.

Rayo Rocket System

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about sales of the Rayo rocket system developed by Royal Ordnance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I have received a number of representations on this matter. Royal Ordnance's participation in the RAYO project continues to be subject to very careful scrutiny under the normal export licensing disciplines.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what defence research agency establishment the Rayo multiple launch rocket system has been tested.

Mr. Aitken: For reasons of commercial confidentiality we do not release details of tests by manufacturers at MOD ranges.

Gulf Trust Fund

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his broad estimate as to the numbers of potential beneficiaries, including widows and dependent children, who might be eligible to apply for help from the Gulf trust fund.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Those who are entitled to be beneficiaries of the Gulf trust fund are defined in the trust deed as members of Her Majesty's armed forces involved in military and other operations relating to or in connection with the Gulf conflict, the civilian personnel attached to or accompanying such members of Her Majesty's armed forces and their respective dependants. On this basis the number of potential beneficiaries from those who served in theatre alone is some 43,500 service and civilian personnel as well as their dependants. Those who have already received assistance from the fund may require further financial help and stress and trauma-related cases may not emerge for a number of years.

Service Pensions

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will review his policy with regard to the provision of pensions for all widows of service men, where their marriage took place after service in the forces;

(2) what consideration has been given to the provision of pensions for all widows of service men who fought in the second world war but married after leaving service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Pension entitlements for service men and their widows are determined according to the terms applicable to the date on which service ends and, where appropriate, on the duration of that service.

The terms of the armed forces pension scheme include provision for a pension to be awarded to the eligible widow of a service man who marries after leaving service provided that some part of his service was given on or after 6 April 1978 and that he qualified for retired pay or pension.

There are no plans to change these arrangements.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Amnesty International

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy regarding consultation with Amnesty International; how many times he has met representatives of the organisation in the past 12 months; what action he has taken following those representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Consultations with Amnesty International are valued by us. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary last met representatives of Amnesty in September 1992; in addition I addressed representatives of non-governmental organisations (including Amnesty) on 18 January, and Amnesty had a general discussion with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 20 January. I attended that meeting. Information received from Amnesty complements Government monitoring of human rights abuse, and therefore contributes to the formulation of policy.

Turkey

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the human rights implications of the killing of journalists in Turkey since 1991.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Turkish Government are well aware of our concern about human rights in Turkey. We welcome Prime Minister Demirel's recognition of a Kurdish identity and his Government's intention to make human rights improvements a priority. Prime Minister Demirel has pledged to bring to justice those responsible for the killing of journalists in south east Turkey.

Vietnam

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his most recent assessment of the economic and political situation in Vietnam.

Mr. Goodlad: The new constitution adopted on 15 April 1992 retained the primacy of the Communist party of Vietnam, but modified the Government structure to make it more accountable to the National Assembly, elections for which were held on 19 July 1992. Since 1986, Vietnam has pursued a programme of economic restructuring, aimed at moving to a free-market system. The IMF consider this an exemplary effort at economic reform.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people, in total, have appealed against repatriation from Hong Kong to Vietnam; and how many of these appeals have been successful.

Mr. Goodlad: As at 31 December 1992, 30,971 appeals had been heard by the Refugee Status review board. Of these 1,855 were successful.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring has taken place to date of those Vietnamese boat people who have been repatriated from Hong Kong to Vietnam to ensure that they do not face persecution on being returned to Vietnam; if such monitoring is continuing; and what the results of the monitoring reveal.

Mr. Goodland: Monitoring has been and will continue to be carried out by the staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the British embassy in Hanoi and non-governmental organisations working in Vietnam.

There has been no evidence of ill-treatment by the Vietnamese authorities in more than 31,000 cases, including returns from first asylum countries in the region other than Hong Kong.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations between the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

Mr. Goodlad: The development of our relations with Vietnam has been given greater impetus by progress towards a political settlement in Cambodia and a solution of the problem of Vietnamese migrants in Hong Kong. Our aid programme to Vietnam was resumed in 1990. Bilateral trade is increasing rapidly and the United Kingdom is now the fifth largest foreign investor in Vietnam. The Vietnamese Foreign Minister paid a successful visit to the United Kingdom in June 1992, and Sir George Young, Lord Caithness and I all visited Vietnam last year. We are also at the forefront of efforts to expand relations between the EC and Vietnam, and to normalise Vietnam's relations with the international financial institutions.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people have, in total to date, been repatriated from Hong Kong to Vietnam.

Mr. Goodlad: As at 31 December 1992, 26,753 Vietnamese migrants had been repatriated.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people currently remain in Hong Kong awaiting repatriation to Vietnam.

Mr. Goodlad: As at 31 December 1992, 22,118 Vietnamese migrants had been found not to be refugees and were awaiting repatriation. A further 20,599 were awaiting refugee status determination.

Iran

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding Iran's military build-up and the removal by the Iranian Government of non-Iranians from Abu Musa island in the Gulf.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We accept the right of countries to acquire the means to defend themselves, but are concerned that Iran's arms procurement should not pose a threat to regional stability. Iranian actions on Abu Musa in the course of last year were a cause for concern in terms of regional stability. We and our European Community partners have urged Iran and the United Arab Emirates to work for a peaceful resolution of their differences.

Denmark

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the provisions of international law governing the extent to which the International Court of Justice may adjudicate on the intergovernmental decision taken in Edinburgh concerning Denmark.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The provisions of international law governing the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice to adjudicate on questions arising on international agreements, such as the decision concerning Denmark agreed at the Edinburgh European Council, are set out in the statute of the International Court of Justice, annexed to the UN charter and in particular chapter II.

Mr. Mansoor Hussain Qureshi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 19 January concerning Mansoor Hussain Qureshi—Ref: K051037—*Official Report*, column *157*, when Mr. Qureshi was refused entry clearance to join his wife in the United Kingdom; what representations have been received at the British post in Karachi by Mr. Qureshi's representatives; what is the average time taken by the post in Karachi in preparing explanatory statements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Mr. Qureshi was refused entry clearance to join his wife on 15 April 1992.

The Deputy High Commission in Karachi received representations from Chans and Co., immigration consultants, in February 1992; from Bradford law centre on 19 November 1992 and 14 January 1993; and from Ruth Budney and Co, in December 1992.

The average time taken by the deputy high commission in Karachi in preparing explanatory statements is, 12 weeks from receipt of the completed appeal forms.

As the hon. Member may know, it has only recently come to light that Mr. Qureshi's appeal forms never

reached the post in Karachi. However, now that they have received proof of posting from Bradford law centre, they have agreed to act as if the appeal had been submitted in time.

Laws of War

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of the additional protocols to the Geneva convention on the laws of war have been signed and ratified by Her Majesty's Government; which have been signed but not ratified; which have not been signed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad *[pursuant to the reply 15 December 1992 c. 87]:* The date given was incorrect. The United Kingdom signed both additional protocols on 12 December 1977. It has not yet ratified them.

Edinburgh Summit

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government intend to register with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, pursuant to article 102 of the United Nations charter, the decision of the head of state and Government meeting within the European Council held at Edinburgh on 12 December 1992 concerning certain problems raised by Denmark.

Mr. Garel-Jones *[pursuant to his reply 13 January 1993 c. 758]:* The decision is registrable with the United Nations secretariat and will be registered. But the question does not arise until the entry into force of the decision on Denmark, which by virtue of section E is linked to that of the Maastricht treaty itself.

HEALTH

Drug Prescribing

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *412*, what was the percentage increase in the cost of publishing the British National Formulary in 1991-92 compared with 1990-91; and what the figure was in real terms using *(a)* the price index for NHS medicines and *(b)* the retail prices index.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no prices index for national health service medicines. The remaining information requested is in the table.

1990-91 Expenditure £	*1991-92 Expenditure* £	*Percentage increase*	*Percentage increase deflated by the RPI*
1,191,169	1,296,320	8·83	4·64

Note: The Retail Prices Index (RPI) for the 12 months to March 1992 is 4 per cent.

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *412*, what was the percentage increase in the cost of servicing the prescribing research centre at Leeds university in 1991-92 compared with 1990-91; and what the figure was in real terms using *(a)* the prices index for national health service medicines and *(b)* the retail prices index.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no prices index for national health service medicines. The remaining information requested is in the table.

1990-91 expenditure £	*1991-92 expenditure* £	*Increase* Per cent.	*Increase deflated by the RPI* Per cent.
328,550	377,984	15·05	10·62

Note: The retail prices index (RPI) for the 12 months to March 1992 is 4 per cent.

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *412*, what was the percentage increase in the cost of the medicines resources centre in 1991-92 compared with the previous year; and what the figure was in real terms using *(a)* the prices index for national health service medicines and *(b)* the retail prices index.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no prices index for national health service medicines. The remaining information requested is in the table.

1990-91 expenditure £	*1991-92 expenditure* £	*Increase* Per cent.	*Increase deflated by the RPI* Per cent.
250,000	275,000	10·00	5·77

Note: The retail prices index (RPI) for the 12 months to March 1992 is 4 per cent.

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *412*, what was the percentage increase in the cost of supporting the publication and distribution of *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin* in 1991-92 compared with the previous year in cash and in real terms.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is in the table.

1990-91 expenditure £	*1991-92 expenditure* £	*Per cent. increase*	*Real terms per cent. increase*
750,863	827,305	10·18	5·94

Notes:
1. The expenditure figure for 1990-91 includes an amount for the Adverse Drugs Reactions Bulletin which was discontinued in June 1990.
2. The real terms figure takes into account the RPI figure for the 12 months to March 1992 which is 4 per cent.

Small Rural Hospitals

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been carried out by, or under the auspices of her Department into the medical value and community role of small hospitals in rural areas.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Epilepsy

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of government funding will be provided for medical research into epilepsy in 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health Departments' recent research expenditure in this field amounts to some £70,000 on a number of projects, of which a small part is to be spent during 1993.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives its grant-in-aid from the Office of Science and Technology under the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In 1991-92 the MRC spent £381,000 on research into epilepsy. The MRC is always willing to consider scientifically sound proposals for research in competition with other applications. Any change in the level of spending during subsequent years will depend on the nature of applications received.

Dentistry

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is planning to maintain the current level of NHS dental services in Cornwall; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is the responsibility of the family health services authority (FHSA) to ensure that local services remain accessible. FHSAs may apply for permission to employ salaried dentists if they consider it necessary to maintain services locally. Approval has recently been given to the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly FHSA to employ two salaried dentists, who will work from a mobile clinic serving a number of areas in the locality. Anyone who needs help in obtaining national health service dental treatment should contact the FHSA.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many courses of dental treatment were undertaken in Cornwall in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is given in the table.

Courses of Dental Treatment in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Family Health Services Authority

Year	Adults	Children	Total
1987-88	229,290	97,290	326,580
1988-89	241,450	98,220	339,670
1989-90	238,716	101,631	340,347
1990-91	237,047	82,423	319,470
1991-92	262,771	26,810	289,581

Note:
The data for each year are not fully comparable. Changes introduced by the new contract for general dental practitioners on 1 October 1990, mean that most treatment for under 18s is given under capitation arrangements and is therefore no longer separately identified.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received about the provision of national health service dental treatment in Cornwall; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since July last year we have received 18 letters from hon. Members about national health service dental treatment in Cornwall and a number from members of the public.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the amount paid to dental practitioners in Cornwall in each of the past five years at constant prices together with the planned level of remuneration for the next three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is shown in the table.

Gross payments to general dental practitioners (GDPs) in contract with Cornwall and Isle of Scilly family health services authority

Financial Year	Cash[1] £ million	At 1991-92 prices[2] £ million
1987-88	6·778	8·946
1988-89	7·822	9·623
1989-90	8·432	9·734
1990-91	9·608	10·272
1991-92	12·051	12·051

Notes:
[1]Based on the total of treatment and registration fees (including charges paid by patients) authorised for payment to GDPs, but excluding additional earnings such as seniority payments, vocational training allowances, and the direct reimbursement of business rates. Data for 1987-88 to 1990-91 are taken from Financial Information System returns and those for 1991-92 are taken from payments scheduled by the Dental Practice Board.
[2]Adjustment using the gross domestic product deflator.

Levels of GDP remuneration are forecast at national level. For 1992-93, we expect that the average GDP in Great Britain will have a gross income of about £88,000. The levels of gross remuneration for GDPs for 1993-94 and 1994-95 have yet to be determined.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the basis on which payments for courses of dental treatment, materials and laboratory fees are calculated.

Dr. Mawhinney: Dentists' remuneration for national health service work is set in a process of several stages. The Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB) recommends a target average net income (TANI) which it considers dentists should earn from providing NHS general dental services, and the Government decide to accept or amend the recommendation and sets the TANI.

The dental rates study group (DRSG) then forecasts the level of dentists' expenses (including materials and laboratory costs) for the coming year and adds this figure to the TANI to produce target average gross income (TAGI). TAGI is modified, if necessary, to take account of under or over-payments of net income arising from an earlier year to produce the sum due to the average dentist. Finally, the DRSG forecasts the amount of NHS work that dentists will undertake in the coming year and sets the scale of individual payments and fees, taking account of the report of its laboratory and materials joint working party, that will, given the forecast amount of work, deliver the TAGI sum due to the average dentist.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental practices in Cornwall have *(a)* restricted the number of new NHS patients they will take on or *(b)* opted out of NHS dental treatment in the last 12 month period for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about the number of dental practices restricting the numbers of new national health service patients is not available centrally. Dentists are independent contractors and, as such, are free to accept or refuse patients for NHS treatment. They may also practise privately, wholly or in part, if they wish. Since July 1992, one dentist out of a total of 145[1] dentists as at 30 June 1992 in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly FHSA, has asked for their name to be removed from the dental list.

[1] Includes dentists who may also have a contract with another FHSA in addition to Cornwall and Isles of Scilly FHSA.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase the number of children registered with general dental practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for family health services authorities, working with district health authorities, to take action to encourage children to be registered with a dentist. The dental contract, introduced in 1990, encourages raised awareness and a more preventative approach to dentistry. As at November 1992, there were 7·3 million children in England registered with a General Dental Practitioner—two thirds of all children in England.

Dentistry

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many nursing mothers received dental treatment in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what was the average cost per patient;

(2) how many pregnant women received dental treatment in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what was the average cost per patient.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of courses of dental treatment for nursing mothers in England in 1991-92 was 666,816, with an average cost per course of treatment of £46·01. The number of courses of dental treatment for pregnant women in 1991-92 was 453,467, with an average cost per course of treatment was £33·78.

Figures for 1990-91 are not available.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average cost per adult patient for each course of dental treatment in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: The average cost per adult patient for each course of national health service treatment in 1990-91 was £35·58 and in 1991-92 it was £36·11.

Brockhall Hospital

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps were taken to set aside the terms of the lease of land at Brockhall hospital in East Lancashire which stipulated that the land and everything on it would revert to the freeholder in the event of Brockhall hospital being closed.

Mr. Sackville: The Secretary of State has no power to override the restrictive covenant attached to the leasehold interest in this land which comprises residential property, attached to Brockhall hospital. Following counsel's opinion, the regional health authority has reached a negotiated settlement with the freeholder giving security of tenure to the tenants and the health authority a full share in any redevelopment.

Hospital Freehold

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* those hospitals in England where the freehold title lies other than with the NHS and *(b)* those hospitals that will revert to the freeholder when they are no longer used for health purposes.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. National health service property is managed by NHS trusts, or by health authorities on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Migrants (Mental Health)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is held by his Department concerning the incidence of mental health problems amongst migrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa, who are settled in Greater London.

Mr. Yeo: District health authorities are responsible for assessing the mental health needs of their populations, including immigrants, and for providing necessary services. The Department does not, therefore, routinely collect statistics or other information on the incidence of mental disorders among immigrant populations.

Departmental officials are in discussion with the Somali counselling project about its work among the Somalian community.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been allocated by her Department to date in publicising the Children Act 1989 and the relevant guidance notes amongst organisations of and for disabled people.

Mr. Yeo: Expenditure on publicising the Children Act 1989 and associated guides was:

	£
1989-90	3,863
1990-91	86,007
1991-92	806,271
1992-93	[1]85,756

[1] Estimated.

Information on publicity material that may have been sent to or requested by disabled people or organisations for the disabled is not available centrally.

Breast and Cervical Cancer

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that more resources are allocated for mobile units for the screening of breast and cervical cancer; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The bulk of cervical screening is performed in general practitioner surgeries or community and family planning clinics. Special facilities are therefore not necessary.

Between 1987 and 1990, the Government provided £70 million in the United Kingdom (£55 million in England) to set up and run the breast screening programme including

the purchase of equipment. Current funding to meet the costs of the breast screening programme is built into health authority allocations and they should implement their breast screening programmes within the overall money allocated to them. It is for health authorities to determine whether additional resources should be made available for screening services in the light of local needs and priorities.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has regarding the prevalence of the practice of screening women prior to abortion for chlamydia.

Mr. Sackville: Information about levels of chlamydia screening is not available centrally. The decision whether or not to offer such screening prior to abortion is one for the doctor concerned.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many cases of abortion, in the last year for which figures are available, it was necessary to provide blood transfusions to the mother.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Care Beds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities have no continuing care beds.

Mr. Yeo: Information collected by the Department on numbers of geriatric beds does not separately identify those used for continuing care. Health authorities are responsible for purchasing services to meet the needs of frail elderly patients, including continuing care for those who require it.

Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities are providing incontinence services for people in residential care homes on the same basis as people living in their own homes; and whether a charge is made.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is not held centrally.

Elderly People (Housing Transfers)

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which local authorities have transferred or propose to transfer all or some of their elderly persons homes to a housing trust or association; how many homes are involved out of the total number in each local authority; and to which housing trusts or associations the homes have been or are proposed to be transferred.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not collected centrally.

Voluntary Organisations (Assistance)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what funding under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 will be made available through Liverpool health authority in 1993-94 to agencies dealing with psychiatric patients, mentally ill patients and mental handicap patients;

(2) if she will list the Liverpool agencies which under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 were funded in 1992-93; how much each received; how many patients they care for; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Grants made by the Department under the section 64 general scheme are almost entirely to assist with the central administrative costs of, or to support a national project run by, a national voluntary organisation.

Health authorities also have powers to make grants under section 64. Information on such grants is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Liverpool health authority for details.

Dentures

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of dentures supplied in the most recent year for which figures are available; what were the comparable figures in each of the previous 10 years; and what figures she has for upper and lower dentures.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is given in the table.

	Synthetic dentures			*Metal dentures*
Year	*Upper*	*Lower*	*Total*	*total*
1981	998,390	730,000	1,728,390	113,740
1982	1,052,330	780,280	1,832,610	136,550
1983	1,038,180	769,860	1,808,040	143,230
1984	1,028,130	756,960	1,785,090	154,330
1985	1,058,050	789,300	1,847,350	172,040
1986-87	1,007,900	742,170	1,750,070	200,210
1987-88	1,010,130	736,670	1,746,800	199,400
1988-89	1,037,700	760,560	1,798,260	206,830
1989-90	883,680	625,890	1,509,570	193,700
1990-91	—	—	1,457,648	195,814
1991-92	—	—	1,536,286	199,958

Notes:

Data for 1981 to 1985 are given in calendar years. Data for 1986-87 to 1991-92 are given in financial years.

Separate figures for upper and lower synthetic dentures are not available for 1990-91 and 1991-92. Separate figures for upper and lower metal dentures are not available for any of the years quoted.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice and suggestions her Department has given to those managing community care in local authorities as to how best to appraise the effectiveness and efficiency of the services they provide.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities and their senior social services are responsible for monitoring the services they provide. This has been strengthened with the introduction of arms-length inspection units and statutory complaints procedures both of which can contribute to quality control. They also draw on the advice, guidance and help offered by the Department. In particular, the social services inspectorate makes available its inspection reports to the authorities concerned and offers guidance on good practice. The Audit Commission has an important role in assessing the cost effectiveness of local authority provision and in drawing the attention of individual authorities to their responsibilities that need to be managed more

effectively. Also, the local authority performance indicator package issued by the Audit Commission on 15 December 1992 should ensure that the public will increasingly be able to judge the effectiveness and efficiency of a wide range of local authority services.

NHS Drugs

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost to the national health service of prescribed but unused drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the introduction of a triple prescription form as a means of preventing wastage of prescribed drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: This matter is still under consideration.

DHA Mergers

47. **Mr. David Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many applications for amalgamation she has received from district health authorities; and if she will list them.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has received 14 applications from regional health authorities to merge the following district health authorities:

Hull and East Yorkshire district health authorities

Grimsby and Scunthorpe district health authorities

Calderdale, Dewsbury and Huddersfield district health authorities

Pontefract and Wakefield district health authorities

West Suffolk and East Suffolk district health authorities

North East Essex, Mid Essex and West Essex district health authorities

Bloomsbury and Islington and Hampstead district health authorities

Southend, Basildon and Thurrock and Brentwood (part of Barking, Havering and Brentwood) district health authorities

Enfield and Haringey district health authorities

Lewisham and North Southwark, Camberwell and West Lambeth district health authorities

Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings district health authorities

Aylesbury Vale, Wycombe and Milton Keynes district health authorities

Kingston and Esher and Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton health authorities

North East Warwickshire and South Warwickshire health authorities.

Correspondence

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to reply to the letter sent to her on 27 August 1992 by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill, about the killing of Lee and Nicholas Evans.

Mr. Sackville: I wrote to the hon. Member on 12 October 1992.

Patients (Transport)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the criteria on which calls received by the London ambulance service are transferred to the patients transport service, after 8 pm Monday to Friday and at weekends; how many calls were transferred; how many calls were taken up by patient transport services; how many calls were of an urgent and non-urgent nature over the past three months; and over what period such statistics are available.

Mr. Sackville: Only in exceptional circumstances should calls for emergency ambulances be passed to the patient transport service. There are no records held centrally of when this may have occurred in the London ambulance service. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. James Harris, chairman of the London ambulance service, for details.

Electromagnetic Radiation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been undertaken by Her Department into the effects of electromagnetic radiation on the uptake of calcium ions by human cells.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* No such studies have been undertaken by the Department, nor any other body so far as we are aware. Studies in the United States involving animal cells have raised the possibility of an effect of electromagnetic radiation on the uptake of calcium ions. However, subsequent work undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board does not suggest an adverse effect. This work has recently been submitted for publication.

Premature Births

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many babies were born prematurely in the United Kingdom in the last two years; and how many of these *(a)* contracted advanced retinopathy, *(b)* received treatment for advanced retinopathy in the United Kingdom, *(c)* received treatment for advanced retinopathy outside the United Kingdom and *(d)* responded to such treatment.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* This information is not available in the form requested.

Babies who are very premature are prone to a condition known as retinopathy of prematurity, the most severe cases tending to occur in babies weighing less than 1,500 g or of 31 weeks gestation or less. In 1990 in England and Wales, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 4,827 babies of less than 1,500 g who survived the first year of life. The number affected by retinopathy of prematurity is not known, though research studies which have been carried out suggest that more than half of those weighing less than 1,500 g experience some form of retinopathy. In most cases of retinopathy of prematurity, the condition improves without recourse to treatment.

Details of the number of low birthweight babies receiving treatment for severe retinopathy either in this country or overseas are not collected centrally; nor is information collected centrally on the outcome of such treatment.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans her Department has to sponsor or conduct research into the cause and treatment of advanced retinopathy in premature babies.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The British Association of Perinatal Medicine and the College of Ophthalmologists have produced joint professional guidelines on the care of retinopathy of prematurity. The Department is currently discussing with the professional bodies concerned what further research studies are required to find out the extent to which this knowledge is being applied in practice.

SCOTLAND

Renfrewshire (Lords-Lieutenant)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* names, *(b)* occupations and *(c)* places of residence of (i) the vice lord-lieutenant and (ii) the deputy lords-lieutenant of the county of Renfrewshire; if he plans to make any further nominations; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 20 January]:* Vice lord-lieutenants and deputy lieutenants are appointed by the lord-lieutenant, subject to Her Majesty's approbation. Current information about their occupations is not held centrally. The names and places of residence of the deputy lieutenants for Renfrewshire are as follows:—

RENFREWSHIRE

Vice Lord-Lieutenant

Colonel Sir Houston Shaw Stewart of Greenock and Blackhall Bt MC: Inverkip

Deputy Lieutenants

Commander Henry C. Abram VRD OStJ: Kilmacolm
Lt Col A Leonard Aitkenhead MBE TD: Giffnock
Brigadier John Brown OBE MM TD: Newton Mearns
G W N H Clark Esq: Inverkip
Sir Ian Denholm CBE: Lochwinnoch
Alan R. Devereux Esq CBE: Giffnock
The Right Hon. The Lord Goold CA: Clarkston
Captain William H Hunter CBE: Kilmalcolm
Captain David A Kerr MC TD: Greenock
Mrs. Helen M. Laird OBE PhD: Blanefield
Sir William J Lithgow Bt of Ormsary: Langbank
Wing Commander C Hector MacLean AE: Kilmacolm
Sir Robert A Maclean KBE LLD: Bridge of Weir
The Right Hon. The Lord Maclay: Kilmacolm
George G MacMillan of MacMillan and Knap: Langbank
James R Minto Esq OBE PhD: Kilbarchan
Group Captain George C Pinkerton OBE DFC AE: Houston
Major John G. Stewart TD: Houston
Sir Eric G Yarrow Bt MBE: Kilmacolm
Sir Simpson Stevenson LLD: Gourock

European Forests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contribution Her Majesty's Government made to the fourth annual report on Europe's forests by the European Commission.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* The 1992 report on forest condition in Europe, which was produced jointly by the Commission of the European Communities and the United Nations economic commission for Europe, was based on the results of forest health surveys carried out in 1991 by the forest services of 33 European countries. In Britain, the survey was carried out by the Forestry Commission which submitted the results to the compilers of the report.

Hill Livestock

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many producers are entitled to hill livestock compensation allowances in Scotland; and what proportion of those are located in *(a)* severely disadvantaged and *(b)* disadvantaged areas.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* My Department's information relates to the number of producers receiving hill livestock compensatory allowances. Under the 1992 scheme 17,706 producers have received HLCAs of whom 16,927 are situated in severely disadvantaged areas and 779 in the disadvantaged areas.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the discrepancy between the low farm gate prices available to Scottish hill livestock producers and the high retail prices paid by consumers in the shops.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement setting out the reasons for reducing levels of hill livestock compensatory allowances; and what assistance he will give the Scottish hill livestock farmers to make up the reduction in income they will sustain as a result.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* We took the decision to reduce HLCA sheep rates after a careful examination of the economic circumstances of farmers in the hills and uplands. This showed that the incomes of specialist sheep producers had risen substantially over the last two years. The reduction in HLCAs will be substantially more than offset by increases in the 1992 sheep annual premium.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many employees were engaged by Scottish hill livestock farming businesses over each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) what percentage of the total labour force engaged in hill livestock farming in Scotland lost their jobs over the last five years for which figures are available.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The number of employees engaged by Scottish hill livestock businesses in each of the last five years is set out in the following table. Information is collected only on levels of employment.

Year	*Number of Employees*	*Percentage Change*
1988	6,880	—
1989	6,874	−0·1
1990	6,978	+1·5
1991	6,830	−2·1
1992	6,704	−1·8

Notes:

1. Employees include family and hired workers, full-time and part-time workers and casual/seasonal workers. Farmers and

spouses are excluded.
2. All figures relate to main holdings classified as Less Favoured Areas (LFA) mainly sheep, LFA mainly cattle or LFA cattle and sheep from Scottish June 1992 census data.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of state-financed social payments, subsidies and other schemes to provide a supplement to income, within the common agricultural policy available to hill farmers in other EC member states.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The information is not readily available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the net farm income figures for Scottish hill livestock farming businesses over the past five years for which figures are available at constant prices shown as a percentage of average full time manual earnings for the same period.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Information on net farm incomes of hill livestock farm businesses and average full-time manual earnings, in money and real terms, over the last five years is set out in the following table. Net farm income is not a measure of the direct cash earnings that farmers receive and hence is not comparable with average manual earnings.

	Net farm income All hill livestock farms[1] *(£ per farm)*		*Average full-time manual earnings (male) (£ per male worker)*	
	Money terms	*Deflated by RPI*[2]	*Money terms*	*Deflated by RPI*[2]
1987-88	8,685	8,685	9,344	9,344
1988-89	11,029	10,514	10,135	9,662
1989-90	8,865	7,838	10,915	9,651
1990-91	8,583	6,933	12,048	9,732
[3]1991-92	8,207	6,265	13,057	9,967

[1] Average of net farm income for less favoured area (LFA) mainly sheep, LFA mainly cattle and LFA cattle and sheep farms.
[2] 1987-88 = 100.
Source: The Scottish Abstract of Statistics.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number and proportion of farmers in Scotland who receive hill livestock compensatory allowance payments.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Under the 1992 HLCA scheme a total of 17,706 producers received payments. That represents 85 per cent. of occupiers of main holdings in Scotland from the June 1992 agricultural census.

Livestock Producers

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the level of average net farm income available to Scottish livestock producers in 1993 and 1994.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* We will shortly be announcing net farm income figures for 1992-93. The level of net farm incomes in 1993 and 1994 cannot be predicted since it will depend on a number of factors, including market returns in those years.

Land

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what hectarage of land in Scotland is in *(a)* less-favoured areas, *(b)* severly disadvantaged areas and *(c)* disadvantaged areas; what proportion of land in Scotland each figure represents; and how many farmers are involved.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Information on agricultural land within the less favoured area is in the following table. The agricultural census collects information on occupiers of main holdings rather than on farmers. Information is not collected separately for severely disadvantaged and disadvantaged areas because of the small number of main holdings in the latter category.

	Scotland	*Within LFA boundary*	*Within LFA boundary as a percentage of Scotland per cent.*
Land (hectares)	5,296,038	4,612,270	87
Occupiers	20,724	15,562	75

Source: June Agricultural Census 1992. (Occupiers of main holdings only).

Road Traffic Accidents

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people have been charged by Scottish police forces for failing to report and stop at the scene of a road traffic accident, in each of the last five years; and if he will give a regional breakdown of these figures;

(2) how many people have been prosecuted for failing to report and stop at the scene of a road traffic accident, in each of the last five years; and if he will give a regional breakdown of these figures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Table (i) gives the total number of offences under section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, and corresponding earlier legislation, which were cleared up by Scottish police forces. Table (ii) gives the number of offences under section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, and corresponding earlier legislation, which were proceeded against. Section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 includes both failing to stop or report a road traffic accident and also failing to provide proof of insurance.

Failing to stop or report a road traffic accident, or give information or insurance documents, by region, Scotland 1987 to 1991

(i) Number of offences cleared-up

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Borders	207	213	195	174	144
Central	290	346	334	334	295
Dumfries and Galloway	359	417	496	403	471
Fife	625	501	524	605	476
Grampian	1,388	1,277	1,270	1,313	1,286
Highland	370	340	305	310	380
Lothian	1,879	1,850	1,578	1,718	2,058
Strathclyde	3,035	2,932	2,865	2,831	2,794
Tayside	709	595	666	688	584
Orkney	26	37	26	37	18
Shetland	40	32	43	33	34
Western Isles	32	27	40	25	50
SCOTLAND	8,960	8,567	8,342	8,471	8,590

(ii) Offences proceeded against by court location

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Borders	84	82	101	99	81
Central	241	251	244	238	229
Dumfries and Galloway	191	265	346	354	266
Fife	234	199	185	198	202
Grampian	686	977	777	896	977
Highland	233	193	165	193	216
Lothian	1,476	1,255	1,075	1,206	1,097
Strathclyde	1,418	1,581	1,389	1,406	1,380
Tayside	571	528	563	509	461
Orkney	38	22	18	31	13
Shetland	57	20	14	14	26
Western Isles	25	18	23	38	36
High Court	5	4	2	7	4
Proceedings discharged before court appearance	75	66	59	41	3
SCOTLAND	5,334	5,461	4,961	5,230	4,991

Scottish Homes (Rents)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what would the average Scottish Homes rent have been if rents had increased only by the rate of inflation in every year since the establishment of Scottish Homes; and what is average rent of Scottish Homes for 1992-93;

(2) what is the amount in cash and real terms by which Scottish Homes has raised its average rents since its establishment;

(3) what percentage of Scottish Homes tenants received housing benefit in each year since the establishment of Scottish Homes;

(4) what is the percentage amount by which Scottish Homes has raised rents in each year since its establishment; and what was the rate of inflation in each of those years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The information is set out in the table.

Scottish Homes Rents

1	2	3	4		5	6
Year	Average rent increase[1]	Inflation rate based on RPI percentage	Annual rent rise Cash	Constant prices[3]	Average rent from 1989-90 increased by inflation rate at column 3	Percentage of tenants on housing benefit
1989-90	£20·65	(²9·7)	7·8	1·63	1·88	20·65	54·86
1990-91	£23·35	(14·0)	9·6	2·70	2·89	22·26	57·98
1991-92	£26·51	(14·5)	4·8	3·16	3·16	24·40	60·09
1992-93	£29·14	(9·0)	n/a	2·63	2·52	25·57	62·86
1993-94	£31·76	(9·0)	n/a	2·62	2·45	n/a	n/a

[1] Different rent rises apply to different properties—average percentage increase does not necessarily apply to the average weekly rent.
[2] Percentage increase over previous year.
[3] Calculated by applying GDP deflator using 1991-92 as base year.

Mental Hospitals

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many beds in mental hospitals were *(a)* closed and *(b)* negotiated to close in 1992 in each health board area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* From a total of 17,631 mental health beds in Scotland, 1,336 were closed in 1992. Some of these will have been replaced by contracts with private or voluntary sector providers, but precise information is not held centrally. Health boards are constantly reviewing their assessment of need, consequently separate figures for negotiated closures are not available.

Mental health beds closed in 1992	*Number*
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	16
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board	—
Borders Health Board	8
Dumfries and Galloway Health Board	17
Fife Health Board	170
Forth Valley Health Board	120
Grampian Health Board	109
Greater Glasgow Health Board	487
Highland Health Board	45
Lanarkshire Health Board	95
Lothian Health Board	102
Tayside Health Board	167
Orkney Health Board	—
Shetland Health Board	—
Western Isles Health Board	—
Total	1,336

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the total grant available from his Department *(a)* in total, *(b)* in revenue and *(c)* in capital towards the provision of (1) residential facilities and (2) non-residential facilities for (i) people with alcohol problems and (ii) people with drug problems in 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the total grant paid by his Department *(a)* in total, *(b)* in revenue and *(c)* in capital towards the provision of (1) residential facilities and (2) non-residential facilities for (i) people with alcohol problems and (ii) people with drug problems in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* Funding is provided directly and indirectly by the Scottish Office for alcohol and drug misuse projects in a number of ways. Many projects are funded by health boards either from their general allocations or the funds, totalling £2·4 million in 1992-93, specifically allocated for drug misuse. Other projects are funded by local authorities. Details of funding from all sources could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, information, as set out in the tables, is available on funding by the Scottish Office for residential and non-residential facilities provided by voluntary sector organisations under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and under the urban programme for the years 1987-88 to 1992-93. Figures for 1993-94 are not yet available.

Table 1: Approved expenditure under urban programme[1]

Year	*Residential*			*Non-residential*		
	Total £	*Capital* £	*Current* £	*Total* £	*Capital* £	*Current* £
Alcohol misuse						
1987-88	23,616	—	23,616	376,960	—	376,960
1988-89	25,482	—	25,482	314,385	1,350	313,035
1989-90	52,188	12,456	39,732	309,221	62,885	246,336
1990-91	24,351	—	24,351	234,774	12,402	222,372
1991-92	62,905	3,999	58,906	270,090	19,071	251,019
1992-93	202,933	37,831	165,102	409,990	11,193	398,797
Drugs						
1987-88	—	—	—	172,950	7,500	165,450
1988-89	—	—	—	164,860	12,950	151,910
1989-90	—	—	—	468,813	42,929	425,884
1990-91	—	—	—	1,133,051	136,584	996,467
1991-92	17,635	17,635	—	1,484,137	38,218	1,445,919
1992-93	106,605	106,605	—	1,583,118	59,417	1,523,701

[1]Grant amounting to 75 per cent. of approved Urban Programme Expenditure is paid to sponsoring local authorities.

Table 2: Grants awarded under Section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

Year	*Residential*			*Non-Residential*		
	Total £	*Capital* £	*Current* £	*Total* £	*Capital* £	*Current* £
Alcohol Misuse						
1987-88	57,309	—	57,309	39,921	4,789	35,133
1988-89	4,100	—	4,100	76,473	—	76,473
1989-90	17,271	17,271	—	75,254	14,426	60,828
1990-91	153,349	150,000	3,349	49,003	10,625	38,378
1991-92	97,132	—	97,132	56,157	—	57,157
1992-93	101,562	—	101,562	76,000	8,000	68,000
Drugs						
1987-88	105,746	—	105,746	3,759	—	3,759
1988-89	48,603	—	48,603	—	—	—
1989-90	2,485	—	2,485	3,000	3,000	—

Year	Residential			Non-Residential		
	Total	Capital	Current	Total	Capital	Current
	£	£	£	£	£	£
1990-91	200,000	200,000	—	—	—	—
1991-92	—	—	—	—	—	—
1992-93	—	—	—	—	—	—

Shetlands (Oil Pollution)

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has finalised the arrangements for the bridging fund to assist local businesses in Shetland affected by the recent incident involving the MV 'Braer'.

Mr. Lang *[pursuant to his answer, of 21 January 1993, c. 411-12.]:* The bridging fund scheme is a new service for which parliamentary approval will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the local environmental services and housing, Scotland vote—class XV, vote 6. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £3 million will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

PRIME MINISTER

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to introduce legislation to outlaw discrimination against disabled people in access to employment, training, education, leisure, transport, public buildings and shops; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We have no plans to introduce generalised anti-discrimination legislation because we foresee problems in both approach and implementation. However, as I have made clear in the past, we are continuing to work to eliminate unjustified discrimination against people on the ground of their disability. We believe that this is best achieved by education and persuasion backed up by targeted legislation to address specific problems.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made by Departments in implementing the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; what plans he has to implement the outstanding sections; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Most of the major provisions of the Act have now been implemented, bringing substantial benefits to disabled people and their carers. The requirements of the non-implemented sections of the Act are now, to a very large extent, reflected in the Department of Health's new and wide-ranging reforms of community care, which demonstrate our commitment to high quality care responsive to the needs and wishes of service users and carers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will review the need to implement these sections in the light of several years' experience of the community care arrangements.

Scottish Constitution

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *790*, if he will list those individuals and organisations that he has consulted when taking stock of the governance of Scotland since April 1992.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 11 January 1993 at column *552*.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions Her Majesty's Government held with the Governments of *(a)* Egypt and *(b)* Syria on the efficacy of military intervention in Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Since the invasion of Kuwait we have had frequent discussions with the Egyptians and Syrians on the situation in Iraq. We have discussed the allies' latest military action in Iraq with Egyptian and Syrian officials.

Ministerial Residences

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 of each of the official country residences owned by the Government broken down into *(a)* housekeeping, *(b)* catering/hospitality, *(c)* maintenance and *(d)* other costs; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* Chequers, Dorneywood and Chevening are not owned by the Government.

Chequers is administered as an independent trust, which receives an annual grant from public funds towards the maintenance of Chequers. In the three years concerned the grant has been:

	£
1990-91	238,000
1991-92	244,000
1992-93	260,000

The Government also contribute to the costs of household staff at Chequers, but this information is not separately identifiable.

The maintenance and staff expenses of Chevening house are met by the Chevening trust. The total cost to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for housekeeping, catering/hospitality and other costs in the three years concerned has been:

	£
1990-91	4,374
1991-92	7,984
1992-93	9,451

In addition, other Government Departments use Chevening from time to time for meetings or seminars, for which they pay separately.

Dorneywood is administered by a trust fund. Its upkeep does not involve any cost to the Treasury.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Tobacco Industry

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of people directly employed in the tobacco industry in Northern Ireland at the latest date; and what proportion of manufacturing jobs this represents in the province.

Mr. Atkins: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Holiday Accommodation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will meet the Association of British Travel Agents to discuss dangerous holiday accommodation abroad.

Mr. Leigh: I see no need for such a meeting. The Association of British Travel Agents already offers comprehensive advice to its members regarding the maintenance of high standards of safety in holiday accommodation.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with United Kingdom tour operators about the safety of foreign accommodation offered to package holidaymakers.

Mr. Leigh: I have had no such discussions. There is already comprehensive guidance for tour operators in this area.

Chambers of Commerce

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the Association of British Chambers of Commerce regarding the proposed setting up of core chambers of commerce; what time scale he is proposing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has consulted extensively with representatives of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce (ABCC) regarding its proposals to set up core chambers of commerce.

The Government support the objectives of the ABCC as set out in its development strategy. Chambers provide a valuable focus for information and support for business. However, coverage is currently patchy and there is considerable untapped potential for chambers to achieve economies of scale. I believe that the establishment of core chambers, and their closer co-operation with other business support organisations to develop one-stop shop business advice centres in each area, will lead to a major improvement in the quality of the support provided to companies.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria he has agreed with the Association of British Chambers of Commerce for financial contributions from his departmental funds towards the cost of development executives; and for what length of time such contributions will be available.

Mr. Leigh: The Government support the objectives of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce (ABCC) to set up a coherent network of chambers, as set out in their development strategy. In each case for which funding is required, the President of the Board of Trade will expect to be satisfied that the proposal is consistent with realising this strategy.

Subject to this condition, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has agreed with the ABCC that he is prepared to fund half the cost of a development officer in each of the core chambers for up two years. The chambers have to fund the remaining 50 per cent. of the cost, and the whole of any continuing cost after the initial two-year appointment.

Trading Standards Service

Mr. Stern: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what proposals he has to alter the basis of funding the trading standards service;

(2) if he will institute an inquiry into the extent to which the trading standards service is fulfilling the functions for which it was set up;

(3) if he will make a statement on increasing central co-ordination of the trading standards service;

Mr. Leigh: I keep the funding and performance of the trading standards service under review and, together with the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for the Environment, have given, and will continue to give, careful consideration to the service in the context of the review of local government. There are at present no proposals for action on the lines suggested by the hon. Member. However, if he has any concerns about the service, the noble Baroness Denton of Wakefield, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, will be pleased to consider them.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to publish a charter for the trading standards service.

Mr. Leigh: I have been asked to reply.

I keep the funding and performance of the trading standards service under review and, together with the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for the Environment, have given, and will continue to give, careful consideration to the service in the context of the review of local government. There are at present no proposals for action on the lines suggested by the hon. Member. However, if he has any concerns about the service, the Noble Baroness Denton of Wakefield, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, will be pleased to consider them.

Supergun Launcher Systems

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the peaceful uses of supergun launcher systems in delivering satellites into earth orbit.

Mr. Leigh: My Department is aware of work being performed in the United States of America, which is aimed

at demonstrating that small payloads can be put into Earth orbit using a supergun launcher and of European patent applications of a similar nature. However, my Department has not made a detailed study of the viability of these proposals. Any assessment in this field would be carried out in conjunction with our partners within the European Space Agency.

Patent Law

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what efforts he is making to bring about greater harmonisation of international patent law.

Mr. Leigh: There is already considerable harmonisation of substantive patent law in Europe. In a wider arena, my officials have been very active in the negotiations for an international treaty on patent law harmonisation which have taken place under the auspices of the World Intellectual Property Organisation and will take a committed part in the diplomatic conference to be held in July this year in order to reach agreement on the treaty. They have also taken an active part in discussions at Community level on a directive to harmonise the legal protection of biotechnological inventions.

Post Office

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his review of the future organisation and structure of the Post Office will be complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The review will be completed in due course. We will then be in a position to make a statement to the House.

Price Marking Order 1991

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to amend the 1991 Price Marking Order, implemented under European Community directive 88/314/EEC.

Mr. Leigh: My Department is currently discussing the way forward with interested parties.

Girobank

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he was consulted about Girobank's recent withdrawal of a small firms export credit support scheme: whether this, or similar matters, was set out as a service obligation in the sale of Girobank; and what those service obligations now are.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade was not consulted about Girobank's provision of export credit schemes, nor would he expect to be. The sale agreement between the Post Office and the Alliance and Leicester Building Society in respect of Girobank did not specify the future of particular Girobank services. Subject only to regulation under the Banking Act 1987, the provision of services by Girobank, as any other bank, is a matter for its commercial judgment.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial assistance his Department gives to manufacturing industry.

Mr. Leigh: My Department runs or supports a wide range of schemes and services providing assistance to manufacturing businesses. The majority of these involve direct financial assistance.

Together the full range of services provide a comprehensive package for business, including help with the provision of expert advice in key management areas such as quality or manufacturing systems; help towards the cost of consultancy to assist businesses plan their use of advanced manufacturing technology; grant support to develop innovative ideas; help with exporting; and special financial assistance for businesses in assisted areas and urban programme areas.

Small Firms

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance is available from his Department to help companies with fewer than 100 employees.

Mr. Leigh: My Department operates the following measures of support for small and medium-sized firms:

the Enterprise Initiative Consultancy Scheme;
the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme;
the Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology;
Support for Products Under Research;
Regional Enterprise Grants (Investment);
Regional Enterprise Grants (Innovation);
Export Marketing Research Scheme;
Your Business Success;
Graduate Enterprise;

The criteria for determining the eligibility of a company to take advantage of each of these forms of assistance varies from scheme to scheme.

My Department also provides funding for development work which aims to benefit small firms and produces a wide range of publications aimed at small businesses.

During 1993 my Department will start support for up to 15 pilot schemes which will provide businesses with a single point of access to information and advice.

From April 1993 my Department will take over responsibility from the Employment Department for funding training and enterprise councils (TECs) to provide a wide range of business support services to help small businesses.

In addition, small businesses can, of course, take advantage of other business support programmes provided for firms of all sizes.

Leg Irons

Mr. McMaster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his current policy on the manufacture of leg irons in the United Kingdom and the export of such products; if any prosecutions are pending for such practices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I have no plans relating to the manufacture of leg irons: they are not used by the police and prison services in the United Kingdom, and my Department, which tightened export controls in this area last year, will not issue a licence for their export under the Export of Goods (Control) Order. I am not aware of any breach of the order in respect of leg irons nor of any prosecution involving their export.

Sovereign Debt

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if doubtful sovereign debt held by the Export Credits Guarantee Department is provisioned in accordance with guidelines established by the Bank of England.

Mr. Needham: I can confirm that the provisions for unrecovered claims in respect of political risk in ECGD's trading accounts are assessed using the Bank of England provisioning matrix. ECGD's 1991-92 trading accounts are due to be laid before the House on 28 January.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide details regarding levels of sovereign debt held by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Needham: The Export Credits Guarantee Department's 1991-92 annual report, which is due to be laid before the House on 28 January, provides a detailed breakdown of its sovereign debt.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide details regarding sovereign debt held by the Export Credits Guarantee Department offered for sale in the secondary debt market.

Mr. Needham: The agreement amongst Paris club group of creditors currently allows the Export Credits Guarantee Department to consider sales of sovereign debt in the following markets:

Benin
Bolivia
Cameroon
Congo
Cote D'Ivoire
Ecuador
Egypt
Ethiopia
Guinea Republic
Jamaica
Jordan
Mali
Morocco
Nicaragua
Niger
Nigeria
Peru
Phillipines
Poland
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
Zambia

Rescheduled Debt

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide details on the proportion of rescheduled official bilateral debt that may be sold on the secondary debt market by the Export Credits Guarantee Department under the auspices of the Trinidad terms.

Mr. Needham: The agreement amongst Paris club group of creditors allows for either US $10 million or 10 per cent. of a creditors exposure, whichever is the greater, to be sold or swapped for local investment.

EC Regulations

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what will be the terms of reference for the scrutiny into the way in which EC regulations impact upon business.

Mr. Heseltine: The terms of reference are as follows:

To investigate the formulation, implementation and enforcement of EC law with the aim of securing legislation which is necessary and proportionate and;

—minimises the burdens on British business and sustains its international competitiveness; and

—is least intrusive in the lives of British citizens.

Specific areas to be addressed will include:

—whether the burden for business is kept to the minimum necessary to comply with EC requirements;

—the difficulties in interpreting EC law;

—the timing and content of implementing legislation;

—whether the views of business are properly taken into account;

—whether the views of United Kingdom enforcement agencies are taken into account;

—whether Ministers are kept fully aware of implementation and enforcement issues; and

—the proportionally of enforcement practice.

These issues will be examined in the context of at least the following case studies:

—Meat hygiene (as implemented by the 1990 Food Safety Act)

—Health and Safety (Framework and Subordinate directives)

—Personal Protective Equipment directive.

The scrutiny will recommend improvements procedures to be followed in negotiating EC law, in implementing EC legislation in United Kingdom law, and in enforcing the United Kingdom law.

The scrutiny will report to Ministers within the 90 working days which are allowed under efficiency scrutiny guidelines.

I will be the supervising Minister for the scrutiny. The scrutiny team will be advised by a steering group which will include private sector members.

Electricity Generators

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the recent report by OFFER on electricity purchasing with respect to the treatment of *(a)* the actual costs of generating and *(b)* the position of coal-fired generators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The contents of OFFER's report will be taken into account in the Government's coal review along with other evidence and submissions.

Coal Review

Mr. Clappison: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to publish the consultants' reports commissioned as part of the coal review.

Mr. Heseltine: I announced on 20 November that I had appointed consultants to report as part of the coal review. John T. Boyds was to examine the viability of each of the 21 pits proposed for closure last October, and not subject to the statutory consultation process being undertaken by British Coal; Ernst & Young was to investigate the competitiveness of British Coal as an organisation; Caminus Energy Ltd. was to investigate the markets for coal; and PIMS Associates Ltd. was to examine British

Coal's costs and productivity in comparison with international benchmarks. Caminus and Boyds have, in addition, jointly produced a summary of their reports.

I sent copies of all these reports and the summary to the Chairman of the Trade and Industry Select Committee yesterday, and am arranging for them to be published today. I have placed a copy of my letter together with copies of the reports and the summary in the Library.

Computer Games (Epilepsy)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what consultations he has had with toys and games retailers and manufacturers concerning the dangers of photo-sensitive epilepsy induced by computer games;

(2) what representations he has received in relation to the dangers of photo-sensitive epilepsy in children induced by use of computer games;

(3) what proposals he has to introduce a compulsory health warning on the dangers of photo-sensitive epilepsy on the packaging of computer games.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 13 January 1993]:* My Department is aware of recent cases of children reported to have suffered epileptic seizures while playing with computer games. We are holding urgent discussions with industry representatives and others to ascertain what information and advice should be made available to consumers and how best this might be achieved.

One-stop Shops

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make a statement on one-stop shops for business and technology information dissemination; what proposals he has to grant aid such one-stop shops; and what arrangements he will make to monitor and evaluate their progress;

(2) if he will make a statement on the local dissemination of business and technology information; and when he expects to announce pilot projects to further such local dissemination.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade made a statement in the House on 3 December 1992 announcing the publication of a prospectus seeking competitive bids for the establishment of up to 15 pilot one-stop shops in England.

I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, who has responsibility for Welsh matters, is separately considering the business enterprise and support arrangements in Wales.

One-stop shop bids will be submitted to DTI by 29 January 1993 and I will be announcing the pilot areas in mid-March 1993.

DTI will provide grant aid as a contribution towards meeting the additional costs of establishing pilot shops for a period of up to three financial years.

The progress of the pilots will be closely monitored and will be the subject of a detailed evaluation. If the initial pilots are as successful as I expect, a further round of bids will take place in 1993-94 and a national network of one-stop shops will be established as quickly as possible.

Staff Documents

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what procedures his Department has to alert staff to the existence of documents which affect their work but are not circulated for security reasons.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* My Department distributes such documents to the appropriate officials, who are alerted by telephone in urgent cases.

Warren Spring Laboratory

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many persons of all grades, scientific and non-scientific, worked in marine pollution-related activities at Warren Spring laboratory in 1979, 1985, 1990, 1991 and 1992; and if he will give conveniently available figures on the public expenditure on such work during those years.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* The information requested is as follows:

	Number of persons	*Total cost of work (£ thousands)*
		£ Thousand
1979-80	12	385
1985-86	17	830
1990-91	13	1,075
1991-92	8	670
[1]1992-93	8	770

[1] Forecast

Royal Family

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if, following the planned privatisation of Parcelforce, members of the royal family will continue to receive free use of its services.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Following my right hon. Friend's announcement on 15 July of his intention to privatise Parcelforce, the arrangements for parcels services for the royal family is one of the many issues which will be studied carefully.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total annual cost of free postage provided *(a)* to Her Majesty the Queen and *(b)* to each other individual member of the royal family so entitled.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The provision of free postage services to members of the royal family is primarily to enable the royal household to deal with mail from the public, congratulatory messages to mark diamond weddings and one hundredth birthdays, and to maintain communications when Her Majesty the Queen is out of London.

The Post Office has no statistics on the annual cost of these services which are provided, to a varying extent, to Her Majesty the Queen and 15 other members of the royal family.

Microwave Frequency Transmissions

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what publicly funded research has been carried out regarding the biological effects of microwave

frequency transmissions; if he will fund a study into the type of equipment being installed on or near high-rise residential blocks in Wolverhampton; and if he will publish the results of any such research;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact of biological penetration from personal communication network range frequencies on all life-forms which have come into close proximity with such equipment; and if he will publish his conclusions.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) has responsibility for advising United Kingdom Government Departments on standards of protection for exposure to non-ionising radiation. Recent reports from that body indicate that, at the lower frequencies associated with these installations, there is no firm epidemiological evidence of the existence of a carcinogenic hazard. My Department is currently helping to fund a joint research study, managed by the NRPB, into the possible effects of exposure to mobile telephone transmissions.

Parcelforce

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what provision he has made to ensure that free postal and parcel services for literature and tapes for the visually impaired are retained following the sale of Parcelforce.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* Both Royal Mail and Parcelforce provide certain free postal and parcel services for the visually impaired. Such provision will continue in the future although the details of how this will be done have yet to be settled.

Coal Industry

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the criteria to be employed by Boyds in assessing the viability of the 10 pits listed for immediate closure; and if he will list the criteria employed by Boyds in respect of the other 21 pits listed for closure.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* Boyds is required to consider for each of the 10 pits whether the criteria for closure announced on 19 October (currently loss-making and no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future) are met. Its conclusions will be based on an inspection of each of the 10 pits and evaluation in respect of each mine of:

(i) financial information for the current financial year;
(ii) available coal reserve base;
(iii) near-term capital requirements;
(iv) estimated future operating costs;
(v) estimated future income.

A copy of the full terms of reference of the Boyds' study of the 10 pits is available in the Library of the House.

In respect of the 21 pits, I refer to the reply my right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade, gave to my hon. Friend for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 20 November at column 433.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Michael: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was *(a)* the total sum of money paid out in legal aid and *(b)* the sum paid out in respect of each category of offence for each of the last five years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Net expediture on all forms of legal aid in the last five years was as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	434
1988-89	475
1989-90	564
1990-91	682
1991-92	906

In respect of each category of offence, figures are available only for the proportion of expenditure accounted for by each category in higher court cases (i.e. those in the Crown Court or the Court of Appeal) for the past four years. This has been set out in the tables:

Payments made to solicitors	*1988-89 per cent.*	*1989-90 per cent.*	*1990-91 per cent.*	*1991-92 per cent.*
Violence against the person	21·58	22·09	20·48	21·75
Sexual offences	6·46	6·84	7·05	7·16
Burglary	13·64	12·37	11·77	12·39
Robbery	5·46	5·18	5·62	5·40
Theft and handling	22·18	22·17	21·45	20·43
Fraud and forgery	4·57	4·14	5·93	6·81
Criminal damage	2·32	1·93	1·79	2·00
Indictable motoring offences	2·58	1·68	1·48	1·65
Appeals etc	4·70	4·40	4·47	4·85
Other offences	16·51	19·20	19·96	17·56

Payments made to barristers	1988-89 per cent.	1989-90 per cent.	1990-91 per cent.	1991-92 per cent.
Violence against the person	21·64	20·99	19·40	20·94
Sexual offences	6·22	6·32	6·42	6·87
Burglary	8·81	7·64	7·12	8·26
Robbery	5·51	5·62	5·74	6·14
Theft and handling	20·41	20·34	18·60	17·78
Fraud and forgery	7·90	8·56	11·35	12·02
Criminal damage	1·82	1·25	1·68	1·34
Indictable motoring offences	1·69	0·93	0·88	1·04
Appeals etc.	1·74	2·19	2·11	2·73
Other offences	24·26	26·16	26·70	22·88

The total net expenditure on legal aid in the higher criminal courts for the past four years was as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	118
1989-90	134
1990-91	157
1991-92	186

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 January 1993

HOME DEPARTMENT

Burglary

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* burglaries of a dwelling, *(b)* burglaries other than of a dwelling and *(c)* burglaries in total were reported (i) in each police force area and (ii) in total for England and Wales in each calendar year since 1979, and in the 12 months ended June 1992.

Mr. Jack: The available information is for notifiable offences of burglary recorded by the police and is contained in the tables.

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area England and Wales 1979

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	3,925	5,134	9,059
Bedfordshire	1,664	3,067	4,731
Cambridgeshire	1,698	2,484	4,182
Cheshire	2,752	3,927	6,679
Cleveland	4,007	3,895	7,902
Cumbria	1,273	2,528	3,801
Derbyshire	3,459	4,630	8,089
Devon and Cornwall	3,239	4,408	7,647
Dorset	1,952	2,046	3,998
Durham	2,155	3,862	6,017
Essex	3,538	6,758	10,296
Gloucestershire	1,151	1,858	3,009
Greater Manchester	19,162	19,962	39,124
Hampshire	6,105	6,413	12,518
Hertfordshire	1,789	2,814	4,603
Humberside	4,476	6,436	10,912
Kent	4,944	5,495	10,439
Lancashire	5,476	6,972	12,448
Leicestershire	2,158	3,543	5,701
Lincolnshire	1,211	2,070	3,281
City of London	51	1,088	1,139
Merseyside	16,699	14,484	31,183
Metropolitan Police District	68,661	48,340	117,001
Norfolk	1,249	3,057	4,306
Northamptonshire	1,798	2,653	4,451
Northumbria	12,285	14,729	27,014
North Yorkshire	2,181	2,593	4,774
Nottinghamshire	6,130	10,364	16,494
South Yorkshire	4,439	8,162	12,601
Staffordshire	2,755	5,250	8,005
Suffolk	857	1,991	2,848
Surrey	2,213	2,577	4,790
Sussex	4,658	4,596	9,254
Thames Valley	5,927	7,931	13,858
Warwickshire	876	1,951	2,827
West Mercia	1,947	3,986	5,933
West Midlands	16,953	22,910	39,863
West Yorkshire	14,905	17,240	32,145
Wiltshire	1,291	2,235	3,526
Dyfed-Powys	544	1,170	1,714
Gwent	1,196	2,123	3,319
North Wales	2,039	2,617	4,656
South Wales	6,984	10,916	17,900
TOTAL	252,772	291,265	544,037

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area England and Wales 1980

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	5,199	6,285	11,484
Bedfordshire	2,168	3,436	5,604
Cambridgeshire	1,886	2,973	4,859
Cheshire	3,639	4,537	8,176
Cleveland	4,265	4,697	8,962
Cumbria	1,622	2,442	4,064
Derbyshire	3,902	5,185	9,087
Devon and Cornwall	3,662	5,188	8,850
Dorset	2,137	2,430	4,567
Durham	2,971	4,740	7,711
Essex	3,850	7,497	11,347
Gloucestershire	1,684	2,246	3,930
Greater Manchester	23,733	23,216	46,949
Hampshire	6,300	6,997	13,297
Hertfordshire	2,642	3,345	5,807
Humberside	5,537	7,173	12,710
Kent	4,805	5,624	10,429
Lancashire	5,597	7,131	12,728
Leicestershire	2,656	4,506	7,162
Lincolnshire	1,268	2,264	3,532
City of London	41	1,030	1,071
Merseyside	19,884	14,917	34,801
Metropolitan Police District	75,214	50,730	125,944
Norfolk	1,568	3,705	5,273
Northamptonshire	2,411	3,637	6,048
Northumbria	14,557	16,511	31,068
North Yorkshire	2,207	3,076	5,283
Nottinghamshire	6,629	11,532	18,161
South Yorkshire	5,777	9,864	15,641
Staffordshire	3,085	5,665	8,750
Suffolk	1,024	2,199	3,223
Surrey	2,412	2,672	5,084
Sussex	5,192	4,778	9,970
Thames Valley	6,611	8,616	15,227
Warwickshire	1,151	2,138	3,289
West Mercia	2,419	4,677	7,096
West Midlands	23,170	26,613	49,783
West Yorkshire	17,077	18,226	35,303
Wiltshire	1,548	2,232	3,780
Dyfed-Powys	602	1,227	1,829
Gwent	1,602	2,365	3,967
North Wales	2,833	3,274	6,107
South Wales	8,576	11,861	20,437
TOTAL	294,933	323,457	618,390

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area England and Wales 1981

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	6,136	7,288	13,424
Bedfordshire	2,528	3,988	6,516
Cambridgeshire	2,343	3,395	5,738
Cheshire	4,637	5,234	9,871
Cleveland	4,985	5,468	10,453
Cumbria	1,782	2,905	4,687
Derbyshire	4,327	6,018	10,345
Devon and Cornwall	4,016	6,316	10,332
Dorset	2,446	2,691	5,137
Durham	3,134	5,069	8,203
Essex	4,503	7,621	12,124
Gloucestershire	1,969	2,886	4,855
Greater Manchester	32,238	25,943	58,181
Hampshire	7,960	8,554	16,514
Hertfordshire	2,486	3,844	6,330
Humberside	6,719	8,254	14,973
Kent	6,032	6,167	12,199
Lancashire	7,297	8,068	15,365
Leicestershire	3,269	5,130	8,399
Lincolnshire	1,430	2,997	4,427
City of London	31	1,058	1,089
Merseyside	23,269	18,421	41,690

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Metropolitan Police District	86,549	58,270	144,819
Norfolk	2,242	4,795	7,037
Northamptonshire	2,558	3,686	6,244
Northumbria	16,581	18,084	34,665
North Yorkshire	3,135	3,548	6,683
Nottinghamshire	8,719	12,986	21,705
South Yorkshire	6,557	10,912	17,469
Staffordshire	3,565	6,305	9,870
Suffolk	1,332	2,567	3,899
Surrey	2,654	2,814	5,468
Sussex	6,108	5,385	11,493
Thames Valley	7,198	9,289	16,487
Warwickshire	1,730	2,813	4,543
West Mercia	3,433	6,005	9,438
West Midlands	27,703	29,655	57,358
West Yorkshire	19,371	20,588	39,959
Wiltshire	1,656	2,623	4,279
Dyfed-Powys	623	1,505	2,128
Gwent	1,696	2,521	4,217
North Wales	3,057	3,956	7,013
South Wales	9,688	13,067	22,755
TOTAL	349,692	368,689	718,381

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1982

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	6,734	7,304	14,038
Bedfordshire	2,583	3,940	6,523
Cambridgeshire	2,681	4,048	6,729
Cheshire	5,106	5,668	10,774
Cleveland	5,489	5,904	11,393
Cumbria	2,193	3,286	5,479
Derbyshire	4,648	6,235	10,883
Devon and Cornwall	4,747	6,932	11,679
Dorset	2,708	3,122	5,830
Durham	3,934	5,946	9,880
Essex	4,869	8,875	13,744
Gloucestershire	2,184	3,055	5,239
Greater Manchester	39,903	26,062	65,965
Hampshire	9,254	9,845	19,099
Hertfordshire	2,548	3,991	6,539
Humberside	6,823	9,768	16,591
Kent	7,773	7,176	14,949
Lancashire	9,087	10,088	19,175
Leicestershire	4,348	6,237	10,585
Lincolnshire	1,728	3,233	4,961
City of London	93	990	1,083
Merseyside	27,188	20,201	47,389
Metropolitan Police District	99,049	59,193	158,242
Norfolk	2,822	5,250	8,072
Northamptonshire	3,046	4,305	7,351
Northumbria	22,806	20,468	43,274
North Yorkshire	3,356	4,204	7,560
Nottinghamshire	7,793	11,096	18,889
South Yorkshire	7,744	11,831	19,575
Staffordshire	4,304	7,229	11,533
Suffolk	1,305	2,654	3,959
Surrey	3,118	3,219	6,337
Sussex	6,654	6,541	13,195
Thames Valley	8,445	10,301	18,746
Warwickshire	1,925	3,242	5,167
West Mercia	3,744	6,841	10,585
West Midlands	33,780	32,240	66,020
West Yorkshire	22,591	22,532	45,123
Wiltshire	1,790	2,797	4,587
Dyfed-Powys	662	1,545	2,207
Gwent	2,036	2,999	5,035
North Wales	3,391	4,004	7,395
South Wales	10,106	13,904	24,010
TOTAL	407,088	398,301	805,389

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1983

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	7,561	7,205	14,766
Bedfordshire	2,788	4,159	6,947
Cambridgeshire	2,592	3,691	6,283
Cheshire	5,338	6,086	11,424
Cleveland	5,804	5,537	11,341
Cumbria	2,326	3,364	5,690
Derbyshire	4,449	5,745	10,194
Devon and Cornwall	5,400	6,506	11,906
Dorset	2,762	2,627	5,389
Durham	4,685	5,483	10,168
Essex	5,261	8,733	13,994
Gloucestershire	2,246	2,911	5,157
Greater Manchester	47,385	25,063	72,448
Hampshire	8,996	9,458	18,454
Hertfordshire	2,463	3,040	5,503
Humberside	7,454	9,613	17,067
Kent	8,021	6,135	14,156
Lancashire	8,968	8,973	17,941
Leicestershire	4,490	5,465	9,955
Lincolnshire	2,007	3,218	5,225
City of London	65	1,095	1,160
Merseyside	31,454	17,635	49,089
Metropolitan Police District	98,927	53,268	152,195
Norfolk	3,131	4,878	8,009
Northamptonshire	3,092	4,098	7,190
Northumbria	22,148	21,968	44,116
North Yorkshire	3,439	4,038	7,477
Nottinghamshire	7,787	10,635	18,422
South Yorkshire	9,015	12,163	21,178
Staffordshire	5,177	7,624	12,801
Suffolk	1,601	2,992	4,593
Surrey	3,116	3,070	6,186
Sussex	7,795	6,060	13,855
Thames Valley	8,901	9,447	18,348
Warwickshire	2,297	3,220	5,517
West Mercia	4,076	5,897	9,973
West Midlands	37,266	30,401	67,667
West Yorkshire	22,533	19,445	41,978
Wiltshire	1,783	2,583	4,366
Dyfed-Powys	709	1,521	2,230
Gwent	1,990	2,858	4,848
North Wales	3,754	4,216	7,970
South Wales	10,987	14,178	25,165
TOTAL	432,039	376,302	808,341

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1984

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	8,282	8,463	16,745
Bedfordshire	3,706	4,256	7,962
Cambridgeshire	2,511	3,635	6,146
Cheshire	6,029	6,658	12,687
Cleveland	7,114	6,919	14,033
Cumbria	2,627	3,796	6,423
Derbyshire	4,399	6,013	10,412
Devon and Cornwall	5,723	7,504	13,227
Dorset	2,742	2,738	5,480
Durham	4,992	6,425	11,417
Essex	5,366	8,331	13,697
Gloucestershire	2,364	3,362	5,726
Greater Manchester	54,252	28,812	83,064
Hampshire	8,815	9,850	18,665
Hertfordshire	2,933	3,609	6,542
Humberside	6,747	10,624	17,371
Kent	8,973	6,714	15,687
Lancashire	9,822	9,384	19,206
Leicestershire	5,099	5,769	10,868
Lincolnshire	2,004	3,860	5,864
City of London	32	913	945

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Merseyside	35,293	18,246	53,539
Metropolitan Police District	109,672	57,980	167,652
Norfolk	2,294	4,892	7,816
Northamptonshire	3,493	4,328	7,821
Northumbria	24,229	26,671	50,900
North Yorkshire	3,971	4,513	8,484
Nottinghamshire	7,611	11,227	18,838
South Yorkshire	10,476	14,794	25,270
Staffordshire	5,783	7,672	13,455
Suffolk	1,619	3,030	4,649
Surrey	3,374	3,248	6,622
Sussex	8,857	7,136	15,993
Thames Valley	9,362	11,444	20,806
Warwickshire	2,531	3,656	6,187
West Mercia	5,082	6,111	11,193
West Midlands	43,643	33,793	77,436
West Yorkshire	25,166	21,267	46,433
Wiltshire	1,950	3,232	5,182
Dyfed-Powys	848	1,819	2,667
Gwent	2,161	2,734	4,895
North Wales	3,415	5,198	8,613
South Wales	10,743	15,562	26,305
TOTAL	476,735	416,188	892,923

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1985

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	8,970	8,765	17,735
Bedfordshire	3,878	4,013	7,891
Cambridgeshire	2,326	3,666	5,992
Cheshire	6,147	6,291	12,438
Cleveland	6,734	6,348	13,082
Cumbria	2,869	3,702	6,571
Derbyshire	4,132	5,338	9,470
Devon and Cornwall	5,814	7,536	13,350
Dorset	2,847	2,733	5,580
Durham	4,723	5,862	10,585
Essex	5,067	8,474	13,541
Gloucestershire	2,903	3,850	6,753
Greater Manchester	51,958	28,572	80,530
Hampshire	8,820	9,744	18,564
Hertfordshire	2,888	3,063	5,951
Humberside	7,488	11,836	19,324
Kent	9,216	6,798	16,014
Lancashire	10,312	8,467	18,779
Leicestershire	4,558	5,476	10,034
Lincolnshire	2,399	3,915	6,314
City of London	35	935	970
Merseyside	35,669	18,800	54,469
Metropolitan Police District	97,242	56,855	154,097
Norfolk	3,209	5,081	8,290
Northamptonshire	3,562	4,029	7,591
Northumbria	24,630	26,546	51,176
North Yorkshire	4,697	4,350	9,047
Nottinghamshire	7,001	10,387	17,388
South Yorkshire	9,057	12,375	21,432
Staffordshire	5,516	7,737	13,253
Suffolk	2,069	3,382	5,451
Surrey	3,164	3,223	6,387
Sussex	8,720	7,105	15,825
Thames Valley	9,070	11,153	20,223
Warwickshire	2,608	3,533	6,141
West Mercia	4,428	5,644	10,072
West Midlands	39,889	33,158	73,047
West Yorkshire	25,733	20,036	45,769
Wiltshire	2,135	3,192	5,327
Dyfed-Powys	951	1,792	2,743
Gwent	1,973	2,914	4,887
North Wales	3,790	5,294	9,084
South Wales	9,993	15,537	25,530
TOTAL	459,190	407,507	866,697

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1986

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	10,912	9,831	20,743
Bedfordshire	4,382	4,349	8,731
Cambridgeshire	2,499	3,650	6,149
Cheshire	6,095	6,134	12,229
Cleveland	8,067	7,022	15,089
Cumbria	4,024	4,038	8,062
Derbyshire	4,375	5,540	9,915
Devon and Cornwall	6,521	8,668	15,189
Dorset	3,531	2,873	6,404
Durham	5,921	5,768	11,689
Essex	6,079	9,468	15,547
Gloucestershire	3,328	4,397	7,725
Greater Manchester	60,738	31,486	92,224
Hampshire	9,241	10,852	20,093
Hertfordshire	3,247	3,470	6,717
Humberside	8,925	14,009	22,934
Kent	8,166	6,610	14,776
Lancashire	11,957	8,855	20,812
Leicestershire	4,881	5,441	10,322
Lincolnshire	3,174	4,109	7,283
City of London	55	872	927
Merseyside	37,375	19,496	56,871
Metropolitan Police District	102,781	54,063	156,844
Norfolk	3,477	6,115	9,592
Northamptonshire	3,441	4,448	7,889
Northumbria	25,880	26,126	52,006
North Yorkshire	4,908	4,908	9,816
Nottinghamshire	7,792	9,596	17,388
South Yorkshire	11,125	12,446	23,571
Staffordshire	6,250	8,639	14,889
Suffolk	2,107	4,216	6,323
Surrey	3,489	3,474	6,963
Sussex	8,736	7,628	16,364
Thames Valley	10,776	12,435	23,211
Warwickshire	2,866	3,172	6,038
West Mercia	5,399	5,513	10,912
West Midlands	45,676	36,090	81,766
West Yorkshire	26,862	19,246	46,108
Wiltshire	2,734	3,502	6,236
Dyfed-Powys	1,036	2,100	3,136
Gwent	2,074	2,748	4,822
North Wales	4,689	5,513	10,202
South Wales	10,417	16,696	27,113
TOTAL	506,008	425,612	931,620

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1987

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	10,268	10,274	20,542
Bedfordshire	3,824	4,269	8,093
Cambridgeshire	2,730	3,566	6,296
Cheshire	6,710	6,336	13,046
Cleveland	9,019	7,191	16,210
Cumbria	3,496	3,696	7,192
Derbyshire	4,462	5,412	9,874
Devon and Cornwall	6,883	8,917	15,800
Dorset	3,826	2,881	6,707
Durham	5,322	5,598	10,920
Essex	5,736	9,424	15,160
Gloucestershire	3,769	5,106	8,875
Greater Manchester	54,323	30,094	84,417
Hampshire	8,903	10,785	19,688
Hertfordshire	3,105	3,408	6,513
Humberside	9,470	14,338	23,808
Kent	7,925	6,303	14,228
Lancashire	11,555	8,940	20,495
Leicestershire	5,524	5,715	11,239
Lincolnshire	2,966	4,318	7,284
City of London	63	991	1,054

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Merseyside	34,087	17,880	51,967
Metropolitan Police District	97,763	52,123	149,886
Norfolk	3,707	6,211	9,918
Northamptonshire	3,460	3,841	7,301
Northumbria	25,186	25,258	50,444
North Yorkshire	4,811	4,929	9,740
Nottinghamshire	7,801	10,038	17,839
South Yorkshire	11,712	13,042	24,754
Staffordshire	6,520	8,395	14,915
Suffolk	2,119	3,723	5,842
Surrey	3,571	3,019	6,590
Sussex	8,059	7,383	15,442
Thames Valley	10,747	11,440	22,187
Warwickshire	2,586	3,395	5,981
West Mercia	4,784	5,406	10,190
West Midlands	39,224	33,838	73,062
West Yorkshire	26,355	20,322	46,677
Wiltshire	2,434	3,300	5,734
Dyfed-Powys	945	1,997	2,942
Gwent	2,195	2,609	4,804
North Wales	4,411	5,544	9,955
South Wales	10,645	15,848	26,493
TOTAL	483,001	417,103	900,104

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1988

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	9,050	9,124	18,174
Bedfordshire	3,890	3,962	7,852
Cambridgeshire	2,505	3,799	6,304
Cheshire	6,110	5,466	11,576
Cleveland	8,402	5,930	14,332
Cumbria	2,800	3,626	6,426
Derbyshire	3,768	4,982	8,750
Devon and Cornwall	6,640	8,564	15,204
Dorset	3,124	2,245	5,369
Durham	4,697	4,939	9,636
Essex	5,261	8,363	13,624
Gloucestershire	3,512	4,659	8,171
Greater Manchester	48,809	26,956	75,765
Hampshire	7,921	9,664	17,585
Hertfordshire	3,077	3,102	6,179
Humberside	7,439	13,733	21,172
Kent	7,705	5,870	13,575
Lancashire	9,890	8,492	18,382
Leicestershire	5,335	5,265	10,600
Lincolnshire	2,822	3,398	6,220
City of London	34	810	844
Merseyside	28,477	14,146	42,623
Metropolitan Police District	93,650	49,227	142,877
Norfolk	3,650	5,958	9,608
Northamptonshire	2,900	3,403	6,303
Northumbria	23,257	22,795	46,052
North Yorkshire	4,011	4,286	8,297
Nottinghamshire	7,519	8,570	16,089
South Yorkshire	10,213	11,518	21,731
Staffordshire	6,337	7,894	14,231
Suffolk	2,209	3,848	6,057
Surrey	3,703	3,222	6,925
Sussex	7,695	7,267	14,962
Thames Valley	9,720	9,629	19,349
Warwickshire	2,233	2,864	5,097
West Mercia	3,968	4,840	8,808
West Midlands	34,790	27,644	62,434
West Yorkshire	24,166	19,841	44,007
Wiltshire	2,293	2,930	5,223
Dyfed-Powys	897	2,317	3,214
Gwent	1,809	2,361	4,170
North Wales	4,080	4,757	8,837
South Wales	10,652	14,506	25,158
TOTAL	441,020	376,772	817,792

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1989

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	8,430	9,142	17,572
Bedfordshire	3,632	3,978	7,610
Cambridgeshire	2,925	3,776	6,701
Cheshire	5,351	5,150	10,501
Cleveland	8,634	5,761	14,395
Cumbria	2,770	3,690	6,460
Derbyshire	4,080	5,310	9,390
Devon and Cornwall	7,256	8,575	15,831
Dorset	3,525	2,444	5,969
Durham	4,345	5,385	9,730
Essex	6,152	9,076	15,228
Gloucestershire	3,288	4,927	8,215
Greater Manchester	45,138	28,300	73,438
Hampshire	9,280	10,298	19,578
Hertfordshire	3,233	3,127	6,360
Humberside	8,366	13,745	22,111
Kent	8,181	6,239	14,420
Lancashire	9,275	7,742	17,017
Leicestershire	5,626	5,926	11,552
Lincolnshire	2,959	3,849	6,808
City of London	39	872	911
Merseyside	23,833	13,038	36,871
Metropolitan Police District	97,608	51,293	148,901
Norfolk	4,064	6,391	10,455
Northamptonshire	2,859	3,533	6,392
Northumbria	24,955	24,630	49,585
North Yorkshire	3,831	4,240	8,071
Nottinghamshire	8,080	10,187	18,267
South Yorkshire	10,132	12,382	22,514
Staffordshire	5,430	7,976	13,406
Suffolk	2,185	3,837	6,022
Surrey	3,825	3,368	7,193
Sussex	8,191	7,847	16,038
Thames Valley	10,165	10,115	20,280
Warwickshire	2,158	3,314	5,472
West Mercia	4,032	5,534	9,566
West Midlands	31,124	26,999	58,123
West Yorkshire	24,207	20,456	44,663
Wiltshire	2,345	2,956	5,301
Dyfed-Powys	946	1,775	2,721
Gwent	1,586	2,252	3,838
North Wales	3,213	4,174	7,387
South Wales	10,466	14,601	25,067
TOTAL	437,720	388,210	825,930

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1990

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	12,072	14,316	26,388
Bedfordshire	5,559	5,250	10,809
Cambridgeshire	3,552	4,809	8,361
Cheshire	6,849	6,706	13,555
Cleveland	10,434	6,125	16,559
Cumbria	3,427	4,283	7,710
Derbyshire	4,886	7,641	12,527
Devon and Cornwall	10,340	11,418	21,758
Dorset	4,371	3,254	7,625
Durham	5,516	5,796	11,312
Essex	8,004	11,839	19,843
Gloucestershire	4,041	5,537	9,578
Greater Manchester	53,725	34,130	87,855
Hampshire	11,998	13,533	25,531
Hertfordshire	4,173	4,487	8,660
Humberside	10,937	16,424	27,361
Kent	11,146	8,530	19,676
Lancashire	11,709	9,926	21,635
Leicestershire	7,645	8,412	16,057
Lincolnshire	3,943	4,294	8,237
City of London	34	949	983

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Merseyside	21,617	12,205	33,822
Metropolitan Police District	115,119	58,128	173,247
Norfolk	4,983	7,541	12,524
Northamptonshire	4,428	4,675	9,103
Northumbria	27,092	27,654	54,746
North Yorkshire	4,004	5,512	9,516
Nottinghamshire	10,385	13,816	24,201
South Yorkshire	12,126	14,981	27,107
Staffordshire	7,639	11,089	18,728
Suffolk	2,555	4,609	7,164
Surrey	5,171	4,687	9,858
Sussex	11,562	10,646	22,208
Thames Valley	15,191	11,939	27,130
Warwickshire	2,525	4,619	7,144
West Mercia	4,383	6,141	10,524
West Midlands	35,613	32,605	68,218
West Yorkshire	30,348	27,901	58,249
Wiltshire	2,770	3,417	6,187
Dyfed-Powys	1,177	2,242	3,419
Gwent	2,074	3,161	5,235
North Wales	3,247	5,095	8,342
South Wales	10,791	17,330	28,121
TOTAL	529,161	477,652	1,006,813

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1991

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	15,795	18,166	33,961
Bedfordshire	6,057	6,816	12,873
Cambridgeshire	4,828	7,069	11,897
Cheshire	8,317	8,220	16,537
Cleveland	10,190	7,088	17,278
Cumbria	4,426	6,400	10,826
Derbyshire	7,116	11,384	18,500
Devon and Cornwall	11,345	14,363	25,708
Dorset	4,862	4,425	9,287
Durham	6,464	7,101	13,565
Essex	9,807	15,173	24,980
Gloucestershire	5,387	7,214	12,601
Greater Manchester	59,605	38,110	97,715
Hampshire	14,062	17,941	32,003
Hertfordshire	4,935	5,955	10,890
Humberside	12,882	20,067	32,949
Kent	15,836	10,699	26,535
Lancashire	13,971	11,074	25,045
Leicestershire	11,513	10,013	21,526
Lincolnshire	4,251	4,740	8,991
City of London	73	997	1,070
Merseyside	21,473	12,136	33,609
Metropolitan Police District	126,861	64,621	191,482
Norfolk	6,023	9,313	15,336
Northamptonshire	5,742	6,406	12,148
Northumbria	31,413	34,688	66,101
North Yorkshire	4,975	7,363	12,338
Nottinghamshire	14,092	16,476	30,568
South Yorkshire	15,085	20,176	35,261
Staffordshire	9,846	13,677	23,523
Suffolk	2,859	4,779	7,638
Surrey	5,157	6,280	11,437
Sussex	13,427	13,047	26,474
Thames Valley	17,545	16,520	34,065
Warwickshire	3,228	7,062	10,290
West Mercia	6,208	8,387	14,595
West Midlands	41,624	42,460	84,084
West Yorkshire	41,857	36,769	78,626
Wiltshire	3,564	4,594	8,158
Dyfed-Powys	1,528	3,168	4,696
Gwent	3,227	4,250	7,477
North Wales	3,876	6,308	10,184
South Wales	13,614	23,023	36,637
TOTAL	624,946	594,518	1,219,464

Notifiable offences of burglary by police force area
England and Wales 1992

Police force area	Burglary in a dwelling	Other burglary	Total burglary
Avon and Somerset	16,267	17,412	33,679
Bedfordshire	6,496	7,614	14,110
Cambridgeshire	5,409	7,716	13,125
Cheshire	8,991	10,010	19,001
Cleveland	12,334	7,423	19,757
Cumbria	4,745	6,818	11,563
Derbyshire	7,454	12,798	20,252
Devon and Cornwall	12,114	14,808	26,922
Dorset	5,136	4,495	9,631
Durham	6,660	6,802	13,462
Essex	10,158	16,252	26,410
Gloucestershire	6,266	8,166	14,432
Greater Manchester	61,582	39,138	100,720
Hampshire	14,270	18,693	32,963
Hertfordshire	5,174	6,374	11,548
Humberside	13,111	21,427	34,538
Kent	17,358	11,768	29,126
Lancashire	15,381	10,882	26,263
Leicestershire	11,920	10,342	22,262
Lincolnshire	4,988	5,162	10,150
City of London	57	943	1,000
Merseyside	21,831	11,911	33,742
Metropolitan Police District	130,095	64,243	194,338
Norfolk	6,018	10,207	16,225
Northamptonshire	5,600	6,801	12,401
Northumbria	32,515	35,870	68,385
North Yorkshire	5,738	8,066	13,804
Nottinghamshire	15,857	17,264	33,121
South Yorkshire	15,815	22,261	38,076
Staffordshire	11,067	14,251	25,318
Suffolk	3,344	5,059	8,403
Surrey	5,188	6,333	11,521
Sussex	13,869	13,471	27,340
Thames Valley	18,507	17,667	36,174
Warwickshire	4,023	7,933	11,956
West Mercia	7,265	8,837	16,102
West Midlands	46,434	45,960	92,394
West Yorkshire	47,444	37,664	85,108
Wiltshire	3,933	4,662	8,595
Dyfed-Powys	1,604	3,395	4,999
Gwent	3,836	4,310	8,146
North Wales	4,733	7,360	12,093
South Wales	13,601	23,953	37,554
TOTAL	664,188	622,521	1,286,709

Offences Against Businesses

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the total number of offences against businesses committed in England and Wales in 1991 and *(b)* the total loss incurred by businesses as a result of those offences.

Mr. Jack: The information is not collected centrally.

Fines

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take to ensure that all an individual's assets and income are taken into account by the court in assessing the level of unit fine under the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack: The Criminal Justice Act 1991 already requires magistrates courts to take the whole of an individual's income, including income from assets, into account in assessing an offender's weekly disposable income for the purpose of determining the value of a unit

in accordance with the provisions of section 18 of the Act, as well as such other information relating to an offender's means as appears to the court to be relevant. A specific exception is made for child benefit.

Under section 20 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, a court may order a convicted person to provide the court with a statement of means. Failure to do so is an offence punishable by a fine of up to £1,000. Provision of false information or omission of any material fact is an offence punishable by a fine of up to £2,500.

Remand Prisoners (Escorts)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances police forces may charge health authorities or trusts to escort prisoners in custody on remand but who are, during their custody, in the care of health authorities or trusts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The escorting of such patients is the responsibility of the health authority or trust concerned. Existing guidance makes it clear that they are free to seek police assistance with escorting if the circumstances appear to require this. Section 15 of the Police Act 1964 gives police authorities power to make charges for services which go beyond normal policing activity. We are currently reviewing guidance on this subject.

Pools Coupons

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has as to what proportion of pools clients prefer to use lucky numbers rather than skill in making their bets on pools coupons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No estimate has been made of the proportion of football pools clients who employ "lucky" numbers when making their selection on pools coupons. The fact remains, however, that the law requires the pools to take the form of a forecasting competition, in which there is an opportunity for clients who wish to do so to exercise skill and judgment in making their forecasts.

Remand Prisons

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the average length of time that women have been held on remand in prisons in England and Wales since 1985.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest information is given in the table.

Average time spent in custody by female untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners in Prison Service establishments, 1985-91.

Year	*Average Number of Days in Custody*	
	Untried Prisoners[1][3]	*Convicted Unsentenced Prisoners*[2][3]
1985	41	26
1986	44	24
1987	45	25
1988	51	27
1989	44	32
1990	40	26
[4]1991	40	32

[1]Time spent in Prison Service establishments before conviction.
[2]Time spent in Prison Service establishments after conviction.
[3]Averages are subject to wide variation because of the small populations on which they are based.
[4]Data for 1991 is provisional.

These figures are published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales", chapter 2, table 2.1, of the volume for 1990, Cm 1800.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women are currently being held on remand in prisons *(a)* in England and Wales and *(b)* in London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows how many unsentenced females were in prison service establishments on 19 January. Of these Holloway prison is the only establishment in London.

Establishment	*Number*
Holloway	200
Low Newton	13
New Hall	32
Pucklechurch	28
Risley	63
TOTAL	336

The numbers shown cover all females, both adults and young persons, remanded in custody by magistrates courts, committed for trial to the Crown court and convicted but not sentenced.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of women held on remand in prisons in England and Wales since 1985 have been acquitted of the charges for which they were held in detention.

Mr. Jack: It is estimated that about 17 per cent. of females held in custody on remand since 1985 have subsequently been acquitted.

Police Custody

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been kept overnight in police custody following being charged, before being released on unopposed conditional magistrates bail the following day in each of the Welsh police authority areas in 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: This information is not held centrally and could be compiled by the individual police forces only at disproportionate cost.

New Age Travellers

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish his proposals for dealing with the public order issues raised by the activities of new age travellers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make an announcement shortly.

Police Officers (Assaults)

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to reduce the level of violent assaults against police officers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office police scientific development branch undertakes a full programme of evaluation of new equipment and improvements to existing equipment. Recent work includes an examination of stab-resistant clothing. In order that their work might be better informed, my right hon. and learned Friend has commissioned an investigation into the circumstances in which police officers are assaulted.

Terrorism (Central London)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis indicating how many police officers have been withdrawn from service in the London borough of Greenwich in each of the last two years in order to increase the police presence in the central London area in response to the threat of terrorist activities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not our practice to disclose details of resources devoted to combating terrorism.

Police Recruitment

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to ensure recruits into the police force are of the highest quality.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The responsibilty for making appointments to the police service lies solely with the chief officer of the police force concerned. All applicants are required to sit the police initial recruitment test, which was revised in 1991 and which is designed to test the precise abilities and attributes which are necessary for a successful career in the service.

The accelerated promotion scheme for graduates, which offers places to young officers who are looking to rise rapidly to the higher ranks in the service, is also highly selective, with high standards.

Data Protection

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to make representations to the European Community to enable exemptions to be granted to charities from the provisions of the current European Community directive on processing of personal data.

Mr. Jack: The Government are seeking, in discussion with their European Community partners, to ensure that the directive makes proper allowance for the needs of charities and other data users, and does not go beyond the 1981 Council of Europe convention on data processing on which the Data Protection Act 1984 is based.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Fissile Material Stocks

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the quantities of fissile material stocks held by *(a)* each of the other four acknowledged nuclear weapons states, *(b)* Israel and *(c)* India.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not available.

Nazi Persecution

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many outstanding claims for compensation from victims of Nazi persecution are known to his Department.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No claim remains outstanding. There was a scheme between 1964-66, when a British tribunal disbursed £1 million to compensate victims of Nazi persecution held at concentration camps during the second world war. All cases were settled and the scheme closed in 1966. It is not now possible to reconsider cases nor to consider new claims.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the claims for compensation by Mr. Ted Roberts and Mr. Arthur Thomas, held by the Nazis at Drancy.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Between 1964 and 1966, a British tribunal disbursed £1 million in a scheme to compensate the victims of Nazi persecution held at concentration camps. The funds were fully disbursed and the scheme closed in 1966. Mr. Roberts's claim failed to meet the criteria and was turned down in 1964. Mr. Thomas made his claim known to the Department only recently. It is not now possible to admit new claims or to reconsider cases settled by the tribunal.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the development of an international plutonium store to enhance non-proliferation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We give careful consideration to any proposal which may contribute to international efforts to prevent proliferation.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the nuclear proliferation implications of the planned stockpiling of military usable plutonium by Japan over the next decade.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Japan, as a non-nuclear weapon state party to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, has undertaken a formal binding commitment not to develop nuclear weapons and has concluded a fullscope safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. We are satisfied that plutonium held by Japan will be covered by such safeguards, but we understand that it is Japan's intention to avoid the accumulation of stockpiles.

Government Communications Headquarters

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about security arrangements at the GCHQ base in the Blackdown Hills, Somerset.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he has

taken to assure himself of the efficiency and effectiveness of the security arrangements at the GCHQ base in the Blackdown Hills, Somerset.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is satisfied that the security arrangements in place at the composite signals organisation station at Culmhead meet prescribed national standards for the protection of classified material.

Serbia

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has of breaches of sanctions against Serbia by companies based in member states of the Community other than Greece.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations sanctions committee in New York has not confirmed any sanctions breach by a company based in a member state of the Community other than Greece.

Mr. Mohd Iftikhar

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he now expects a decision to be taken by the United Kingdom post in Islamabad on the entry clearance application by Mr. Mohd Iftikhar—ref. TH/20617/92—to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, I have asked the high commission in Islamabad for a full report. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Kuwait

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice his Department is currently giving to United Kingdom subjects working and living in Kuwait; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The current Foreign and Commonwealth Office consular travel advice for Kuwait is:

"In view of heightened tension in the area, British nationals visiting Kuwait should exercise caution. In particular they are strongly advised not to travel anywhere near the border with Iraq. It would be easy and very dangerous to cross inadvertently. Anyone who has to travel north of the Mutla Ridge should consult HM Consul, British Embasy, Kuwait City (Tel. 240 3334–6 or 240 3324–7) in advance.

British nationals travelling anywhere outside Kuwait City should take care, and let someone know where they are going. There are dangers from unexploded ordnance. Even where officially cleared, beaches and picnic spots should be avoided because of mines.

Visitors are advised to register with the Embassy on arrival."

Nuclear Test Ban

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the resumption of negotiations towards a comprehensive test ban treaty is now considered to be in the United Kingdom's security interests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have long made plain our support for the ultimate goal of a comprehensive test ban, but we have also emphasised our belief that this can be approached only on a step-by-step basis. In particular, we have drawn attention to the problems of verification, and have been actively involved in discussing these issues in the conference on disarmament, in Geneva.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which United Nations Security Council resolutions specifically authorised each of the allied coalition military attacks on Iraq in the current year, pursuant to chapter VII of the United Nations charter.

Mr. Hogg: The Security Council determined in its statements of 8 and 11 January that Iraq was in material breach of resolution 687 and its related resolutions, and warned Iraq that serious consequences would ensue from continued failure to comply with its obligations. Resolution 687 lays down the terms for the formal ceasefire between the coalition states and Iraq at the end of the hostilities mandated by the Security Council in resolution 678. These terms are binding in themselves but have also been specifically accepted by Iraq as a condition for the formal ceasefire to come into effect. In the light of Iraq's continued breaches of Security Council resolution 687 and thus of the ceasefire terms, and the repeated warnings given by the Security Council and members of the coalition, their forces were entitled to take necessary and proportionate action in order to ensure Iraqi compliance with those terms.

The purpose of the no-fly zones in Northern and Southern Iraq is to monitor compliance by Iraq with United Nations Security Council resolution 688 in areas in which there are circumstances of extreme humanitarian need. Iraq has been warned frequently not to interfere with allied aircraft in the zones. Such aircraft have the inherent right of self-defence against Iraqi threats to their safety. Attacks against Iraqi missile systems and associated command and control centres were necessary and proportionate responses in self-defence to such threats.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of the talks between the different factions of southern Somalia; and if he will list *(a)* the positive decisions reached and *(b)* the issues that remain to be resolved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* We have received regular reports on the recent meeting of Somali factions in Addis Ababa. The factions have agreed in principle:

(i) on a cease fire;
(ii) to hold a National Reconciliation Conference, probably on 15 March in Addis Ababa;
(iii) on the establishment of an ad hoc committee to continue discussion, in particular over the participation and the agenda for reconciliation conference;
(iv) on the disarmament of heavy weapons;
(v) on the encampment of factional militias.

The agreement leaves key issues for discussion by an ad hoc committee. Conference attendance in particular is likely to be contentious. Implementation on the ground of the cease fire, disarmament and emcampment too will be a complex and difficult task.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the representatives who attended the meeting of Somali factions which ended on 13 January; and what assistance to the peace process was given by *(a)* the United Nations, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* the EC and *(d)* Britain.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The recent meeting of Somali factions in Addis Ababa was arranged by the United Nations. We, the EC, and the United States have consistently supported the United Nations peace initiative in Somalia. The following representatives of Somali factions attend the meeting.

1. Somali Africans Muki Organisation (SAMO)
   Mr. Mohamed Ramadan Arbow, Chairman
2. Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA)
   Mr. Mohamed Farah Abudllahi, Chairman
3. Somali Democratic Movement (SDM)[1]
   Mr. Abdi Muse Mayow, Chairman
   Colonel Mohamed Nur Aliyou, Chairman[1]
4. Somali National Democratic Union (SNDU)
   Mr. Ali Ismael Abdi, Chairman
5. Somali National Front (SNF)
   General Omar Hagi Mohamed Hersi, Chairman
6. Somali National Union (SNU)
   Dr. Mohamed Ragis Mohamed, Chairman
7. Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM)[1]
   General Aden Abdillahi Noor, Chairman
8. Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM)[1]
   Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess, Chairman
9. Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF)
   General Mohamed Abshir Musse, Chairman
10. Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM)
    Colonel Abdi Warsame Isaaq, Chairman
11. United Somali Congress (USC)[1]
    General Mohamed Farah Aidid, Chairman
12. United Somali Congress (USC)[1]
    Mr. Mohamed Qanyare Afrah, Chairman
13. United Somali Front (USF)
    Mr. Abdurahman Dualeh Ali, Chairman
14. United Somali Party (USP)
    Mr. Mohamed Abdi Hashi, Chairman

[1] The USC, SPM and the SDM were divided into different factions owing different allegiances.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have been made to include the traditional elders in Somalia in the March negotiations and in relief and reconstruction plans; and what plans he has to reduce the role of the warlords.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made it clear to the United Nations that the reconciliation process and the development of rehabilitation plans must involve all sections of Somali society, particularly the traditional elders. Implementation of Security Council resolution 794 has reduced the ability of the warloads to hinder aid deliveries.

Liberia

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Security Council's special representative has yet reported back to the Council with his evaluation of the situation in Liberia under resolution 788; what further steps are being considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations Secretary-General's special envoy, Mr. Gordon-Somers, has reported informally to the Security Council on his visit to Liberia. He has now returned to Liberia. The Secretary-General is expected to deliver his report on Mr. Gordon-Somers's evaluation to the Security Council in the last week of January. We would not wish to anticipate that report.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to monitor developments of incursions of rebel forces from Liberia into Sierra Leone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have been monitoring Liberian rebel incursions into Seirra Leone through our high commission in Freetown. Our defence adviser in Accra visits Sierra Leone regularly.

TRANSPORT

Driving Tests

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the proportion of those passing driving tests at the first time of taking in each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many people successfully completing driving tests at the first time of taking in Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Information on first-time passes is not collated regularly. Surveys carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory from time to time provide information on first-time pass rates for Great Britain.

Aircraft (Air Circulation)

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what guidelines from the Civil Aviation Authority or his Department exist for the circulation rates of air in aircraft cabins necessary to safeguard the health of passengers and flight attendants; and if the CAA takes regular readings of circulation rates of aircraft in service;

(2) if the Civil Aviation Authority or his Department will initiate a review with the joint aviation authorities into cabin air quality issues and their effects on the health of passengers, flight attendants and crew;

(3) what assessment the Civil Aviation Authority has made of the dangers to the health of flight attendants and passengers of high levels of ozone in aircraft cabins encountered on some high altitude, high latitude flights; and what plans there are to introduce regulations to ensure ozone is kept within safe limits.

Mr. Norris: The Civil Aviation Authority and the joint aviation authorities—JAA—have no plans at present to review aircraft cabin air quality issues. The airworthiness requirements addressing fresh air supply in civil air transport aircraft cabins have remained unchanged for some years and the CAA does not believe there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a further review is necessary.

The European—JAA—airworthiness regulations include requirements for minimum fresh air ventilation flows expressed in terms of fresh air quantity per minute per person. These minimum flows must be provided in the event of a failure in the air supply system; normal flow rates would be appreciably higher. The CAA does not consider it necessary to make regular checks of air flow rates in aircraft cabins.

The JAA have reviewed the need for changes to aircraft systems to limit ozone levels and have concluded that no additional design features are required.

Workers (Reduced Mobility)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when she next expects to discuss with other EC member states and the European Commission the proposed Council directive on minimum requirements to improve the mobility of and the safe transport to work of workers with reduced mobility; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The directive is not currently under discussion. The agenda for Council meetings is a matter for the current presidency in consultation with the Commission.

Glasgow Airport

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will sponsor a study of the environmental impact of aircraft noise in the urban area under the flight path of Glasgow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I understand that Glasgow airport has undertaken to operate a noise monitoring scheme agreed with the local district council. It also produces noise contours regularly and has a local consultative committee at which noise issues are discussed. In these circumstances, I do not see a need for a study by the Department.

Transport Policies (Land Use)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the research work recently undertaken by his Department on the interaction of land use and transport policies and needs.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The consultants' report will be published shortly.

Driver Sleepiness

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention in relation to driver sleepiness.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have now considered the review of research on driver fatigue undertaken for the Department by the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention. As a result, we have commissioned the Transport Research Laboratory to manage a research programme into fatigue and driving which will involve Professor Horne's department at Loughborough university.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions, and for how much mileage in each case, county highways have been redesignated as trunk roads in each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information is not readily available in the form required.

Road Schemes, Oxford

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for a public inquiry into the north Oxfordshire tin hat scheme, the details of the Marston interchange and the A40 bypass north of Headington; and what consideration has been given to holding a joint inquiry into the schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Marston interchange is part of the A40 north of Oxford scheme. Draft orders for this scheme are expected to be published under the Highways Act 1980 later this year, followed by those for the A40 Headington bypass. The need for, and timing of, public inquiries into the schemes will be decided in the light of objections received following publication of the respective orders.

Rural Train Services

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with British Rail the extension of request stopping on rural lines as an alternative to the closure of smal rural stations.

Mr. Freeman: I expect British Rail to have considered all realistic options before proposing closure of any station. I understand that any savings that might arise from making an unstaffed station a request stop are unlikely to be sufficient to influence materially its viability.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the United Kingdom's international search and rescue commitments under *(a)* the Chicago convention on civil aviation 1947, *(b)* convention of the high seas 1958, *(c)* convention on safety of life at sea 1974, *(d)* the maritime search and rescue convention 1979 and *(e)* other relevant treaties or conventions to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* The United Kingdom's international search and rescue commitments under *(a)* international convention on civil aviation 1944—Chicago convention—are:

"Each contracting State undertakes to provide such measures of assistance to aircraft in distress in its territory as it may find practicable, and to permit, subject to control by its own authorities, the owners of the aircraft or authorities of the State in which the aircraft is registered to provide such measures of assistance as may be necessitated by the circumstances. Each contracting State, when undertaking search for missing aircraft, will collaborate in co-ordinated measures which may be recommended from time to time pursuant to this Convention."

(b) convention of the high seas 1958 are:

"Every coastal State shall promote the establishment and maintenance of an adequate and effective search and rescue service regarding safety on and over the sea and—where circumstances so require—by way of mutual regional arrangements co-operate with neighbouring States for this purpose."

(c) convention of safety of life at sea 1974 are:

"Each Contracting Government undertakes to ensure that any necessary arrangements are made for coast watching and for the rescue of persons in distress at sea round its coasts. These arrangements should include the establishment, operation and maintenance of such maritime safety facilities as are deemed practicable and necessary having regard to the density of the seagoing traffic and the navigational dangers and should, so far as possible, afford adequate means of locating and rescuing such persons."

(d) international convention on maritime search and rescue 1979 are:

"Parties shall ensure that necessary arrangements are made for the provision of adequate search and rescue services for persons in distress at sea round their coasts".

There are no other relevant search and rescue conventions and treaties to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the names of members and organisations they represent at the United Kingdom search and rescue committee and the district search and rescue and safety committee responsible for south-west Wales.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* A local coastal search and rescue committee responsible for south-west Wales has yet to be established. The district marine safety committee for Wales is split into sub-committees concerned with specific areas. Those present at the meeting of the sub-committee responsible for Whiteford Point to Cardigan Island including Milford Haven, Pembroke Dock and Fishguard were:

Mr. J. Leak——DOT (Chairman)
Mr. J. Frost—MHPA
Mr. J. Haines—Cory Towage Ltd.
Mr. G. Taylor—Llanelli District Council
Mr. D. Williams—Llanelli District Council
Mr. T. Bennett—Preseli District Council
Mr. R. Phillips—Carmarthen District Council
Mr. C. Morgan—Saundersfoot Harbour Commissioners
Mr. F. V. Mountney—South Pembrokeshire District Council
Mr. T. Lloyd—Dyfed County Council
Mr. N, Saul—Sealink UK Ltd.
Mr. M. Earley—HM Coastguard
Mr. D. Millar—HM Coastguard
Mr. M. P. Jones—MAFF
Capt. N. Sainsbury—Cardiff Marine Office, DOT
Mr. N. J. Spring—Cardiff Marine Office, DOT
Mrs. A. Hay—Cardiff Marine Office, DOT (Secretary)

The members of the United Kingdom Search and Rescue Committee are as follows:

Mr. C. J. Harris (Chairman)—DoT DMEO
Cdr. D. T. Ancona—DoT Chief Coastguard
Mr. J. Astbury—DoT HMCG
Capt. R. Pomphrey—DoT DSG1B
Mr. A. G. Thorning—DoT Civil Aviation Safety Adviser
Ms. D. Parkin—DoT CAP2
Mr. E. J. Glover (Secretary)—DoT MEAD
Miss P. A. Brown (Assistant Secretary) DoT MEAD
AVM A. B. Blackley CBE AFC RAF—AOSNI RAF
Wg Cdr. M. J. Carlyle—MoD SAR (RAF)
Wg Cdr. White—Wg Cdr. Air RAF HQ 18 Gp
Mr. C. Kingham—MoD (Air)
Cdr. P. G. Millar—MoD (DNW/WASF)
Mr. J. R. G. Clark—MoD SEC (AIR)
Mr. R. M. Wilton—British Telecom
Mr. R. Burdess—British Telecom
Mr. H. E. Brenchley—Meteorological Office
Mr. I. Small—CAA C(G)2
AVM J. F. H. Tetley CB CVO—RNLI
Lt. Cdr. B. Miles—RNLI
Cdre. G. R. Cooper—RNLI
Mr. R. A. Hall—Chamber of Shipping
Capt. J. R. Corke—UK Offshore Operators Association
Capt. N. MacD Turner RD—Trinity House
Mrs. A. Welch—The Royal Aero Club
Mr. R. Sjoberg—Royal Yachting Association
Mr. B. Hayman—Royal Yachting Association
Mr. W. F. Hay CBE—Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Mr. R. Allan MBE—Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Mr. G. E. Lawry—Cornish Inshore Fishermen's Federation
Mr. D. R. Bond—National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers (NUMAST)
Mr. M. Howard—National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers (NUMAST)
Capt. D. Whatling—British Air Line Pilots' Association (BALPA)
Mr. T. Santamera—National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)
Mr. J. Kinahan—National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)
Capt. W. A. Kirwan—Director, Irish Maritime Emergency Service (IMES)
Capt. A. V. Cherry—British Air Transport Association (BATA)
Mr. R. D. Mapleson—British Air Transport Association (BATA)
Capt. D. M. Cowell—Isle of Man Government
Mr. Jeffard—North Yorkshire Police
Mr. F. MacLennan QPM FBIM—Deputy Chief Constable ACPO(S)—Northern Constabulary
Mr. R. Evans—Assistant Chief Constable ACPO(W)—South Wales Constabulary
Capt. R. M. Bullen—States of Jersey
Capt. T. A. Spencer—States of Guernsey
Capt. P. R. White—British Ports Federation
D. C. G. Brook Esq. CB CBE—Civil Emergencies Adviser Home Office

MV Braer

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the chemical composition of dispersants, including the half-life of biodegradable substances, used to date to disperse oil spilled from the MV Braer.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

In general, dispersants are a blend of surfactants and solvents which have the ability to modify surface tension between the oil and the water, promoting the formation of oil droplets and helping to prevent the oil reforming into one mass. Dispersion of the droplets in the water column makes the oil more accessible to the natural processes of degradation. The precise chemical composition of individual dispersants is subject to conditions of commercial confidentiality under which manufacturers have provided the information.

No specific tests are carried out on the biodegradability of the dispersants. However, data on the substances used indicate that they are not environmentally persistent and most would degrade within a few weeks.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Training Organisations

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to change VAT regulations as they currently apply to organisations providing training opportunities to the unemployed.

Sir John Cope: Customs and the Department of Employment are jointly consulting with training and enterprise councils and other training providers in order to assess the impact of VAT on Government-funded training schemes. It is too early yet to predict whether these consultations will result in a recommendation for a change in VAT legislation.

Council Tax

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what advice was given to valuation officers on the special circumstances relating to farm properties in relation to valuation for the council tax;

(2) what instructions were given to district valuers on checking properties for restrictive planning covenants in favour of agricultural use when establishing valuations for council tax bandings;

(3) what was the base level for estimating farm incomes to establish the valuations of properties for council tax bandings.

Mr. Dorrell: The banding of dwellings for council tax has not been carried out by reference to farm incomes. General advice was given to listing officers on the approach to the valuation of farmhouses. The way in which special circumstances relating to particular categories of property are to be taken into account is a matter for individual listing officers.

Listing officers were instructed to make appropriate general inquiries from local authorities as to the existence of planning restrictions limiting dwellings to occupation by persons engaged in agriculture.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the instructions given to district valuers on checking whether properties were connected to water, gas or electricity when establishing valuations for council tax bandings.

Mr. Dorrell: No specific instructions were issued to listing officers about checking for these services. The availability of water, gas or electricity are factors taken into account in any valuation of property as part of normal valuation practice.

Printed Products (VAT)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list *(a)* the current obligations on the United Kingdom under the existing treaties of the European Community in respect of VAT on printed products, including books and newspapers and *(b)* the additional obligations arising from the treaty on European union.

Sir John Cope: Article 189 of the treaty establishing the European Economic Community places upon member states the obligation to comply with European Community law. There are no additional obligations in this regard in the treaty of European union. Community law in respect of VAT takes the form of directives, of which the most significant is the sixth VAT directive, as amended. The right of the United Kingdom to continue with its zero rates, including those on books, newspapers and printed products, is fully protected by that legislation.

Contractors' Payments

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on progress towards the introduction of new contracting terms requiring companies awarded Government contracts to pay their subcontractors promptly.

Mr. Portillo: Government Departments and agencies have confirmed that they have introduced a clause into their contracts for goods and services which requires the supplier or contractor to pay its suppliers or subcontractors promptly.

Taxation

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *148*, what information he has on the average income tax liability of each decile group of tax-paying married men for the years 1986-87 to 1989-90.

Mr. Dorrell: For years prior to the introduction of independent taxation income tax liability was calculated on a tax unit basis and a married couple was counted as one tax unit. The table shows the average income tax liability of those tax units comprising a married couple, and the figures include the liability on both the husband's and the wife's income.

Decile groups of taxpaying married couple tax units Per cent.	*Average income tax liability (£ per year)*			
	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Bottom 10	180	150	140	180
10—20	450	430	410	520
20—30	720	710	680	810
30—40	970	990	980	1,100
40—50	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,400
50—60	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,700
60—70	1,900	2,000	2,000	2,100
70—80	2,400	2,500	2,500	2,800
80—90	3,200	3,300	3,300	3,900
Top 10	8,300	9,000	9,200	10,700
Average	2,800	2,900	2,900	3,300

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Business Debt

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on progress towards improvements to court procedures for business debt recovery.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Both the Lord Chancellor and I recognise the difficulties that late payment causes the business community. Although it would not be equitable to single out business debts for special treatment by the courts, we are committed to improving the efficiency of the court system for the benefit of all court users. For example, procedures have been streamlined and simplified through initiatives such as the establishment of the computerised summons production centre and the county court bulk centre; more general measures for replies to summonses to be sent directly to plaintiffs and allow them to prepare a range of court documents, giving greater control over the speed with which their cases move through the system. Recent changes to the small claims procedure—October 1992—have reduced the number of times a party is required to attend court.

Other improvements, such as a measure to encourage district judges to help unrepresented litigants present their cases and giving them the right to be represented by someone other than a lawyer at a small claims hearing, are of equal benefit to business men as to other litigants. During 1993 improvements will be made to a number of post-judgment procedures including administration orders and oral examinations.

Legal Aid and Advice

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of the adult population of *(a)* Cornwall and *(b)* Devon is currently eligible for (i) legal advice and assistance and (ii) legal aid for civil purposes irrespective of the level of contribution; and what is his estimate for the proportion which will be so eligible after 1 April.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available. The only estimates of eligibility which are available are those which are made for England and Wales as a whole.

Retrials

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many cases in the last year section 8 of the Criminal Appeals Act 1968 has been breached in that the retrial was not listed within the two-month period; and what action he is taking to ensure that the provisions of section 8 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 regarding the period for listing a retrial are complied with.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On three occasions during 1992 the time limits laid down by section 8 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 were not met.

As the right hon. Lady is aware from my previous reply on 11 December 1992, at columns *801-2*, existing instructions to court staff are that defendants in such cases must be arraigned within two months so as to comply with the statute. Guidelines for Crown court listing to be published on 1 February 1993, which have already been dispatched for issue to the Crown court, state that the appellant must be arraigned on a new indictment within two months. The Registrar of Criminal Appeals will, in addition, when retrials are ordered in the future, change the letter which he always sends to the Crown court and the legal representatives of the parties notifying them of the Court of Appeal's order, stating in clear terms the need to arraign the defendant in two months.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Burglaries

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what statistics he has for house burglaries in Carrowdore, Ballywalter and Greyabbey districts in the Ards peninsula in each of the past three years; whether policing has been increased in these areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* Total house burglaries reported to the RUC in the Greyabbey station area, which includes the villages of Carrowdore, Ballywalter and Greyabbey, for the last three years were as follows:

1990—11 burglaries
1991—15 burglaries
1992—13 burglaries

Policing in the area is an operational matter for the Chief Constable of the RUC. I understand that police patrols have been increased in the Greyabbey station area during the last six months.

Training

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what monitoring exists to assess the Training and Employment Agency's programme to encourage the development of skills within the two communities; what numbers of men and women are being trained within each community; and what monitoring takes place to assess the long-term impact of such training.

Mr. Atkin *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 22 January 1993:

You asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what monitoring exists to assess the Training and Employment Agency's programmes to encourage the development of skills within the two communities; what numbers of men and women are being trained within each community and what monitoring takes place to assess the long term impact of such training. As Chief Executive of the Agency, I have been asked to reply.

The Training and Employment Agency has instituted arrangements to collect information by which it can monitor uptake of all its employment and training services, by reference to religion, gender and disability. After a developmental period this information is now coming on stream. It is as yet incomplete, partly because there are still substantial numbers of people who entered our programmes before its collection commenced but its quality is steadily improving. The information will be monitored monthly.

Because there is a constant flow in and out of our programmes, the figures change from month to month. However at the last count there was a total of 27,350 people receiving training in our programmes. Of those whose religion we have so far been able to determine, 7,061 were Protestant (47%) and 7,927 were Catholic (53%). We cannot as yet establish the gender split, within these groups. Overall however 62% of participants were male and 38% were female.

Establishing the long term impact of training measures is by definition a long term process, and is difficult to do accurately or exhaustively. However we collect information about the numbers and proportion of trainees who secure recognised vocational qualifications and employment. We plan in future to analyse this information so that we can establish what proportions of successful trainees are Protestant or Catholic, male or female, or disabled.

Civil Service

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what regulations exist preventing or limiting the employment of citizens from *(a)* the Republic of Ireland, *(b)* other European Community countries and *(c)* Commonwealth nations in the Northern Ireland civil service.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* Rules relating to the conditions under which persons may be appointed to the Northern Ireland civil service are set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commission General Regulations 1991, a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

In the case of citizens of Commonwealth nations a work permit under the Immigration Act 1971 is required.

PRIME MINISTER

Kashmir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise the issue of the status of Kashmir and the human rights of Kashmiri people with the Indian Prime Minister during his forthcoming visit to India.

The Prime Minister: I expect my discussions with the Indian Prime Minister to include the situation in Kashmir and our concerns about human rights.

Arabic-speaking Adviser

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will appoint an Arabic-speaking adviser as part of the staff in 10 Downing Street.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Office Running Costs

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what steps are being taken by him to limit or reduce the cost of running of his office.

The Prime Minister: My office is subject to the same efficiency and value-for-money initiatives as the rest of the civil service. Between 1989-90 and 1991-92, the cost of running my office fell by just over 2 per cent. in real terms.

CD-ROM

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements are in place for Government Departments to offer financial assistance for CD-ROM applications for blind and visually impaired people; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Department for Education is providing £40,000 for the development of software which will enable blind and partially-sighted people to gain full access to CD-ROM materials. This is being undertaken in collaboration with the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Open university and will be completed later this year. The software will be published by the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

HEALTH

Multiple Pregnancies

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 7 July, *Official Report*, column *147*, if she has yet reached a decision on publishing the counselling guide about multiple pregnancies for patients attending infertility centres; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: It is our intention to fund publication and distribution of the booklet "The Prospect of Triplets and Quads". Arrangements for this are being finalised.

Dentistry

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the reduction in turnover experienced by dental practices in Cornwall as a result of the Government's recent changes in the method of remuneration.

Dr. Mawhinney: The most recent quarter for which figures are available shows that the turnover, as reflected in gross income received, of dentists in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly family health services authority has increased by some 20 per cent. by comparing October to December 1992 with the same period in 1990.

GP Fund Holders

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount of the computer budget in general practice per family health services authority, regional health authority and nationally in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93, or estimates, and what was the percentage of that computer budget given to first, second and third wave GP fund holders for each FHSA, RHA and nationally in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The information shown in the table is based on quarterly returns from individual FHSAs. The way in which the information is collected from, and supplied by FHSAs, means that in some cases it may not accurately reflect the split between reimbursement for non-fund holders' computers and those for fund holders. Figures in 1990-91 do not distinguish non-fund holders' and fund holders' computer costs.

FHSA	*Reimbursement of computer costs Total 1990-91* £	*Reimbursement of computer costs Total 1991-92* £	*GPFH 1991-92 computer costs as a percentage* Per cent.	*Reimbursement forecast computer costs Total 1992-93* £	*GPFH 1992-93 computer forecast as a percentage* Per cent.
Cleveland	164,551	390,595	47·77	279,000	35·48
Cumbria	207,618	291,129	38·67	367,000	34·60
Durham	315,675	472,302	34·87	603,000	17·91
Northumberland	163,208	337,076	39·85	109,000	30·28
Gateshead	139,978	112,098	46·37	160,000	68·13
Newcastle	94,301	188,000	21·28	149,000	34·23
North Tyneside	66,176	130,985	21·90	155,000	27·74
South Tyneside	22,738	153,310	10·46	53,000	37·74
Sunderland	99,868	62,796	1·64	150,000	3·33
Northern RHA	1,274,113	2,138,291	34·42	2,025,000	29·38
Humberside	327,888	742,389	52·87	413,000	57·63
North Yorkshire	334,616	816,768	60·06	472,000	75·64
Bradford	273,818	210,981	21·20	304,000	0·00
Calderdale	87,973	147,520	20·97	124,000	44·35

FHSA	Reimbursement of computer costs Total 1990-91 £	Reimbursement of computer costs Total 1991-92 £	GPFH 1991-92 computer costs as a percentage Per cent.	Reimbursement forecast computer costs Total 1992-93 £	GPFH 1992-93 computer forecast as a percentage Per cent.
Kirklees	90,101	289,665	5·83	375,000	40·53
Leeds	259,692	455,401	72·11	489,000	77·71
Wakefield	261,735	284,355	20·84	310,000	86·13
Yorkshire RHA	1,635,823	2,947,079	46·26	2,487,000	58·26
Derbyshire	471,473	1,085,302	62·22	1,147,000	79·08
Leicestershire	475,200	457,765	41·65	852,000	49·53
Lincolnshire	261,553	425,853	52·26	656,000	69·66
Nottinghamshire	402,328	633,071	24·92	561,000	48·84
Barnsley	54,686	118,154	0·00	116,000	63·79
Doncaster	166,544	120,396	26·88	361,000	44·60
Rotherham	77,973	116,702	30·98	130,000	44·62
Sheffield	185,997	839,567	2·69	735,000	17·41
Trent RHA	2,095,754	3,796,890	35·22	4,558,000	54·43
Cambridgeshire	243,895	337,503	0·00	522,000	4·60
Norfolk	340,698	270,400	4·61	799,000	67·08
Suffolk	131,596	680,541	27·50	710,000	23·38
East Anglian	716,189	1,288,444	15·49	2,031,000	35·75
Bedfordshire	170,555	574,916	12·37	411,000	65·69
Hertfordshire	619,934	719,229	61·46	1,045,000	76·56
Barnet	49,118	190,236	0·00	190,000	0·00
Brent and Harrow	82,239	277,200	0·00	450,000	55·56
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	250,407	269,023	13·21	177,000	64·41
Hillingdon	124,309	145,243	28·43	125,000	40·00
Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea	102,058	237,140	63·60	340,000	2·35
North West Thames RHA	1,398,620	2,412,987	30·70	2,648,000	56·34
Essex	420,739	908,000	0·0	864,000	48·50
Barking and Havering	77,756	189,657	23·70	91,000	8·79
Camden and Islington	116,859	122,793	0·0	124,000	8·06
City and East London	160,184	230,000	13·95	136,000	0·00
Enfield and Haringey	107,118	129,176	13·76	251,000	11·55
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	117,957	161,736	0·00	140,000	0·00
North East Thames RHA	1,000,613	1,741,363	5·44	1,606,000	29·02
East Sussex	243,918	305,603	47·63	801,000	81·52
Kent	411,913	1,036,195	49·11	1,043,000	57·81
Greenwich and Bexley	87,126	167,616	29·77	290,000	46·55
Bromley	105,764	130,526	37·09	77,000	28·57
Lanbeth, Southwark and Lewisham	135,139	218,862	13·67	329,000	0·00
South East Thames RHA	983,860	1,858,802	42·10	2,540,000	55·63
Surrey	395,220	974,250	40·27	308,000	60·39
West Sussex	216,829	848,879	42·23	717,000	41·98
Croydon	77,180	185,371	36·91	181,000	23·20
Kingston and Richmond	88,667	311,207	45·54	175,000	34·86
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	148,649	421,660	16·11	322,000	18·63
South West Thames RHA	926,545	2,741,367	37·53	1,703,000	38·17
Dorset	239,321	739,422	51·16	472,000	66·10
Hampshire	509,500	923,102	52·58	617,000	23·34
Wiltshire	209,551	198,000	8·08	130,000	19·23
Isle of Wight	49,054	92,136	78·64	92,000	23·91
Wessex RHA	1,007,426	1,952,660	48·76	1,311,000	38·37

FHSA	Reimbursement of computer costs Total 1990-91 £	Reimbursement of computer costs Total 1991-92 £	GPFH 1991-92 computer costs as a percentage Per cent.	Reimbursement forecast computer costs Total 1992-93 £	GPFH 1992-93 computer forecast as a percentage Per cent.
Berkshire	200,482	587,964	44·18	764,000	65·71
Buckinghamshire	325,477	631,026	61·94	657,000	69·41
Northamptonshire	186,181	534,029	69·93	437,000	48·28
Oxfordshire	231,169	670,835	33·14	205,000	41·46
Oxford RHA	943,309	2,423,854	51·42	2,063,000	60·79
Avon	342,890	650,000	33·08	613,000	67·54
Cornwall and Scilly Isles	221,977	241,900	36·77	247,000	67·61
Devon	444,429	1,071,252	46·83	1,110,000	32·43
Gloucestershire	195,681	422,702	44·30	424,000	46·70
Somerset	250,570	638,953	27·01	289,000	21·45
South Western RHA	1,455,547	3,024,807	38·53	2,683,000	44·76
Hereford and Worcester	356,423	473,700	53·52	644,000	75·78
Shropshire	96,265	297,328	44·67	158,000	18·99
Staffordshire	291,961	695,641	28·34	356,000	16·85
Warwickshire	122,586	457,340	52·13	466,000	75·97
Birmingham	225,436	374,906	0·00	374,000	42·78
Coventry	69,344	178,207	33·67	292,000	38·36
Dudley	58,259	64,695	0·00	417,000	23·98
Sandwell	108,346	313,951	28·88	271,000	29·52
Solihull	94,236	267,880	55·25	267,000	86·89
Walsall	48,069	127,429	24·50	216,000	60·65
Wolverhampton	51,266	77,138	0·00	100,000	—
West Midlands RHA	1,521,191	3,328,215	34·61	3,561,000	49·06
Cheshire	644,647	1,030,878	15,85	1,288,000	19·02
Liverpool	121,994	371,000	0·00	412,000	20·39
St. Helens and Knowsley	152,865	310,131	62·87	470,000	55·32
Sefton	314,332	264,038	39·67	260,000	57·69
Wirrel	74,132	408,187	0·00	391,000	8·95
Mersey RHA	1,307,970	2,384,234	19·42	2,821,000	27·44
Lancashire	459,282	672,519	13·76	771,000	24·25
Bolton	150,175	150,476	52·01	141,000	81·56
Bury	48,107	109,852	0·00	214,000	0·00
Manchester	62,032	209,285	3·92	234,000	20·51
Oldham	70,779	88,154	34·92	85,000	35·29
Rochdale	118,082	136,133	24·09	154,000	35·06
Salford	47,086	201,837	0·00	160,000	18·75
Stockport	123,543	175,398	47·29	215,000	73·95
Tameside	67,211	138,193	25·02	96,000	53·13
Trafford	54,985	90,814	0·00	131,000	58·78
Wigan	103,448	105,807	0·00	138,000	27·54
North Western RHA	1,304,730	2,078,468	17·33	2,339,000	33·73
England	17,571,690	34,117,460	34·07	34,376,000	45·21

Incontinence

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in England and Wales suffer from incontinence.

Mr. Yeo: Estimates vary according to the definitions used by researchers, but up to about 3 million adults and children in England and Wales may be affected. A Medical Research Council survey showed a prevalence of urinary incontinence of 8·5 per cent. in women and 1·6 per cent. in men aged 15 to 64 and 11·6 per cent. in women and 6·9 per cent. in men aged 65 and over.

Smoking

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the risk to women who are *(a)* smokers and *(b)* non-smokers and taking the contraceptive pill of a heart attack, stroke or other cardiovascular disease.

Dr. Mawhinney: The risk of myocardial infarction, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases in young women is increased approximately three to four fold by either oral contraceptive use or by smoking. When the two are combined there is an approximately tenfold increase in risk overall.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the cost to the national health service of advice from doctors to their patients in respect of giving up smoking per year.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the number of smokers who die each year in the United Kingdom as a result of smoking and smoking-related diseases.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is estimated that in the United Kingdom about 110,000 deaths each year are smoking related.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the number of deaths in the United Kingdom each year from lung cancer caused by passive smoking.

Dr. Mawhinney: In its fourth report published in 1988, the independent scientific committee on smoking and health estimated the number of lung cancer deaths in non smokers exposed to environmental tobacco smoke over most of their lives as
"several hundred deaths per year".

Breast Cancer

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of women with breast cancer in Britain have, since 1980, died within *(a)* one year, *(b)* three years and *(c)* five years of the original diagnosis being made; and what comparison she has made of the survival rates of women with breast cancer in other EC countries.

Mr. Sackville: The one, three and five-year relative survival rates—per cent.—for cases registered in 1981 in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Scotland are given in the table. More recent figures for England and Wales are not available. Those for Scotland show no change in the five-year relative survival rate, but small improvements in the one and three-year rates. Figures on cancer survival are not published by any other EC country.

One, three and five year relative survival (per cent.) of cases of breast cancer registered in England and Wales and in Scotland in 1981

	one year relative survival rate	*three year relative survival rate*	*five year relative survival rate*
England and Wales	86	71	62
Scotland	87	72	62

Eye Tests

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people had sight tests in Nottingham, North, or the next biggest geographical area for which figures are available, in *(a)* the last 12-month period for which figures are available and *(b)* 1 January 1988 to 31 December 1988; and what proportion of these were over the age of 65 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Figures are not collected in respect of parliamentary constituencies. The numbers of national health service sight tests paid for in each financial year by the Nottingham family health services authority are shown in the table.

Year	*Number of sight tests*
1987-88	238,980
1988-89	254,830
[1]1989-90	111,410
1990-91	82,950
1991-92	96,850

[1] From 1 April 1989, NHS sight tests were restricted to certain groups in the population. The sight tests paid for in 1989-90 include some conducted prior to 1 April 1989. The remainder paid for in 1989-90 do not represent a full year under the new system, because of the delay in payments. The figure for 1989-90 is not, therefore, directly comparable with that for 1990-91.

The Department does not collect information on either the number of private sight tests carried out, or the number of people aged over 65 who have sight tests. The figures are collected by financial year.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date she proposes to visit St. Bartholomew's hospital to discuss the Tomlinson report; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have visited St. Bartholomew's hospital twice to listen to views on the Tomlinson report, We expect to announce our policy on the future of London's health services and medical education shortly.

Children in Hospital

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what examination she has made of financial hardship faced by families visiting children in hospital.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 20 January at column *321*.

Tuberculosis

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of tuberculosis have been reported in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland in each year since 1985.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table.

Notifications of Tuberculosis[1] in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1985.

	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
1985	5,583	707	274	83
1986	5,743	756	249	108
1987	4,853	560	232	99
1988	4,960	528	201	86
1989	5,223	533	209	94
1990	5,010	563	194	131
1991	5,268	546	166	96

[1] Excludes chemoprophylaxis.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what moneys are expended nationally on tuberculosis vaccinations in schools in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The National Health Service Supplies Authority purchases tuberculosis vaccine—BCG—on behalf of the national health service. It is for district health authorities to arrange for immunisation and costs vary from one authority to another.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of rickets and TB have been reported in the Liverpool health authority area in the past five years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested about the number of cases of rickets is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. D. H. Tod, chairman of Liverpool health authority, for details. Information on the number of cases of tuberculosis in Liverpool is given in the table.

	Number of cases
1991	44
1990	55
1989	70
1988	49
1987	36

Source: OPCS.

Tobacco

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to license tobacco retailers.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on the advertising of tobacco.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government's policy on tobacco advertising is set out in the "Health of the Nation" White Paper.

Children's Hospices

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children's hospices are funded by Government funds for *(a)* revenue costs and *(b)* capital projects.

Mr. Yeo: The Department is giving direct assistance to voluntary organisations, in one case contributing to the running costs of an existing children's hospice and, in another, to the cost of planning a new hospice soon to be constructed. Support for this new development is from a £5 million programme of pilot projects which we are funding to identify good practice in the care of children with life-threatening illnesses. We are not providing any help with capital costs. Health authorities may purchase services for children with life-threatening illness from statutory and voluntary sector bodies, but no details of these are held centrally.

Child Care

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress made towards implementing the European Council recommendation 92/241/EEC on child care.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities, national voluntary organisations, child care providers in the private and voluntary sectors and other relevant organisations were sent copies of the recommendation 92/241/EEC on 11 January together with the Department's further guidance on the day care provisions in the Children Act—LAC (93)1. Copies of the recommendation and the guidance are available in the Library.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her Department's definition of informed consent under her Department's guidance for dealing with patients, in the context of women consenting to an abortion.

Mr. Sackville: Patients have the right under common law to give or withhold consent prior to examination or treatment. Informed consent as such does not form part of English law. Patients are, however, entitled to receive sufficient information in a way that they can understand about the proposed treatment, the possible alternatives and any substantial risks, so that they can make a balanced judgment. A doctor will exercise his or her professional skill and judgment in deciding what information a patient is given about a particular treatment.

This principle applies to all forms of treatment, including abortion.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions exist for reporting physical complications following abortions which occur after the form notifying her Department of the abortion has been submitted.

Mr. Sackville: There is no formal procedure for reporting complications occurring after an abortion has been notified to the Chief Medical Officer, but doctors can provide additional information.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if charities providing abortion services for the NHS through agency agreements with individual district health authorities may also enter into agency agreements with individual GP fund holders; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Terminations of pregnancy are not included in the list of goods and services which GP fund holders may purchase. We have no plans at present to change this.

Consultants

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on relating the system of distinction awards for consultants to their performance, with particular reference to outcomes.

Dr. Mawhinney: The leaflet "Consultants' Distinction Awards", issued in October 1990, sets out general guidelines on the criteria used in assessing consultants for

awards. A copy of the leaflet is available in the Library. This makes clear that, in considering consultants for awards, awards committees look for performance over and above what is normally expected in respect of service to patients, teaching and the management and development of the service.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the reform of the system of distinction awards—merit payments—for consultants.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are at present no plans to change the distinction awards system.

Hospital Visits

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each ministerial visit to *(a)* Charing Cross, *(b)* Guy's, *(c)* London chest hospital, *(d)* Queen Charlotte's, *(e)* Queen Elizabeth hospital, Hackney, *(f)* Royal Brompton, *(g)* Royal Marsden, *(h)* St. Mary's, Paddington, (i) St. Thomas's, *(j)* St. Mark's, *(k)* St. Bartholomew's, *(l)* UCH-Middlesex, *(m)* the Royal National Ear, Nose and Throat, and *(n)* the Hospital for Tropical Diseases, since 23 October 1992; how long the Minister spent at each hospital to the nearest quarter hour; and if she will indicate for each hospital whether the Minister held discussions on the Tomlinson report with (i) management, (ii) consultants, (iii) junior doctors, (iv) nurses or (v) staff side.

Dr. Mawhinney: In addition to visits by my colleagues I have either visited or had discussions with representatives of all the hospitals mentioned. I have visited St. Batholomew's twice to listen to their views on the Tomlinson report. I have also had meetings with professional, educational and trade union representatives.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the rules relating to the making available to NHS patients of services and equipment available for private patients in NHS trusts; and what is the position in respect of the laser treatment for myopia at St. James's hospital, Leeds.

Dr. Mawhinney: The availability of such services within the National Health Service is dependent on the decisions of purchasers, who are responsible for assessing the health care needs of their resident populations.

The corneal laser centre based at St. James's hospital, Leeds offers a service supplied by an independent company. The laser equipment will be used for the private treatment of short sight, a service currently not available under the NHS. It will also be made available to treat NHS patients with corneal scars. The revenue from leasing the premises and the royalties the trust receives from each operation provides additional funds for services for all patients at the hospital.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the basis of the standards set in the citizens charter for response performance of emergency ambulance services.

Mr. Sackville: The patients charter performance standards reflect those first recommended to the ambulance service in 1990 as a national benchmark which all services should strive to meet or better.

Care in the Community

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring her Department is undertaking of implementation of care in the community in respect *(a)* of local authority variations around the United Kingdom, *(b)* existing proposed provision of residential facilities in the private sector and *(c)* the effectiveness of dialogue between interested parties over each individual client's needs.

Mr. Yeo: The social services inspectorate and regional health authorities are currently undertaking their fourth round of monitoring of the progress being made by English social services and health authorities towards the full implementation of the Government's community care reforms from April this year. This monitoring is paying particular attention to liaison between authorities and between the statutory and independent sectors. The Department routinely collects data on the number of private residential care home places in England. Arrangment in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

West Midlands RHA

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will order the publication of the management letter by the district health auditor which was sent to the West Midlands regional health authority in December 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. This is a management document. Its publication is a matter for West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Joseph Raphael

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement concerning the escape from custody of Joseph Raphael on 19 January;

(2) what changes she intends to make in the procedures for the transportation of remand prisoners from hospital to court;

(3) if she will make a statement on the escape by Joseph Raphael while being taken to the Old Bailey in the company of nurses from Cane Hill secure unit.

Mr. Yeo: I understand that Mr. Raphael was detained in the secure unit at Cane Hill hospital on 6 November 1992 under section 35 of the Mental Health Act 1983, which provides for an accused person to be remanded to hospital for a report on his medical condition. He was to appear at the central criminal court on 19 January 1993 on a charge of murder. He absconded from the custody of the nurses who were escorting him from the hospital to the court. He subsequently gave himself up to the police and was detained at Brixton prison.

The Ravensbourne NHS Trust, which manages the Cane Hill unit, has stated that a decision was taken following clinical assessment to transport Mr. Raphael without a police escort. The trust is holding an internal

inquiry into the incident and the events leading up to it. We will be studying the inquiry report carefully and will consider in consultation with the Home Office what further guidance might be needed for hospitals and the police about their responsibilities in this area.

Managerial Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many senior nurse manager posts there were in each region in each year since 1989.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Information on the number of nurse manager posts in each region is not collected centrally. The table shows the number of senior nurses in posts paid on review body pay scales in each year since 1989. There are in addition senior nurse managers on the pay arrangements for general and senior managers; the numbers of these senior nurses cannot be disaggregated from other senior managerial staff. The fall in nurse numbers is a result of the continuing transfer of senior nursing staff to the managerial grades and the growing numbers of Project 2000 trainees who are not counted in the manpower figures.

Senior Nurses, by RHA, whole time equivalents

	September 1989	*September 1990*	*September 1991*
Northern	240	150	120
Yorkshire	200	140	170
Trent	250	190	160
East Anglian	90	60	60
North West Thames	300	300	150
North East Thames	350	260	210
South East Thames	240	170	120
South West Thames	180	130	110
Wessex	140	110	90
Oxford	130	120	120
South Western	140	90	70
West Midlands	310	270	240
Mersey	140	100	90
North Western	270	250	260
SHAs	50	40	40
OSAs	—	—	—
England	3,030	2,370	2,010

Source: Non Medical Manpower Census, HAP(STATS)B, NHSME
Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 wte.

Radiation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what facilities and experienced personnel are available within the national health service to detect, study and report on the incidence of illness resulting from nuclear radiation contamination.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* Currently, there is no known method of directly identifying disease in an individual which has been induced wholly or in part by exposure to low levels of radiation in the environment. In order to establish whether an excess incidence of disease in a given population is associated in some way with external factors, accepted public health practice is to subject the available data to epidemiological study. The national health service employs public health professionals in each region and district whose responsibilities include monitoring the health of the local population and investigating unusual patterns of disease. Statistics on disease are also monitored at the national level. In addition, the Department has established the small area health statistics unit which is concerned with the assessment of any risk to the health of the population from point source contamination. In relation to environmental radiation, the results of epidemiological studies are referred to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, a group of independent experts which was set up to assess and advise the Government on the health effects of natural and man-made radiation in the environment, and to assess the adequacy of the available data and the need for further research.

Mrs. Tracey Evans

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will order a public inquiry into the circumstances which led to the discharge of Mrs. Tracey Evans from Brighton general hospital; what social services involvement occurred in this case; and what assessment has been made of the implications for the treatment of schizophrenics arising out of the case of Tracey Evans.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* No. The reports I have received from the local agencies involved indicated that there was nothing untoward which suggested that Mrs. Evans would harm her children.

This is a tragic case and is one that will fall within the remit of the inquiry which the Government have asked the Royal College of Psyschiatrists to establish in consultation with the other relevant professional groups to

"Inquire into the circumstances leading up to and surrounding homicides and suicides committed by people under the care of or recently discharged by the specialist psychiatric services, to identify factors in the patients' management which may be related to the deaths, and to recommend measures designed to reduce the number of such incidents".

EDUCATION

Lingua Programme

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if pupils at independent schools are eligible to participte in the programme of exchanges under the Lingua programme; and what are the reasons for these arrangements.

Mr. Boswell Under the terms of the Council of Education Ministers' decision of 28 July 1989, upon which the Lingua programme is based, eligibility for support for pupil exchanges is limited to pupils attending educational establishments supported with public funds. In line with this, pupils at independent schools in the United Kingdom are not eligible for support under the current programme.

Socially Responsible Parenthood

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to develop a post-school education strategy aimed at promoting socially responsible parenthood as recommended in the Elton report on discipline in schools.

Mr. Boswell: The Government's general policy for further and higher education is to create a framework to enable institutions to meet the widely differing needs of students. It is for institutions to decide which courses to

offer, and to help students to select those courses which meet their needs. The Government would expect institutions, including local authority adult centres, to take account of the need for education about parenthood, building on that provided in school in collaboration with other appropriate agencies, including the youth service.

School Management

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities have schools which take formal account of the views of pupils on matters relating to school management; and whether these arrangements meet the standards expected by his Department.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally. Pupil participation in school management is a matter for individual schools and their governing bodies.

School Governors

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities provide regular training courses for school governors which meet the standards expected by his Department.

Mr. Forth: All LEAs arrange for training for school governors. The 1991 HMI report "The Quality of Training and Support for Governors in Schools and Colleges" found that 81 per cent. of training sessions inspected were sound or very good. Training and support were reaching a high proportion of governors.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest available figures for the number of pupils excluded from school *(a)* permanently and *(b)* temporarily.

Mr. Forth: The Department has been monitoring permanent exclusions at maintained schools over a two-year period starting with summer term 1990 under the national exclusions reporting system—(NERS). Some preliminary findings from NERS were incorporated in our recently published discussion paper on exclusions. Some 3,000 pupils were permanently excluded in the first year of the NERS exercise. Information on temporary exclusions is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities have schools with conditional re-entry agreements as a means of readmitting excluded pupils to schools; and what assessment he has made of their effectiveness.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

School Closures

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what occasions he has used his powers under the Education Reform Act 1988 to close schools whose governing bodies were deemed to be failing in the performance of their statutory duties.

Mr. Forth: None.

Schools (Communication Systems)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities have formal systems of communication within their schools and between schools and parents, governors, their communities and outside agencies, as recommended in the Elton report on discipline in schools; what percentage of schools have such systems of communication; and to what extent they meet the standards expected by his Department.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Health Education

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to monitor the response of local education authorities to the ending of grants for education support and training—GEST—funding for health education co-ordination and the impact on the employment of dedicated health education staff;

(2) what plans he has to monitor the continued provision of drugs education in schools from 1 April.

Mr. Forth: The monitoring arrangements for the GEST preventive health education programme were set out in the original draft circular inviting bids, which issued on 1 July 1991. Amongst other things, this made clear that LEAs would be asked to provide by July 1993 a brief report on the work undertaken in 1992-93 and its effectiveness. My right hon. Friend will look to the Office for Standards in Education to provide him with information and advice about all aspects of education provision in schools. This will include provision made for preventive health education, aspects of which are included in the national curriculum and must be studied by all pupils.

Educational Psychologists

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities have developed working relationships between schools and educational psychologists to provide advice on the management of behaviour in groups and in schools as a whole which meet with the standards expected by his Department.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

St. Mary's School, Hendon

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to determine the application by St. Mary's school, Hendon, to become a grant-maintained school.

Mr. Forth: No application for grant-maintained status from St. Mary's school, Hendon, has yet been received. Following the positive ballot result at the school in favour of grant-maintained status on 7 December, the governors must publish proposals within six months from that date and submit them to the Secretary of State for determination.

Schools (Arson Attacks)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest available figures for the incidence of arson attacks in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The number of incidents of arson in schools in England is not collected centrally. Information on the number of incidents of deliberate—or probably deliberate—fires in maintained primary and secondary schools in England is collected as part of the Department's annual survey of security in schools. In the financial year 1990-91 there were an estimated 3,100 such fires.

Schools (Lunch-time Supervision)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities provide lunch-time supervision; what percentage of schools in each local education authority provide such supervision; how much is spent; and what assessment he has made of the extent to which this supervision meets the standards expected by his Department.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Schools Police Liaison

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to monitor the way in which local education authorities have assessed the number of schools in their areas which would particularly benefit from school-police liaison projects; and what percentage of such schools in each local education authority have these projects.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, school governing bodies are required to report annually to parents on steps taken to strengthen links with the community, including the police. Advice on good practice in police/school liaison was contained in HM inspectorate's publication "Our Policeman" published in 1989. The Elton report on "Discipline in Schools", distributed to all LEAs and schools in March 1989, also gave advice on links with the police. The Department is currently funding a research project by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders on the role of the education service in youth crime prevention. My right hon. Friend will wish to review the general question of links between schools and the police in the light of the outcomes of that project.

Funding

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities have made representations to him on the funding of education services in the last three months.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received representations from a number of local education authorities.

Surplus School Places, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total number of surplus school places in each district council area in Hampshire in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools; and what was the basis on which these figures were calculated.

Mr. Forth: The information is not available in the form requested. We estimate that in 1991 there were 24,719 surplus primary places and 10,373 surplus secondary places in Hampshire, representing 17 per cent. and 16 per cent. of total capacity respectively. These figures derive from the Department's survey of school capacity which was carried out during the 1990-91 academic year. Surplus place figures were calculated by comparing the capacity derived from the more open enrolment formula with the number of pupils on roll at each school.

Schools Expenditure, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the capital expenditure on *(a)* nursery schools, *(b)* primary schools and *(c)* secondary schools in Hampshire in each of the years since 1987, expressed in 1987 values.

Mr. Forth: The table shows the information requested:

Capital spending by Hampshire LEA on schools, expressed in cash terms and in 1987 values

	Nursery and Primary Schools £'000	*Secondary Schools* £'000
1987-88	11,407	7,306
1988-89	15,169	7,015
1989-90	12,588	5,846
1990-91	11,412	7,438

Notes:

1. 1990-91 is the latest year for which data are available.
2. Capital expenditure on nursery and primary schools is not identified separately in the returns made by local authorities.
3. Real value figures were derived by applying the GDP deflators announced with the Autumn Statement.

Nursery Education, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of three and four-year-old children attended nursery school or nursery classes in Hampshire in each year since 1987.

Mr. Forth: In each year between 1987 and 1991—the latest year for which information is available—approximately 5 per cent. of the local three and four-year-old population attended maintained nursery schools and classes in Hampshire.

Mandatory Awards

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will review the arrangements for the provision of mandatory awards.

Mr. Boswell: These arrangements are already kept under periodic review.

Maths and Physics

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress he is making in standards of teacher training in maths and physics.

Mr. Forth: All courses of initial teacher training for primary teachers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland must include at least 100 hours devoted to maths and 100 hours devoted to science. A number of courses for secondary teachers now provide for "balanced" science, including physics. Postgraduate teacher training courses in "balanced" science enable students whose initial degree was in one science to spend part of the course extending their knowledge of the others.

Under the programme of grants for educational support and training, the Department for Education supports 20-day designated courses of in-service training to enhance the subject knowledge of primary maths and science teachers. They make a valuable contribution to improving teaching standards.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the bids for capital expenditure for education from shire counties in 1993-94 and 1992-93 and the annual capital guideline notified by the Department for Education for 1993-94 and 1992-93.

Mr. Forth: The figures in the table represent the bids and annual capital guidelines—ACGs—for county and voluntary controlled schools in 1992-93 and 1993-94. They do not include capital work at sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges, the responsibility for which will transfer on 1 April 1993 to the Further Education Funding Council, or capital work at voluntary-aided schools.

The allocation figures also exclude resources issued during the current year by means of supplementary credit approvals—SCAs. No SCAs have yet been issued for 1993-94.

Schools ACGS: 1992-93 and 1993-94 *(£000s)*

LEA	*Total Schools ACG Bid 1992-93*	*Total Schools ACG 1992-93*	*Total Schools ACG Bid 1993-94*	*Total Schools ACG 1993-94*
Avon	8,904	4,269	13,012	4,780
Bedfordshire	7,840	3,789	4,788	2,827
Berkshire	21,703	5,238	22,707	4,421
Buckinghamshire	12,412	5,289	13,016	5,869
Cambridgeshire	26,667	6,380	21,740	7,638
Cheshire	24,991	8,605	30,688	9,676
Cleveland	6,760	3,788	9,396	3,657
Cornwall	18,476	4,443	16,000	2,864
Cumbria	19,115	10,024	20,260	8,298
Derbyshire	41,748	15,997	40,245	12,885
Devon	19,165	9,855	21,406	10,592
Dorset	20,581	4,735	19,980	5,196
Durham	27,504	7,001	40,197	5,306
East Sussex	51,441	17,076	41,132	11,020
Essex	56,032	17,954	44,992	11,643
Gloucestershire	16,446	6,980	29,223	8,598
Hampshire	17,377	12,086	26,375	9,605
Hereford and Worcester	10,884	3,331	10,640	2,396
Hertfordshire	23,519	5,677	17,980	4,009
Humberside	21,275	9,049	24,479	6,936
Isle of Wight	6,425	1,584	6,015	1,939
Kent	39,229	20,229	38,444	15,820
Lancashire	31,926	20,456	37,631	11,129

LEA	*Total Schools ACG Bid 1992-93*	*Total Schools ACG 1992-93*	*Total Schools ACG Bid 1993-94*	*Total Schools ACG 1993-94*
Leicestershire	25,919	8,372	16,310	6,859
Lincolnshire	26,435	12,263	21,646	10,471
Norfolk	9,347	2,811	9,457	3,987
North Yorkshire	12,236	6,222	10,883	5,296
Northamptonshire	8,087	4,107	8,603	4,558
Northumberland	7,343	2,516	3,782	2,199
Nottinghamshire	20,549	5,182	11,267	2,989
Oxfordshire	20,179	5,681	25,525	3,301
Shropshire	10,398	4,109	4,485	3,842
Somerset	9,071	5,134	14,762	4,207
Staffordshire	18,048	7,805	17,790	6,041
Suffolk	18,343	9,169	21,070	7,494
Surrey	17,976	5,482	26,031	10,167
Warwickshire	10,802	1,988	12,011	2,058
West Sussex	10,950	3,645	18,801	4,277
Wiltshire	12,175	4,137	7,055	2,518

Notes:
1. The figures do not include capital work at FE, sixth form or tertiary colleges as, from 1 April 1993, responsibility for the funding of capital work in such institutions will transfer to the Further Education Funding Council.
2. The figures are ACGs only and do not include any schools supplementary credit approvals issued in year. No supplementary credit approvals for 1993-94 have yet been issued.
3. The figures do not include work related to the technology schools initiative as these allocations are made via supplementary credit approvals.
4. The figures do not include bids or capital allocations for work at voluntary aided schools.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Research and Development

36. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the Government's spending on civil research and development in the latest available year; and what were the comparable figures for the United States of America and Japan.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Data in the 1992 annual review of Government-funded research and development show that Government spent £2,772·8 million—0·51 per cent. of GDP—in 1990-91 and an estimated £2,830 million in 1991-92 on civil research and development.

In calendar year 1990, the latest year for which comparable figures are available, Government expenditure on civil research and development in the United States of America and in Japan was £14,524 million—0·44 per cent. of GDP—and £5,651 million—0·43 per cent. of GDP—respectively.

Departments of Physics

37. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to maintain the dual support system in respect of departments of physics, not currently considered to be in the top research rank, to ensure that they have the funds to develop ideas that may move them up the scale.

Mr. Robert Jackson: All university departments can apply for research council grants to support projects. Applications are considered on their merits. Institutions are free to use their block grants from the higher education funding councils to foster promising departments.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Waldegrave: Contracts were awarded by the Office of Public Service and Science and its agencies to KPMG Management Consultants during the past 12 months for the following:

CCTA—the Government Centre for Information Systems

Distributed information technology infrastructure scoping study.
Information systems strategy study.
Infrastructure management scoping study.
Speaker for managing change workshop.
Business transformation scoping study.

Office of Science and Technology

Financial management survey of costing Research Council contracts with other Government Departments.

Civil Service College

Study of future financial structures.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of public expenditure was the responsibility of non-departmental public bodies in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1992 or the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Expenditure by non-departmental public bodies, which excludes national health service bodies, funded by the Government through grants and other support was 4 per cent. of general Government expenditure in 1978-79 and 4·6 per cent. in 1990-91.

Citizens Charters

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his proposals for citizens charters as they affect young people under 18 years of age.

Mr. Waldegrave: Young people benefit—as do all sections of society—from the better quality, more responsive public services promoted by the citizens charter initiative. More specifically, they will benefit from the publication, later this year, of charters setting standards of service for students in further and higher education.

Freedom of Information

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce a Bill on the freedom of information.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government will be publishing a White Paper later this Session setting out our further proposals for achieving greater openness and access to information.

Research and Development

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what spending per capita on research and development is in each country of the European Community and the EC as a whole.

Mr. Waldegrave: The latest figures for per capita spending on research and development in the EC are for 1990:

Millions of Current Purchasing Power Parity £ per capita, 1990

	£
Belgium	165·66
Denmark	[1]170·81
France	252·66
Germany	306·78
Greece	[1]19·65
Ireland	58·02
Italy	124·50
Netherlands	193·68
Portugal	[1]19·84
Spain	57·18
United Kingdom	210·60
EC Average	186·90

[1] Nearest date to 1990.
Note: Luxembourg is not separately identified in OECD R & D statistics.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what clinical research is carried out in the United Kingdom into tuberculosis; at what institutions; and at what cost.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from this Department. The MRC is an independent body deciding what research to support on its own expert judgment.

In the last financial year 1991-92, the council's expenditure for research directly relevant to tuberculosis was £808,000. This supported basic research at its own MRC tuberculosis and related infections unit at the Hammersmith hospital, and through grants to researchers at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Public Health Laboratory Service, London, and the university of Leicester. A further £327,000 was spent in 1991-92 on projects which may, in part, be relevant to the study of tuberculosis.

The MRC is not currently funding any research into tuberculosis directly relevant to patients, but the council is always willing to consider for support soundly based new scientific proposals in competition with other applications.

Research is also undertaken by higher education institutions, but details are not available centrally.

Quangos

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give figures for the total number of quangos, together with the total number of staff employed and the total expenditure, including those connected with the health service, for each year from 1979 to 1991; and if he will give the percentage difference in each figure between 1979 and 1991.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The available information is shown in the table; fuller details are published in "Public Bodies", copies of which are available in the House Library. The figures are not strictly comparable on a year-by-year basis because of the change of status of some major spending bodies.

	NDPBs			*Health Service bodies*			*Total NDPBs and Health Service bodies*		
Year	*Total*	*Total staff*	*Total gross expenditure £ million*	*Total*	*Total staff*	*Total expenditure £ million*	*Total*	*Total staff*	*Total expenditure £ million*
1979	2,167	217,000	6,150	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982	1,810	205,500	8,330	n/a	n/	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1983	1,691	196,700	9,940	261	1,072,300	14,350	1,952	1,269,000	24,290
1984	1,681	141,200	7,280	259	1,080,300	15,420	1,940	1,221,500	22,700
1985	1,654	138,300	7,770	266	1,071,100	17,050	1,920	1,209,400	24,820
1986	1,658	146,300	8,240	355	1,055,500	14,160	2,013	1,201,800	22,400
1987	1,643	148,700	9,100	356	1,047,600	14,350	1,999	1,196,300	23,450
1988	1,648	134,600	9,450	359	1,027,400	15,500	2,007	1,162,000	24,950
1989	1,555	118,300	9,410	359	1,035,100	17,020	1,914	1,153,500	26,430
1990	1,539	117,500	11,870	355	1,029,200	19,370	1,894	1,146,700	31,240
1991	1,444	116,400	13,080	411	1,026,300	20,770	1,855	1,142,700	33,850
Percentage change 1979-91	−33·4	−46·4	+112·7	+57·5	[1]−4·3	[1]+44·7	[1]−5·0	[1]−10·0	[1]+39·4

[1] Since 1983.
n/a—Not available.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hendon Artists

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition of paintings by Hendon, South artists to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 22 to 26 March 1993.

Machine Tool Technology

Mr. Waller: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to machine tool technology to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 1 to 5 March 1993.

Staff Salaries

Mr. Winnick: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission if he will set out the level of the most recent salary or wage increase given for this year for each grade of staff employed by the House, giving the effective date of the increase in each case.

Mr. Beith: Grades 1 to 3 in the service of the House are affected by the decision of the Government that, in common with Ministers and Members of Parliament, staff covered by the Top Salaries Review Body should receive no pay increase in 1993. However, the second stage of the 1992 TSRB award comprising a 3 per cent. increase of salaries in payment will be implemented with effect from 1 April 1993. This applies to staff of the House in grades 1 to 3.

The most recent salary increases for other grades are as follows:

Grade	*Percentage increase*	*Effective date*
4-7	3·9	1 August 1992
8 and below (including Catering grades)	4·1	1 April 1992

The existing arrangements for discretionary performance-related pay will continue to operate.

Questions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will introduce proposals to allow the tabling of questions to take place *(a)* by fax and *(b)* by electronic transfer.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

It is the long-standing practice of the House that each question should be tabled on the personal authority of an hon. Member, either in person or on his or her behalf by another hon. Member, or in writing with a genuine signature. It would not be possible for the Clerks in the Table Office to verify that a fax or electronic message had been sent personally by an hon. Member. However, the hon. Member may wish to draw this matter to the attention of the Select Committee on Procedure.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he now expects to respond to the Procedure Committee's third report of Session 1990-91, HC 178, on parliamentary questions.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Thursday 22 October 1992, at column *363*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Cambridge Water Company (Judgment)

Mr. Fry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect on British industry of the retrospective provisions of the judgment in the case of Cambridge Water Company *v.* Eastern Counties Leather plc.

Mr. Sainsbury: Eastern Counties Leather is petitioning for leave to appeal to the House of Lords. The Government will await the final determination of this case.

President of the Board of Trade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *745*, if he will now abolish the title of President of the Board of Trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: No.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for the United Kingdom national authority under the chemical weapons convention to include representation from the chemical industry, the scientific community and other concerned and interested parties.

Mr. Heseltine: The national authority will be an executive body. No decision has been taken about the involvement of the chemical industry, the scientific community, and other concerned and interested parties. Such involvement will be the subject of consultation in due course.

Pit Closures

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he is taking to ensure that British Coal's care and maintenance procedures in the 31 pits proposed for closure do not prejudice the outcome of his reviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Coaling and development work is continuing at the 21 pits subject to the coal review so there can be no question of the outcome of that review being prejudiced. British Coal has given frequent assurances in correspondence, to the Trade and Industry and

Employment Select Committees, and in court that it is preserving the fabric of the 10 pits so that if, at the end of the period of consultation, it is decided to keep any or all of them open, that will be possible. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has asked Boyds to report on whether the fabric of the 10 pits is being preserved in accordance with those assurances.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects Boyds to complete its report on the 10 pits proposed for immediate closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has asked Boyds to submit its final report by 15 March 1993. A copy of the full terms of reference of the Boyds study of the 10 pits is available in the Library of the House.

Oil and Gas Exploration

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps are being taken to protect wildlife sites and sites of special scientific interest in the firth of Forth from oil exploration and possible oil contamination arising from the Department of Trade and Industry's 14th round of offering coastal oil and gas exploration licences.

Mr. Eggar: The environmental sensitivities of all areas offered in the 14th offshore oil and gas licensing round, including any which encompass sites of special scientific interest or of particular wildlife value, have been considered on a block-by-block basis. Environmental conditions to be attached to blocks offered in the first two stages of the round have been drafted following agreement with the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee; those for coastal blocks, including those offered in the Forth approaches, include requirements to consult these bodies and relevant local authorities regarding environmental protection measures before exploration commences. Other special conditions may include seasonal restrictions on exploration activities and controls on discharges from rigs and the chemical formulation of drilling muds.

Corporate Communications Ltd.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has appointed inspectors to inquire into the actions of the auditors and directors of Corporate Communications Ltd.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I cannot comment on the affairs of individual companies. I am prepared to consider any information the hon. Member may provide in the usual way.

Maxwell Companies

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date Companies house was notified that the ownership of London and Bishopgate International had been transferred from Kevin Maxwell to L & B Holdings plc.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: On 24 May 1989.

Coal Industry

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the findings by the Closkey Coal Information Services contained in the Easington district council submission entitled "The Case for Easington and Vane Tempest Collieries"; and if he will commission an environmental impact report.

Mr. Eggar: We are taking Easington district council's submission into account in the coal review, and hope to publish a White Paper setting out our findings as early as possible next month. The commissioning of an environmental impact report would be an operational matter for British Coal.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the operation of the market development fund in the Republic of Ireland with respect to possible unfair competition for United Kingdom exports into the European single market and possible subsidy implications; what consideration has been given to the implications for manufacturing firms in Northern Ireland; what representations he has made to the authorities of the Irish Republic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Officials in this, and other Government Departments, are watching closely the operation of the market development fund which is scheduled to terminate at the end of March 1993. My right hon. Friend raised our concerns with the Commission as soon as he heard of this scheme. These concerns included the incompatibility of the measures with the common market, the damaging effects on United Kingdom and other Community producers and the serious precedents it would set were the Commission to approve the measures. As a result of this approach, the Commission imposed a number of important restrictions on the operation of the scheme.

British Steel (US Duties)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 4 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *459*, what further discussions he has had with the United States about their imposition of duties on British steel output.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade raised this matter with the US Secretary of Commerce by letter on 11 December.

Outstanding Debts

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on progress towards requiring large companies to state in their reports and acounts how quickly they pay outstanding debts.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms has today published a consultative document to take forward the commitment the Government have given that in future large companies will be required to state in their report and accounts how quickly they pay.

Late payment is a reflection of business culture which is intangible and notoriously resistant to change. The Government are using their influence to nudge a culture change in the right direction.

A number of options have been considered as the best way of taking forward the commitment and these options are discussed in the consultative document.

The Government-preferred option uses data large companies collect already, rather than requiring collection of new data which would be a burden on business. Suppliers and others will be provided with information they have not had previously.

The consultative document also suggests which companies would be required to make this disclosure by proposing a definition of large companies.

The Department is seeking comments on the consultative document by 26 March 1993 with a view to presenting the necessary regulations to Parliament and applying them to company accounts as soon as possible.

Energy Strategy

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he is giving to the generation costs, and employment and investment levels of the nuclear and offshore gas and oil industries, relative to coal equivalents, in developing a national energy strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Many of these issues are being addressed in the coal review currently being undertaken by my Department.

Wind Generation

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has further to increase the generation of wind-generated electricity in East Anglia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Wind-generated electricity is expected to increase in the future, encouraged by further orders under the non-fossil fuel obligation. There are no plans to promote wind energy selectively in particular locations.

BCCI

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date he granted an extension to the liquidators of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International to the undertaking they gave on 14 January 1992 to hold a creditors' meeting.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In view of the terms of the judgment of the vice-chancellor given on 2 March 1992 no formal extension was given to the liquidators in respect of the undertaking whch they gave on 5 December 1991 regarding the holding of a creditors meeting pursuant to section 141 of the Insolvency Act 1986. The liquidators have now sought and obtained the directions of the court with regard to the summoning and conduct of such a meeting which I understand will be held May 1993.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many compromises he has sanctioned in respect of the liquidation of the bank of Credit and Commerce International; and what is the value involved.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Twelve such sanctions have been given, 10 in respect of claims totalling £30,877,540 and two in respect of claims totalling 14,438,462 US dollars.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many meetings he has had with the liquidators of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None.

Colombian Coal

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department have made to the EC Commission in support of British Coal's anti-dumping claim against Colombian coal imported into the United Kingdom through the EC.

Mr. Eggar: The responsibility for deciding whether an anti-dumping complaint should be formally investigated lies with the Commission. The Government have made it clear to the Commission that we look to it to take seriously its responsibilities in this area and therefore to consider British Coal's complaint carefully. We have also made clear that we have no objection to its opening an investigation.

Electricity Generators

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will call for a report from the Office of Electricity Regulation on profits made by the electricity generators.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* When the Government set up the privatised electricity market it appointed the Director General of Electricity Supply—DGES—to regulate it. It is for the DGES to decide whether any action is called for over the profits made by the electricity generators. However, the terms of reference of the coal review announced on 26 October said that the review would, amongst other issues, consider in consultation with the DGES whether any company is abusing its position in the marketplace.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Press Regulation

16. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to maintain press freedom.

23. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes will be made concerning the Press Complaints Commission in the light of the report by Sir David Calcutt, QC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier today to the question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

National Lottery

17. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent representations he has received about his proposals for a national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: I have received a number of recent representations from a wide range of interested parties about the Government's proposals for a national lottery. Only a small minority of those representations were opposed to the establishment of a national lottery.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received urging the location of the headquarters of the national lottery in an area traditionally associated with the pools industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Department has received representations from the Liverpool chamber of commerce and from the editor of the *Liverpool Echo*, and from the Glasgow development agency. Bradford metropolitan borough council has also urged consideration of Liverpool as a location. The National Heritage Committee recommended that the headquarters of the office of the national lottery should be established in such an area.

BBC Licence Fee

18. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the BBC licence fee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Since the Department's establishment, we have received a total of 713 representations about the television licence fee. Matters raised included the level of the fee, possible concessions for particular groups and the operation of the concessionary licence scheme.

Cathedrals

19. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what grants his Department is making to support the preservation of great cathedrals.

Mr. Brooke: In April 1991, the Government launched the cathedral repair grant scheme, aimed at assisting with the repair of cathedrals and comparable buildings of other denominations. A total of £11·5 million, spread over the three financial years 1991-92 to 1993-94, was provided to English Heritage for this purpose. Following the autumn statement, I was able to announce an additional provisional allocation of £4 million for each of the two years 1994-95 and 1995-96 in order to sustain this very successful scheme.

Rugby League Grounds

20. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the operation of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 in relation to professional rugby league football.

Mr. Brooke: I am empowered under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 to designate for the purposes of safety certification any sports ground accommodating more than 10,000 spectators at which football, rugby or cricket is played. The purpose of certification is to secure reasonable public safety. At present, 25 rugby league grounds are designated under the 1975 Act.

Highcliffe Castle, Dorset

21. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the future of Highcliffe castle, Dorset.

Mr. Key: The Buildings at Risk Trust has submitted to Christchurch borough council a business plan for the restoration of Highcliffe castle. I have agreed to meet my hon. Friend, and a deputation from the council, on Monday 15 February, to discuss the plan.

Windsor Castle (Fire)

22. **Mr. Boyce:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he is now in a position to give an estimate of the cost of Windsor castle's restoration and the percentage to be met from public funds.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Theatres Act 1843

24. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the passing of the Theatres Act 1843.

Mr. Key: Although we have no particular plans to mark this anniversary, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having drawn it to the attention of the House. As he will know, the Theatres Act greatly liberalised the provision of theatre in London in the last century.

Drug Abuse (Sport)

25. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if, when he next meets the chairman of the Sports Council, he will discuss with him the problem of drug abuse in sport.

Mr. Brooke: During 1993, I expect to have a number of meetings with the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss issues of mutual concern, including the abuse of drugs in sport.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he will take to counter the abuse of the taking or administration of drugs in sport.

Mr. Brooke: My Department is seeking to combat drug abuse in sport both nationally through support for the Sports Council's national drug testing programme and internationally through the Council of Europe's anti-doping convention and the memorandum of understanding with the Australian, Canadian and Norwegian Governments.

Regional Orchestras

26. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy concerning regional orchestras.

Mr. Key: Under the arm's-length principle, it is for the Arts Council to set policies for the arts in line with the broad objectives agreed by the Government. As my right hon. Friend said in his statement to the House on 11 December, *Official Report*, columns 1123-33, the orchestras are unevenly distributed around the country, and their funding requirements needed to be assessed by comparison with each other. They will, therefore, continue to be funded directly by the Arts Council rather than the regional arts boards.

Tourism

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he next expects to visit seaside resorts in the north-west to review progress in co-ordinating the marketing of tourist attractions inside and outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit resorts in the north-west in the immediate future. I am a regular visitor to the north-west and either my right hon. Friend or I would welcome an invitation to visit my hon. Friend's constituency as soon as an opportunity can be found.

Pub Theatre

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received concerning assistance towards pub theatre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Although I have received no representations about pub theatre, I am aware that the growth in pub theatre over the last two decades has added a new and lively dimension to theatre life in London and elsewhere. The funding of these theatres is a matter for the Regional Arts Boards. I understand that a number of pub theatres have received grants from, for example, the London Arts Board.

DEFENCE

Northumberland National Park

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, for each of the last five years, the amount of land in the Northumberland national park used by the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: That part of Otterburn training area which lies within the Northumberland national park area has been as follows:

1988 23,364 hectares freehold
1989 23,364 hectares freehold
1990 23,364 hectares freehold
1991 23,379 hectares freehold
1992 23,379 hectares freehold

Since 1991, about 3,640 hectares within the national park (including Kidland, Kidlandlee and parts of Harwood forest) have been licensed for use up to a maximum of 28 days each year. In addition, some training has been carried out on private land such as Thirwell common and Blakehope fell without charge and by prior arrangement with the owners.

The land detailed is mostly used for training by the Army.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, for each of the forthcoming five years, the amount of land in the Northumberland national park expected to be allocated for use by each of the armed services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The future use of land within Northumberland national park for military training is under review at present. It is too early to say what the precise future requirements will be.

Equipment (Exports)

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each year since 1980 levels of exports of defence equipment in pound million to *(a)* NATO and other western European countries, *(b)* the middle east and north Africa, *(c)* other African countries, *(d)* Asia and the far east and *(e)* Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to table 1.12 of "Defence Statistics," 1992 edition, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. 1991 is the latest year for which these figures are available.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Aitken: During the past 12 months one contract has been placed with KPMG Management Consultants; the contract covers the provision of out-placement services related to "Options for Change".

Bosnia

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding pay and allowances for British troops serving in Bosnia; whether he plans to introduce any special allowances for those troops; if he will list the comparative pay and allowances for British troops serving in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* BAOR and *(c)* Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have received a number of representations on this subject.

The pay and allowances paid to military personnel depend not only on their location but on their rank, job and personal circumstances, including whether they are married or not. It is our general policy that normal provisions on pay and allowances apply wherever personnel are serving. Service personnel receive the 'x' factor (currently an 11·5 per cent. addition to basic pay) throughout their career, which recognises their liability to serve, on occasions, in difficult and demanding circumstances. Provisions also include the payment of local overseas allowance (LOA) to personnel deployed outside the United Kingdom to cover, where appropriate, the additional costs associated with living in the country concerned. The troops deployed from Germany to the former Yugoslavia continue to receive a significant element of their LOA (70 per cent. for married personnel and 40 per cent. for single personnel) in recognition of their continuing financial commitments in Germany. In recognition of the conditions under which troops are serving in the former Yugoslavia, we have introduced a special welfare package which includes free two-way aerogrammes and an allowance towards the cost of telephone calls for all troops based in the region.

Nuclear Weapons Testing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the cost to the United Kingdom of radioactive decontamination and rehabilitation of Christmas island and Monte Bello island following weapons testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Three independent studies by American and New Zealand experts have demonstrated that the levels of radioactivity on Christmas island—now Kiritimati—is consistent with that to be expected from world-wide fall-out. As for the Monte Bello islands, the report of the technical assessment group showed their

isolation and lack of potable water ensured visitations would be casual and that such visits would cause no radiological health concern. For both localities, therefore, no radioactive decontamination is either necessary or planned.

HMS Ark Royal (Aircraft Landings)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of *(a)* the Sea Harrier and *(b)* the Sea King pilots who landed their aircraft on HMS Ark Royal on 15 January had not previously exercised landing of their aircraft on an aircraft carrier at sea.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Search and Rescue

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about his plans to transfer the search and rescue unit from RAF Coltishall to RAF Wattisham; if he proposes to review the transfer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has received a number of representations. There are no plans to review the decision.

HMS Vanguard

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of the in-service date of HMS Vanguard.

Mr. Aitken: Vanguard remains on course to enter service towards the end of 1994 or early in 1995.

Anti-ballistic Missile Systems

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the operational effective range of the anti-ballistic missile systems deployed around Moscow.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Components of the ABM system deployed around Moscow include the short range Gazelle interceptor for engagements within the atmosphere and the Gorgon long-range interceptor for engagements beyond the atmosphere. The Gorgon is capable of engaging incoming warheads at ranges of several hundred kilometres.

Ballistic Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the downloading of Russian ballistic missiles under the terms of the START II agreement will be verified; and whether the downloading of Russian ballistic missiles precludes those missiles from being uploaded at a subsequent date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: START II is a bilateral treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. I understand that the comprehensive verification procedure agreed under START I will apply to the new treaty as well. The texts of both START treaties have been released. Implementation of the treaty is a matter for the states party to it.

Polaris

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of the year in which the final Polaris submarine will be decommissioned.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We expect the last Polaris submarine to be decommissioned in the second half of the decade.

RAF Carlisle

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the reason for the postponement of the planned £2 million capital improvements at RAF Carlisle; and when the improvements will now commence.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A study is currently being carried out, with the knowledge of the trade unions, into options for the rationalisation of RAF equipment supply depots. To avoid pre-empting the results of that study, it was considered prudent to defer expenditure on the transportation shed at RAF Carlisle.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fallen Livestock

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new guidelines have been produced by his Department to local authorities on the provision of facilities for animal waste disposal following the publication of the fourth report of the Agriculture Committee, Session 1990-91, HC 493, on disposal of fallen livestock.

Mr. Soames: The Government reply to this report—Cm 1778—made it clear that it did not believe that it would be appropriate for local authorities to take on new functions on disposal of fallen livestock within their areas of responsibility either voluntarily or as a legal duty. The Department has issued codes of good agricultural practice for the protection of water and air which contain advice to anyone including local authorities on the disposal of animal carcases.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action has been taken by his Department since 1991 to tighten legal controls over the disposal of fallen stock.

Mr. Soames: The Animal By-Products Order 1992 came into effect on 1 January 1993. This requires anyone disposing of fallen animal carcases to ensure that they are either processed in establishments approved or registered for such purposes, buried or burned.

The order increases the penalties that can be imposed on those found to be disposing and dumping fallen stock illegally.

Hill Farmers

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on state-financed social payments, subsidies and other support schemes to supplement income available to hill farmers in other EC member states.

Mr. Curry: Information on payment of compensatory allowances to hill farmers for 1987 to 1989 in all EC member states is available at page T/129 of "The Agricultural Situation in the Community—1991 Report", published by the European Commission. This publication is in the Library of the House. More recent information is not available. The Government do not have comprehensive details of expenditure on social and other national payments available to hill farmers in other member states.

Hormone Substances

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people have been charged with offences under the Hormonal Substances (Food Source) (Animals) Regulations 1991 to date.

Mr. Soames: The Hormonal Substances (Food Sources) (Animals) Regulations 1991—SI 1991/1593—were revoked and replaced by the Animals, Meat and Meat Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations 1991—SI 1991/2843—which came into force on 8 January 1992. To date no persons have been charged with offences under either set of regulations.

Salmonella

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the checks which take place for salmonella in live birds in Holland producing eggs that are being sold in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: I understand that official checks are carried out for the presence of salmonella in poultry brooding flocks in the Netherlands, but not as far as I am aware in commercial egg laying flocks.

The EC Zoonoses directive—92/117/EEC—agreed at the December Agriculture Council, includes provisions for the control of salmonella in poultry. The directive comes into force on 1 January 1994, and from that date producers in all member states will be required to meet the standards set in the directive. We would expect the European Commission to ensure compliance with the requirements in other member states.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of egg imports are subject to testing for salmonella.

Mr. Soames: Checks for salmonella in imported eggs ceased from 1 January on the introduction of the single market. However, all eggs, including imported eggs, remain subject to checks at any stage of marketing.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of salmonella were reported in each month since January 1991.

Mr. Soames: The total number of incidents of salmonella in animals and birds reported to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the Zoonoses Order 1989, in each month since January 1991 were:

	1991	[1] *1992*
January	389	275
February	371	320
March	315	290
April	318	245
May	280	183
June	300	236
July	300	282
August	298	281
September	492	298
October	500	301
November	393	270
December	315	166
TOTAL	4,271	3,147

[1] Figures for 1992 are provisional.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements exist for the removal of egg stocks from the market where sample testing of imported eggs reveals salmonella contamination.

Mr. Soames: All eggs on the British market, whether imported or home produced, may be subject to testing for salmonella. Any food, including eggs, which poses a threat to human health would be removed from the market under section 9 of the Food Safety Act 1990.

Eggs

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures common to all member states of the European Community exist for the inspection of eggs and chickens.

Mr. Soames: European Community legislation requires inspections of chickens and eggs for various purposes including animal health, trade and consumer protection. Detailed arrangements for such inspections are usually a matter for the competent authority in each member state.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures exist to ensure that where containers carrying imported eggs are subject to random sampling, such sampling includes eggs from throughout the container and not just from those areas of the container which are immediately accessible to inspection officials.

Mr. Soames: Sampling arrangements are the same for both home produced and imported eggs. Arrangements take account of the need both to take representative samples and to facilitate the flow of trade.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value, at 1980 prices, of hill livestock compensatory allowances in each year since 1980.

Mr. Curry: The figures requested are shown in the table.

Hill livestock compensatory allowances at 1980 prices[1]
£ per head

	Severely disadvantaged area			*Disadvantaged area*	
	Beef cows	*Higher rate sheep*	*Lower rate sheep*	*Beef cows*	*Sheep*
1980	35·00	5·50	4·25	[2] . .	[2] . .
1981	37·98	5·59	3·80	[2] . .	[2] . .
1982	36·63	5·14	3·50	[2] . .	[2] . .
1983	35·01	4·92	3·34	[2] . .	[2] . .
1984	33·36	4·69	3·19	[2] . .	[2] . .
1985	31·45	4·42	3·00	15·72	1·50
1986	37·23	4·61	3·07	18·61	1·54
1987	35·76	4·43	2·95	17·88	1·48
1988	34·08	4·22	2·81	17·04	1·41
1989	31·61	3·92	2·61	15·81	1·31
1990	28·88	3·97	2·38	14·44	1·19
1991	31·70	4·38	2·45	15·85	1·23
1992	30·54	4·22	2·36	15·27	1·18
1993	29·65	3·04	1·69	14·82	1·34

[1] Current prices deflated by the retail price index.
[2] . . Not applicable.

Recycling (Horticulture)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what specific assistance is currently granted by his Department to promote the use of recycled waste in horticulture.

Mr. Curry: Advice on disposal, including the potential for recycling, of waste from agricultural and horticultural premises was included in the MAFF/Welsh Office code of good agricultural practice for the protection of air, issued in July 1992. The Ministry's professional advisory service, Agricultural Development Advisory Service, also offers free initial advice to growers on a wide range of environmental issues, including the recycling of waste.

Dairy Inspection Charges

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 18 January, at column *74*, regarding dairy inspection charges, for what reason no dairy inspection charges are levied in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Curry: This is a matter for the respective Secretaries of State.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the European Commission and to other fishing nations requesting that other European fishing efforts in British waters be limited to an extent equal to that resulting from the days at sea limitations to be imposed on British fishermen.

Mr. Curry: The multi-annual guidance programmes which were agreed in December require all member states to take steps to reduce their fishing effort, but it is for individual member states to determine the balance between measures to reduce capacity and measures to reduce time at sea.

Myxomatosis

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the veterinary medicines directorate will have completed its assessment of the current application from Intervet (UK) Ltd. to licence a myxomatosis vaccine.

Mr. Soames: The assessment of product licence applications against the Medicines Act's criteria of safety, quality and efficacy is a complex matter and is individual to each product. The application referred to is being assessed as rapidly as possible, consistent with the requirements of the Act.

Badgers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licences for fox hunts to damage and enter dogs down badger setts during the breeding seasons of *(a)* December 1991 to June 1992 and *(b)* December 1992 to June 1993 he has granted; and if he will give details in each case.

Mr. Soames: No such licences have been issued.

Abattoirs

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated cost to the meat and livestock industry of veterinary supervision in abattoirs.

Mr. Soames: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 11 January, *Official Report*, column *618*.

SCOTLAND

Children's Hospices

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the development of hospices for terminally ill children in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland gave to his question on 1 December, at column *186-87*.

Health Service

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all appointments made as members or chairpersons and members-designate and chairpersons-designate of all national health service trusts and trusts-designate in Scotland as at 21 January and the annual scale of remuneration payable to each.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* The information requested is as follows.

		Annual remuneration £
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. A. B. Broomfield	Aberdeen	19,285
Non-executive Directors		
Professor Graeme Catto	Aberdeen	5,000
Professor Michael Meston	Aberdeen	5,000
Mr. Harold Tocher	Aberdeen	5,000
Dr. Fiona Lyle	Laurencekirk	5,000
Mrs. Ann D. Scott	Aberdeen	5,000
South Ayrshire Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. J. D. Brown	Ayr	17,145
Non-executive Directors		
Mr. William M. Mowatt	Ayr	5,000
Mr. Harold J. Currie	Mauchline	5,000
Mr. Graeme McKinstry	Ayr	5,000
Mrs. Anne Wilson	Girvan	5,000
Mrs. Dorothy McLellan	Symington	5,000
Royal Scottish National Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. A. D. Ward	Uplawmoor	17,145
Non-executive Directors		
Mr. Willian Hughes	Falkirk	5,000
Ms. Valerie Smart	Falkirk	5,000
Professor Averil Stewart	Linlithgow	5,000
Mr. David Tarr	Bridge of Allan	5,000
Dr. Peter Williams	Bridge of Allan	5,000
Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Care NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mrs. A. K. Bates	Galston	17,145
Non-Executive Directors		
Mr. Ian Allison	Ayr	5,000
Mr. David Gall	Ayr	5,000
Mr. Robert Johnston	Beith	5,000
Dr. Susan Kinnaird	Troon	5,000
Mr. W. Scott McConnell	Strathaven	5,000
Caithness and Sutherland NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. G. Bruce	Thurso	15,125
Non-Executive Directors		
Mr. John Gunn	Wick	5,000
Rev. Alexander Murray	Lairg	5,000
Dr. Elizabeth MacKenzie	Skerray by Thurso	5,000
Mr. John Rosie	Thurso	5,000
Ms. Wilma Taylor	Wick	5,000
Dundee Teaching Hospitals NHS Trusts		
Chairman: Mr. J. S. Fair	Dundee	19,285
Non-Executive Directors		
Mrs. Maureen Cane	Broughty Ferry	5,000
Mr. Gordon Lowden	Dundee	5,000
Mr. Robert Lyon	Dundee	5,000
Mrs. Jacqueline Wood	Dundee	5,000
Professor Heather Dick	Dundee	5,000
Moray Health Services NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. J. Snedden	Elgin	17,145
Non-Executive Directors		
Mrs. Marjory Adams	Elgin	5,000
Mr. Russell Anderson	Elgin	5,000
Mrs. Lydia King	Lossiemouth	5,000
Mr. William Phillips	Elgin	5,000
Mr. James Royan	Elgin	5,000
North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. W. Ritchie	Kirkoswald	19,285
Non-Executive Directors		
Mrs. Angela Dunbar	Saltcoats	5,000
Mrs. Kim Donald	Fenwick	5,000
Mr. James Grier	West Kilbride	5,000
Mr. Alan Stewart	Kilmarnock	5,000
Mr. Keith Tulloch	Monkton	5,000
Raigmore Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. J. Kyle	Gairloch	17,145
Non-Executive Directors		
Mr. James Gray	Fortrose	5,000
Mrs. Flora Hunt	Inverness	5,000
Mr. Alexander Morrison	Golspie	5,000
Professor George McNicol	Rosemarkie	5,000
Mr. Judith Robertson	Inverness	5,000
Royal Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. T. Gibson	Paisley	17,145
Non-Executive Directors		
Mrs. Audrey Burns	Houston	5,000
Mr. Allan Durward	Bridge of Weir	5,000
Mrs. Marion Ford	Paisley	5,000
Mr. Alec MacDonald Gaunt	Paisley	5,000
Mr. George Murray	Paisley	5,000
Stirling Royal Infirmary NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. G. B. McKelvie	Auchterarder	17,145
Non-Executive Directors		
Mrs. Agnes Bowie	Stirling	5,000
Mr. Graham Houston	Dunblane	5,000
Mrs. Doris Littlejohn	Bridge of Allan	5,000
Mr. Graeme Simmers	Balfron	5,000
Mrs. Anne Walker	Deanston	5,000
Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust		
Chairman: Dr. J. L. C. Dall	Glasgow	19,285
Non-Executive Directors		
Dr. Robert Colville	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Danielle Glasser	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Lorna Howieson	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Joan Mackenzie	Glasgow	5,000
Mr. Desmond O'Brien	Glasgow	5,000
West Lothian NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. R. S. Watt	Edinburgh	19,285
Non-Executive Directors		
Mr. Thomas Bennie	Linlithgow	5,000
Mr. Jack Cunningham	Armadale	5,000
Mrs. Irene Douglas	West Calder	5,000
Mr. Peter Johnston	Livingston	5,000
Mrs. Carole Stevenson	Livingston	5,000
Southern General Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. A. Garland	Glasgow	5,000
Non-Executive Directors		
Mr. Robert McEwan	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Ann Moore	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Agnes Stewart	Glasgow	5,000
Mr. Henry Tankel	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Susan Bell	Biggar	5,000
Grampian Health Care NHS Trust		
Chairman: Dr. A. J. Taylor	Fyvie	19,285
Monklands and Bellshill NHS Trust		
Chairman: Dr. G. Bell	Bellshill	19,285
Yorkhill NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mrs. J. Cameron	Glasgow	19,285

My right hon. Friend expects to announce shortly the names of the non-executive directors of the Grampian Healthcare, Monklands and Bellshill, and Yorkhill trusts.

Health Promotion

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the individual contributions made in an official capacity by Ministers in his Department towards his Department's health promotion campaign.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* In his foreward to the policy statement "Scotland's Health—A Challenge To Us All", my right hon. Friend set out some of the initiatives we would be taking to help promote good health in Scotland.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State is co-ordinating action on the policy statement; and, with his agreement, the chief medical officer has met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss ways in which these two bodies can contribute to health improvements in Scotland. In October he formally welcomed the launch of a major anti-smoking campaign by the Health Education Board for Scotland. Both he and I participated in a number of engagements during European Drug Prevention Week in November to emphasise the dangers of drug misuse to health.

On 4 December my hon. Friend the Minister for industry and local government in Scotland met representatives of employers' organisations in Scotland to discuss health promotion in the workplace. He was much encouraged by the helpful and constructive views expressed at the meeting and by the general welcome given to our proposal to prepare a guide to good practice on health promotion in the workplace. Later this year my hon. Friend, the Minister for agriculture and the environment in Scotland, will be meeting representatives of farming, food processing and retailing organisations to discuss how they can contribute to improvements in the Scottish diet. Further ministerial activity will take place as appropriate to maintain the momentum generated by the policy statement.

Petitions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy for responding to the signatories of petitions; if it is his policy to respond to each of the signatories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* My Department's usual practice is to respond to the organisers of a petition or the individual who presents it. If the organisation or person is not readily identifiable my Department writes to the first name on the petition. Responses are not sent to each of the signatories.

Official Visits

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* dates and *(b)* reasons for each official visit he has made to Paisley since being appointed to his present post; what plans he has to visit the town; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* I attended the formal launch of the Glencoats area development in Ferguslie Park, Paisley on 4 October 1991. I have no plans to visit Paisley in the immediate future.

Hill Livestock

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the subsidies available to hill livestock farming businesses over the last five years for which figures are available; and how they have varied in value at constant prices in relation to farm input costs and the retail price index over the last five years for which figures are available.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The table shows the main rates of assistance available to hill farming enterprises, in money and real terms, from livestock subsidy schemes over the last five years. Information on the prices of input items of hill farming enterprises are not readily available. However, aggregate input costs which include input volume as well as price changes, have risen at a rate below the retail prices index.

	In money terms					*Deflated by retail prices index 1987-88 = 100*				
Subsidy	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £
Sheep annual premium	6·24	6·10	6·94	9·88	16·03	6·24	5·81	6·14	7·98	12·24
Suckler cow premium	33·40	33·40	47·43	51·69	59·64	33·40	31·83	41·94	41·76	45·52
Hill livestock compensatory allowances[1]										
Hill sheep	6·75	6·75	7·50	8·75	8·75	6·75	6·43	6·63	7·07	6·68
Upland sheep	4·50	4·50	4·50	4·90	4·90	4·50	4·29	3·98	3·96	3·74
Cows	54·50	54·50	54·50	63·30	63·30	54·50	51·94	48·19	51·14	48·32

[1] Rates payable in the severely disadvantaged areas.

Road Traffic Accidents

Mr. Alex Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people have been charged by Scottish police forces for failing to report and stop at the scene of a road traffic accident, in each of the last five years; and if he will give a regional breakdown of these figures;

(2) how many people have been prosecuted for failing to report and stop at the scene of a road traffic accident, in each of the last five years; and if he will give a regional breakdown of these figures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Table (i) gives the total number of offences under section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, and corresponding earlier legislation, which were cleared-up by Scottish police forces. Table (ii) gives the number of

offences under section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, and corresponding earlier legislation, which were proceeded against. Section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 includes both failing to stop or report a road traffic accident and also failing to provide proof of insurance.

Failing to stop or report a road traffic accident, or give information or insurance documents, by region, Scotland 1987 to 1991

(i) Number of offences cleared-up

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Borders	207	213	195	174	144
Central	290	346	334	334	295
Dumfries and Galloway	359	417	496	403	471
Fife	625	501	524	605	476
Grampian	1,388	1,277	1,270	1,313	1,286
Highland	370	340	305	310	380
Lothian	1,879	1,850	1,578	1,718	2,058
Strathclyde	3,035	2,932	2,865	2,831	2,794
Tayside	709	595	666	688	584
Orkney	26	37	26	37	18
Shetland	40	32	43	33	34
Western Isles	32	27	40	25	50
SCOTLAND	8,960	8,567	8,342	8,471	8,590

(ii) Offences proceeded against by court location

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Borders	84	82	101	99	81
Central	241	251	244	238	229
Dumfries and Galloway	191	265	346	354	266
Fife	234	199	185	198	202
Grampian	686	977	777	896	977
Highland	233	193	165	193	216
Lothian	1,476	1,255	1,075	1,206	1,097
Strathclyde	1,418	1,581	1,389	1,406	1,380
Tayside	571	528	563	509	461
Orkney	38	22	18	31	13
Shetland	57	20	14	14	26
Western Isles	25	18	23	38	36
High Court	5	4	2	7	4
Proceedings discharged before court appearance	75	66	59	41	3
SCOTLAND	5,334	5,461	4,961	5,230	4,991

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table showing the *(a)* names, *(b)* place of residence, *(c)* current occupation, *(d)* salary, honorarium or allowance payable, *(e)* expected weekly time commitment, *(f)* date of appointment and *(g)* date of retirement of those appointed to serve on each local committee for the employment of disabled people; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Gordon McMaster, dated 25 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about Committees for the Employment of People With Disabilities (CEPDs). This is something which falls within the responsibility delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unfortunately, I cannot provide you with the information you require about the names, residence and occupation of people appointed to the Committees. There are 60 local Committees with a total membership of approximately 900 people and such information about the membership is not held centrally.

Chairmen and members of Committees are not paid. Certain allowances may however be claimed and I am enclosing a note of the current rates.

We do not expect any particular weekly commitment from people on the Committees, nor is there a record of the amount of time spent on Committee work. There are usually 2-4 meetings each year and events to promote people with disabilities.

Turning to your question about the date of appointment and retirement, I regret I cannot give details about the date of appointment as such information is again not held centrally. Committees are normally reconstituted approximately every three years when all appointments are considered afresh. Committee Chairmen are appointed by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State on behalf of the Secretary of State. Members are appointed by my Regional Directors again on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Committees are next due to be reconstituted on 1 April 1994 and current appointments will terminate on 31 March 1994.

Committees have a duty to advise and assist the Secretary of State for Employment (in practice my local officials) on matters relating to the employment and self employment of people with disabilities in their areas. Their role includes:

helping to influence and educate employers locally towards positive policies and action to promote the employment and progression of people with disabilities;

promoting and marketing our services to people with disabilities particularly employers;

a statutory role in respect of items referred to them in conjunction with registration of people as disabled and the provisions of the Quota Scheme.

We value the help Committees give to promoting people with disabilities and in getting the important message across to employers that disability does not mean inability.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Allowances for CEPD chairmen and members
Subsistence allowance

	If lunch is not provided £	*If lunch is provided* £
Night subsistence		
Inner London	98.70	94.45
Elsewhere	85.85	81.60
Day subsistence		
More than 5 hours but not more than 8 hours	4.25	none
More than 8 hours	9.30	5.05

Financial loss allowance including loss of earnings and child care allowance

	£
(i) Where the period during which loss or expense is incurred is not more than four hours—maximum of	20.70
(ii) Where the period during which loss or expense is incurred exceed four hours—maximum of	41.40
Maximum amount paid per day—	41.40

Mileage by private motor vehicle

	Engine capacity of car		
	Up to 1500cc	*1501-2000cc*	*Over 2000cc*
Up to 5,000 miles per year	35.7p	40p	43p
Over 5,000 miles	17p	21p	27p

Redundant Workers

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to introduce a charter for redundant workers.

Mr. McLoughlin: The redundancy payments service charter, which has been in operation since November 1991, lays down standards of service to be met in dealing with claims for statutory redundancy payments, as well as certain other debts against employers who have become insolvent. It prescribes target time limits within which claims will be met, and which have recently been enhanced.

In December 1991, the Employment Service published its job seekers charter, which tells job seekers how the Employment Service can help them get back to work and what happens when they claim unemployment benefits. All local offices display the standards and their performance against them.

Unemployment Benefit Disqualification

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes the Derbyshire, North-East constituency.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Harry Barnes, dated 25 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the North East Derbyshire area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes the constituency of Manchester, Withington.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 25 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the Manchester, Withington area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

WALES

Transport Links

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make representations to the European Community to secure the inclusion of additional Welsh seaports in the draft maps outlining the trans-European transport network.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made to the European Community concerning the possibility of including Cardiff Wales airport as a second-line hub airport within a trans-European airport network.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government are currently considering their approach to the Commission's work on trans-European transport networks which are still at an early stage. My officials hope soon to meet the Commission's transport directorate.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what representations have been made by his Department to date to the European Community concerning *(a)* the future development of ferry ports in Wales and *(b)* the future development of transport links between Wales and the Republic of Ireland;

(2) what representations he has made to the European Commission's directorates general XVI (inter-regional) and VII (transport) concerning the inclusion of Wales-Ireland transport links as part of the INTERREG programme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My officials have had a number of discussions with their counterparts in the European Commission over links between Wales and the Republic of Ireland and my right hon. Friend intends to raise this matter at his next meeting with Commissioner Millan.

Self-employment

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many self-employed people in Wales have reported *(a)* zero income and *(b)* after-tax losses in Wales in each year since 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: Reliable estimates for Wales are not available.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have been self-employed *(a)* in their main job and *(b)* in a secondary job in Wales in each year since 1990; and what are the numbers of self-employed (i) men, (ii) women and (iii) the percentage of the Welsh work force who have been self-employed in each year.

Mr. David Hunt: The estimated numbers of people who have been self-employed in main and secondary jobs are given in the table. These estimates are subject to sampling variablity and are not reliable indicators of year to year changes.

Self-employed in main and second job by sex

Thousands

Spring	*Self Employed (main job)*	*Self Employed (second job)*[1]	*Self Employed in main job as a percentage of economically active*
1990			
All persons	166	18	12·3
Males	128	13	16·7
Females	38	—[2]	6·6
1991			
All persons	161	12	12·0
Males	123	—[2]	16·3
Females	38	—[2]	6·5
1992			
All persons	168	18	12·7
Males	129	11	17·1
z7Females	39	—[2]	6·9

Source: Labour Force Surveys

[1] Excludes those who did not state their status in second job.

[2] Estimates below 10,000 are not published.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many families with a self-employed main earner have been in receipt of *(a)* family income supplement and *(b)* family credit in Wales in each year since 1990; and if he will express this figure as a proportion of all *(a)* family income supplement claimants and *(b)* family credit claimants.

Mr. David Hunt: Estimates of the numbers in receipt of family credit, based on a 5 per cent. sample of awards, are given in the table. Family income supplement was replaced by family credit in April 1988.

Family credit recipients in Wales

	Families with a self employed main earner	*Families with a self-employed main earner as a percentage of all cases*
April 1990	4,100	19
April 1991	3,740	17
April 1992	3,920	16

Source: Department of Social Security.

Quangos

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give figures for the total number of quangos in Wales, together with the total number of staff employed and the total expenditure, including those connected to the health service, for each year from 1979 to 1991, together with the percentage difference in each case.

Mr. David Hunt: The available information is shown in the tables, based on the figures published annually in "Public Bodies,".

Total number of public bodies in Wales[1] [2] Table 1

Year	Executive	Advisory	Tribunals	NHS	Total	Per cent difference year on year
1978-79	16	12	3	9	40	—
1979-81	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	17	19	4	10	50	—
1982-83	17	27	4	10	58	+16
1983-84	16	30	10	10	66	+14
1984-85	16	31	11	18	76	+16
1985-86	16	30	11	18	75	−1
1986-87	16	30	11	19	76	+1
1987-88	17	28	11	19	75	−1
1988-89	18	30	11	19	78	+4
1989-90	18	29	11	19	77	−1
1990-91	19	31	11	19	80	+4

Total number of staff employed by public bodies in Wales[1] [2]

Year	Executive	NHS	Total	Percentage difference year on year
1978-79	7,548·0	[3]50,321·0	57,869·0	—
1979-81	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
1 April 1982	7,393·0	[3]54,055·0	61,448·0	—
1 April 1983	7,082·5	54,030·0	61,112·5	−1
1 April 1984	1,766·0	54,121·0	55,887·0	−9
1 April 1985	1,749·0	54,791·0	56,540·0	+1
1 April 1986	1,529·0	55,602·0	57,131·0	+1
1 April 1987	1,570·5	55,567·0	57,137·5	—
1 April 1988	1,548·0	55,602·5	57,150·5	—
1 April 1989	[5]1,565·0	55,765·0	57,330·0	+1
1 April 1990	1,580·5	55,851·0	57,431·5	—
1 April 1991	1,794·0	55,517·5	57,311·5	−1

Total expenditure by public bodies in Wales[1] [2]

Year	Executive £ million	NHS £ million	Total £ million	Percentage difference year on year
1978-79	212·32	[3]411·00	623·32	—
1979-81	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
1981-82	310·50	[3]765·30	1,075·80	—
1982-83	304·81	737·82	1,042·63	−1
1983-84	130·11	784·33	914·45	−12
1984-85	138·61	[5]838·93	977·54	+7
1985-86	134·82	909·43	1,044·25	+7
1986-87	133·45	977·42	1,110·87	+6
1987-88	168·64	1,082·25	1,250·88	+13
1988-89	223·51	1,202·43	1,425·94	+14
1989-90	337·18	1,285·86	1,623·04	+14
1990-91	379·67	1,465·81	1,845·48	+14

[1] *Source:* Report on Non-Departmental Public Bodies published January 1980, Cmnd 7797.
[2] *Source:* "Public bodies", first published in 1982 and successive years by the Cabinet Office.
[3] Figures for NHS bodies are estimated. Not previously published in this format.
[4] These figures should be read in conjunction with the notes provided in the Cabinet Office publications "Public Bodies" for the appropriate year.
[5] Figures published in "Public Bodies" were misprinted. Amended figures are shown above.

Business Advice Centres

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many clients have sought the assistance of each business advice centre in Wales within each of the last three years; and what monitoring has been undertaken of the nature of the inquiries.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Many organisations in Wales, including banks and other commercial companies, have "centres" for giving advice to businesses. Information on total numbers of clients seeking advice from such bodies is not held centrally. However, the Development Board for Rural Wales—DBRW—operates a network of business advice centres and the information requested for those centres is as follows:

Business Advice Centre

	1989-90		1990-91		1991-92	
	[1]BAS	[2]TS	BAS	TS	BAS	TS
Ystradgynlais and Brecon	685	113	465	74	630	129
Llandrindod Wells	668	67	661	57	794	144
Welshpool	1,412	107	940	94	1,040	100

	1989-90		*1990-91*		*1991-92*	
	[1]*BAS*	[2]*TS*	*BAS*	*TS*	*BAS*	*TS*
Newcastle Emlyn	747	73	1,033	128	1,011	130
Aberystwyth	1,292	120	1,178	97	1,152	69
Dolgellau	524	125	772	100	793	59

[1] BAS—Business Advisory Sessions (number held).
[2] TS —Training Sessions (number held).

The Development Board for Rural Wales monitoring includes a range of processes including customer-care questionnaires, independent reviews and evaluations of customer needs, as well as meeting representatives of the business advice centres monthly.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the business advice centres established in Wales within the last three years; and if he will make a statement outlining the main activities carried out by such centres.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given today. As regards the Development Board for Rural Wales network of business advice centres, two additional centres have been established at Cardigan and Lampeter. They primarily provide advice on business start-up, training, and access to information on premises and financial assistance.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been allocated by his Department to develop business advice centres in Wales within each of the last three years; and if he will list the amount allocated to each centre.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given today. The Development Board for Rural Wales has allocated funding to its business advice centres over the last three financial years, as follows:

Business advice centre	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £
Ystradgynlais and Brecon	21,000	36,000	36,000
Llandrindod Wells	14,000	18,000	18,000
Welshpool	14,000	18,000	18,000
Newcastle Emlyn	18,000	18,000	18,000
Aberystwyth	14,000	18,000	18,000
Dolgellau	14,000	18,000	18,000

In addition, the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales have given funding for core services and special projects to Wales' 21 local enterprise agencies, which also provide business advice, as follows:

1989-90 £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £
430,700	370,400	353,000

Local Development Agencies

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to establish local development agencies to operate in the 10 areas which head the deprivation tables published by his Department with the duty of granting loans to assist unemployed people to establish their own businesses.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have approved local enterprise agencies in all but one of the areas concerned and I am currently considering an application for the remaining area. These agencies provide a wide range of services to people considering establishing their own business, including advice on the Government's loan guarantee scheme.

Disabled People (Unemployment)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current rate of unemployment among *(a)* disabled people in total and *(b)* disabled people of working age in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on those with a health problem or disability which limits the kind of paid work they can do is available from the labour force survey, but is only collected for people of working age. It is estimated that, in the summer of 1992, 7 per cent. of such people were unemployed according to the International Labour Organisation definition. A further 12 per cent. said they would like a job but were not currently looking for work. These estimates are based on very small samples in Wales and may be subject to large sampling variability.

Education Capital Expenditure

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the indicative capital allocation for education in Mid-Glamorgan *(a)* for 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93; and what information he has of the actual expenditure by Mid-Glamorgan;

(2) what calculation he has made in capital appraisals for Mid-Glamorgan in 1993-94 for the development of bilingual education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Welsh local education authorities do not receive indicative capital allocations for education services. County councils receive annual basic credit approvals which are unhypothecated to particular services. Spending priorities between services and within services, including spending on bilingual education, are a matter for them. Actual capital expenditure on education services by Mid Glamorgan county council, including any financed from the authority's own resources, in 1991-92 was reported at £9·014 million and for 1992-93 is forecast by the local authority to be £8·226 million.

EC Regional Development Fund

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the projects supported by the European regional development fund in Wales, by county, for each of the last three years.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions, and for how much mileage in each case, county highways have been redesignated as trunk roads in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In the last 10 years only two such trunking orders have been made. These were :

1982—The St. Clears-Nash (South Pembrokeshire) Trunk Road (Nash Finger Post—Waterloo Roundabout Trunking) Order 1982 (SI 1982 No. 437). A length of 2.81 miles.

1987—The London—Fishguard Trunk Road (A48) and the Newhouse—High Beech Principal Road (A466) (County of Gwent) Order 1987 (SI 1987 No. 322) A length of 1.34 miles.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with Cardiff city council concerning the release of final tranches of urban development grant to the Brent Walker Welsh world trade centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office receives a written quarterly progress report from Cardiff city council on the Cardiff international arena—formerly the world trade centre. Frequent informal contact by officials is also maintained with the city council's monitoring team.

Under the terms of the urban development grant agreement between Cardiff city council and Brent Walker plc, £3 million has been paid to Brent Walker for work undertaken and £0.25 million remains to be paid. The balance of the grant will only be released when the building has been completed to the satisfaction of the city council and the Department.

Conwy Tunnel

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what analysis he has made of the cost control and contracting techniques used in the completion of construction of the Conwy tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am satisfied that the financial aspects of the work carried out on the Conwy crossing, including cost control and contractual arrangements, are consistent with best financial practice as laid down in the Department's rules and instructions for dealing with all trunk road projects.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for what length of time the Central Office of Information will carry responsibility for his Department's printing and publicity contracts; and if he will place a copy of the letter of arrangement with COI covering the delegation of power to place his Department's contracts in the Library.

Mr. David Hunt: We will be reviewing the arrangements during 1993-94 and will change them if value-for-money and managerial considerations suggest that that is the right course.

The relationship with COI is a long-standing one. The extent to which COI is used is a matter for administrative decision rather than specific contract.

Butetown Link Road

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he had with the South Glamorgan county council concerning the application of a global settlement agreement with the contractors' consortium building the Butetown link road section of the south Glamorgan peripheral distributor road.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend met the leader of South Glamorgan county council on 16 November and again on 20 January when the financing of the Butetown link was discussed.

Printing and Publicity Contracts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he was first informed of allegations of improper conduct in the placing of his Department's printing and publicity contracts; and what follow-up action he took.

Mr. David Hunt: On 28 April 1992 I was advised that a member of staff engaged in publicity work was to be dismissed for misconduct following an informal investigation. The matter was put in the hands of the police.

A reorganisation of the department's systems for publicity management had been instituted in 1991 and is continuing.

Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which non-departmental public bodies are sponsored by his Department; which of these are audited by the National Audit Office; which firms of private accountants audit each of the others, by what method of tendering contracts to such firms are awarded; and for what duration.

Mr. David Hunt *[Pursuant to his reply, 10 July 1992, c. 360-61]:* Three Welsh non-departmental public bodies were not included in "Public Bodies 1991" because of their establishment after its publication.

Wales Youth Agency was incorporated on 1 April 1992. The agency is a company limited by guarantee. Messrs. Owens Thomas and Co., chartered accountants, were appointed as auditors on 18 December 1992. The appointment followed open competition.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the Further Education Funding Council for Wales were established on 6 May 1992. In both cases the Comptroller and Auditor General is the auditor.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Carers

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his best estimate of the cost of continuing payment of invalid care allowance for a period of *(a)* eight weeks and *(b)* six months after their caring responsibilities come to an end to carers who have been receiving invalid care allowance for more than one year.

Mr. Scott The estimated cost of continuing payment of invalid care allowance after caring ceases to carers who have been receiving the benefit for more than one year is £5 million for eight weeks and £16 million for six months.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will review the present rules governing carer premium and carers over the age of 65.

Mr. Burt: The carer premium is linked to entitlement to invalid care allowance and is primarily intended to give additional help to younger carers, many of whom previously had no premium. Additional help is given to people over 60 through the pensioner premiums. We have no plans to extend the carer premium to people who are unable to establish entitlement to invalid care allowance on age grounds.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many carers aged over 65 years receive *(a)* invalid care allowance and *(b)* the carer premium; and what proposals he has to increase the amount of financial support for older carers.

Mr. Scott: At 31 December 1992, 288 men over age 65 and 9,028 women over age 60 were receiving invalid care allowance. Separate figures are not held on the numbers of carers over age 65 who receive carer premium. We have no plans to increase the amount of financial support for older carers.

Note: Separate figures are not available for female carers over age 65.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much his Department spends on invalid care allowance and the carer premium; and what percentage of the total social security budget this figure makes up.

Mr. Scott: Expenditure on invalid care allowance and the carer premium was £262 million and £15·5 million respectively in 1991-92. This represents 0·02 per cent. of the total social security budget for that year.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much it would cost his Department to restore national insurance credits for short-term benefits through invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 18 November 1992, at columns *252-53*.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he plans to initiate a take-up campaign for invalid care allowance and the carer premium in light of the introduction of community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The number of people in receipt of invalid care allowance continues to increase. We have no plans to initiate a take-up campaign at present, but we shall continue to monitor the situation.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he proposes to abolish the upper age limit for first claims of invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people currently receive invalid care allowance; and what percentage this is of the total number of people caring for 35 hours or more each week.

Mr. Scott: At 31 December 1992, there were 189,000 people receiving invalid care allowance. Figures showing the total number of people who are caring for 35 hours or more each week are not available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate for the number of carers who are entitled to the carer premium; and how many are actually paid it.

Mr. Burt: We estimate that about 70,000 people are entitled to the carer premium because they have invalid care allowance, or would have it but for the overlapping benefit rules, and are claiming income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit. Premiums are awarded in those benefits where the qualifying conditions are met, so this would also be our estimate of the numbers who have it included in the calculation of their benefit.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of national average earnings the current level of invalid care allowance is; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The current rate of invalid care allowance is £32·55 which represents 10·69 per cent. of average national earnings. Invalid care allowance recipients may earn up to £40 a week, after deduction of allowable expenses, without affecting their entitlement. They may also be eligible to receive other social security benefits.

Note: Average national earnings figure for April 1992 is £304·60 (*Source:* New Earnings Survey).

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much it would cost his Department to extend eligibility for invalid care allowance to carers providing care and support for a person who receives the lower rate care component of disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people would benefit and what is his estimate of the cost of extending entitlement to invalid care allowance to those caring for a person who receives the lower rate care component of disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs Ewing) on 18 November 1992 at columns *252-53*, and to my reply to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) on 11 January 1993 at columns *676-77*.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are *(a)* in receipt of and *(b)* estimated to be eligible for the carer premium; and what measures his Department is taking to increase take-up of the carer premium.

Mr. Burt: We estimate that about 70,000 people are currently eligible for, and receiving, the carer premium in income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit because they have invalid care allowance, or would have it but for the overlapping benefit rules. It is not possible to make a reliable estimate of the numbers who could become eligible for the premium were they to claim one or more of the benefits mentioned. The carer premium is already publicised in a number of ways and we continually monitor the provision of information about benefits.

Income Support

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of claimants of income support in residential and nursing homes in each of

the last three years for which figures are available, in each year giving both the total figures and the numbers in receipt of the weekly rates for elderly people, very dependent elderly, mental disorder other than mental handicap, drug or alcohol dependency, mental handicap, terminal illness and physical disablement below pension age.

Mr. Burt: Estimates of numbers claiming each of the income support limits are shown in the table.

Numbers of claimants

(000s)[1]

	May 1990	*May 1991*	*May 1992*
Residential Care			
Elderly	58	63	63
Very dependent/blind elderly	31	35	40
Mental illness	5	6	10
Alcohol and drug dependence	3	2	3
Mental handicap	18	21	27
Physical handicap below pensionable age	7	8	9
Others	4	2	2
TOTALS	125	137	154
Nursing Homes			
Others including elderly	37	49	60
Mental illness	5	4	4
Alcohol and drug dependence	—[2]	—[2]	—[2]
Mental Handicap	1	2	2
Physical handicap below pensionable age	2	5	7
Terminal illness	17	34	44
TOTALS	64	94	117

[1] Numbers rounded to nearest thousand.
[2] Denotes figures under 500.
Note: These estimates are based on the May quarterly, one per cent, samples of live cases.

Social Fund

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the social fund budget allocations for individual district offices, following the social fund discretionary loans budget announced on 18 January.

Mr. Scott: Today a list of the new social fund budget allocations for district offices has been placed in the Library.

As a result of increases in the discretionary social fund loans budget for this financial year, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State has changed two of the Benefits Agency's published targets for 1992-93. The revised targets are:

(i) to keep to the gross allocation for social fund loans and grants of £317 million.
(ii) recovery of Social Fund loans—£187 million.

The new loan recovery target represents the higher level of recoveries which the Benefits Agency is expected to achieve as a result of the increased gross allocation for loans. We do not propose to increase the rate of recovery from individual customers or change their repayment arrangements.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action his Department is taking to help carers who have gone into debt as a result of the delays in payments of disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: Income Support is available under the normal rules for anyone who otherwise would be left without funds.

Furthermore an award of invalid care allowance may be backdated for up to 12 months provided that entitlement to disability living allowance has been established for the relevant period.

Community Care

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of severely disabled people who will have to go into residential care when the new funding system for community care is introduced in April; and if he will publish letters sent by officials of his Department during December 1992 to directors of *(a)* the independent living fund and *(b)* other relevant organisations about maximum payments for independent living.

Mr. Scott: The information on residential care is not available in the form requested. We do not intend to publish official correspondence.

SERPS

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to advertise the financial benefits of opting back into the state earnings-related pension scheme for those with personal pensions;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of those holding personal pensions who would now benefit by opting back into the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: The 1 per cent. additional rebate, which will be paid to appropriate personal pension holders aged 30 and over from April this year, is intended to ensure that the majority of personal pension holders continue to find it worth while to maintain their personal pensions.

Taking out and maintaining a personal pension is a matter of individual choice. The decision will be based on many factors, including age, earnings, likely future investment returns and future employment intentions. It is therefore not possible to say how many appropriate personal pension holders would benefit from returning to the state earnings-related pension scheme at any specific time.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements will be made under the successor scheme to the independent living fund in assessing care needs for awards; and what action will be taken in the event of reduction in support provided by a local authority.

Mr. Scott: Responsibility for assessing care needs will initially be with local authorities. People who are eligible for help from the new fund will also be assessed by social workers employed by the successor body. Details of how local authority arrangements will work, including interaction between local authorities and the successor body, have yet to be finalised.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what powers the successor independent living fund body will have to review the awards of existing beneficiaries.

Mr. Scott: Subject to its cash limited provision, the successor body will have an unfettered power to review the awards of existing beneficiaries.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assumptions will be made in considering applications under the successor scheme to the independent living fund, on the level of support from local authorities for applicants; if this will be fixed on a local basis; to whom applications will be made; and if local authorities will be able to refuse awards.

Mr. Scott: Details of arrangements applying to local authorities are not yet finalised and are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements will be made under the successor scheme to the independent living fund for appeals by applicants in cases of disagreement between the trustees and local authorities or otherwise; what limits will be placed on payments and whether help for local authorities will count towards the limit; what criteria will be applied in deciding applications; and what arrangements will be made for local cash limits.

Mr. Scott: There will be no independent right of appeal available to those who apply to the successor body for new cases. It is right that the trustees should have the final say on expenditure for which they are responsible.

There will be a ceiling of £500 per week for total costs of help under the scheme.

Details of arrangements applying to local authorities are not yet finalised and are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

The people eligible for help from the body for new cases will be those severely disabled people aged 16 to 65 who are:

(a) in receipt of the highest rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance;

(b) who, after paying care costs with help from the fund, are left with income at or about the level of Income Support; and

(c) who would otherwise have to go into residential care.

EC Social Security Schemes

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next expects to have discussions with other EC member states and the European Commission on the proposed Council regulation amending regulation (EEC) No. 1408/71 on the application of social security schemes to employed persons, to self-employed persons and to members of their families moving within the Community and regulation (EEC) No. 574/72 laying down the procedure for implementing regulation (EEC) 1408/71; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: We have no current plans to discuss these draft amending regulations personally with other EC member states or the European Commission. However, officials are taking part in negotiations on behalf of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, within the normal Community machinery. Once these negotiations have been completed, reference will be made to the Council of Ministers for final approval by all member states.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Women Refugees

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has had on the particular needs and dangers facing women refugees; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will seek to amend the 1951 United Nations convention relating to the status of refugees to define women as a social group facing persecution resulting from gender based discrimination, violence, sexual exploitation and traditional practices harmful to women.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It would not be a practical proposition to amend the 1951 convention on the status of refugees. But I am well aware of the particular needs and dangers facing women refugees. Women are often in the majority among refugees. They may be separated from their husbands and relatives, struggling to look after children in difficult conditions.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has become increasingly aware of women's particular problems and needs, such as protection from violence, equal representation on refugee committees, family planning services and child care facilities. The high commissioner has introduced appropriate operational guidelines and appointed a women's co-ordinator.

Tropical Rain Forests

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress was made during the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Community in implementing the fourth European Community action plan for the Environment as it relates to the conservation of tropical rain forests.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under our presidency we achieved, with EC backing, the inclusion of follow-up to the UNCED forest principles in the remit of the UN Sustainable Development Commission, and the development of a consensus amongst tropical timber consuming countries that the sustainable production of timber should be the central objective of a renegotiated international tropical timber agreement. The Community and individual member states, including the United Kingdom, made progress towards the identification of incentives for the sustainable management of forests. The Community and many member states continued to undertake substantial programmes of development assistance in tropical forestry.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to support the development of a code of conduct to regulate the activities of European national companies operating in tropical rain forest regions.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have no such plans. Regulation of the activities of companies operating in the rain forests is the responsibility of the rainforest countries themselves. We are ready to consider requests from developing countries for help in the management of their forests including the development and strengthening of effective regulatory arrangements and institutions.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will publish the

results of monitoring carried out in relation to the joint Commonwealth Development Corporation and Kolombangara Forest Products Ltd. project, pursuant to plans elaborated in the 1989-1993 environmental working plan;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 3 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *310*, if the Commonwealth Development Corporation has carried out an environmental impact assessment in relation to its involvement with the Liberty Club Ltd. tourist hotel development in Grenada.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As indicated in my earlier answer, decisions on individual investments are the responsibility of the Commonwealth Development Corporation Board. Consideration of the environmental aspects of proposed investments is an integral part of the corporation's project appraisal and approval procedures. The assessment and monitoring procedures for specific projects and the results of these are a matter for the corporation. I have asked the chairman to write the hon. Member and will arrange for copies of his letter to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to review the current level of tariffs on imports of tropical timber goods into the European Community in order to encourage trade in sustainably produced and value-added products.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no plans to review these tariffs. Negotiation of such tariffs is the responsibility of the European Commission which is currently engaged in tariff negotiations as part of the Uruguay round on GATT.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 4 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *428*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the ODA-supported assessment of the implementation to date of the international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continuously review and assess the ITTO's performance. No report has been produced.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the Government's total contribution to the special account of the International Tropical Timber Organisation since 1987.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 1987 we have committed US dollars 1,961,986 to projects financed through the International Tropical Timber Organisation's special account.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response ODA officials have made to a letter from Friends of the Earth, dated 20 November 1992, requesting detailed information on British support for the tropical forestry action plan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: ODA officials will reply to Friends of the Earth as soon as they have compiled the details requested. I will send the hon. Member a copy of their letter. A summary is contained in my reply to the hon. Member of 7 December 1992 at column *494*.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what plans he has to discuss the conservation of tropical rain forests with Ministers from other European Community member states;

(2) what plans he has to discuss the conservation of tropical rain forests with ministers from other European Community member states.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have no immediate plans to do so. Tropical forestry issues are discussed regularly within the European Community at official level.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 3 December, to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), *Official Report*, column *310*, what was the most recent FAO assessment of the rate of tropical forest loss before the one made in 1990.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The previous assessment in 1980 estimated the rate of tropical forest loss to be 12 million hectares annually.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to discuss with his European Community counterparts the renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No Ministerial meetings are planned. Overseas Development Administration officials have frequent discussions with their European Community colleagues on the renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to establish a programme for the planting of trees in tropical countries to offset emissions of carbon dioxide.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our support to forestry programmes in developing countries through the aid programme is designed to encourage sustainable forestry and forest conservation and includes reafforestation activities. One of the advantages of successful implementation of these policies is to the global climate through carbon sequestration.

International Development Association

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom proposals for the replenishment of the World Bank's International Development Association.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) on 19 January at column *155*.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what proportion of British aid is directly focused on the alleviation of poverty;

(2) if he will publish in the next issue of "British Aid Statistics" a table showing the proportion of British aid directly focused on the alleviation of poverty.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The basic purpose of the aid programme is to reduce poverty in the poorest countries. We do this in a number of ways including supporting

sound policies that will encourage economic growth, ensuring that full account is taken of the impact of our projects and programmes on poor people and by projects which are specifically intended to help the poorest communities directly.

Direct poverty alleviation activities are funded through a number of channels including through our bilateral country programmes, and our support for non-governmental organisations. The overall figure for those activities is not currently available, although work is underway on a system for collating this information. We hope to include it in future editions of "British Aid Statistics". But this direct assistance is only a part of our total contribution to poverty reduction through multilateral as well as bilateral channels.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of aid for developing countries planned for 1993-94 and 1994-95 is already committed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The financial management of the aid programme for developing countries over the survey period is exercised through spending allocations to individual programme managers for each of the three years ahead.

It is the responsibility of programme managers to live within their spending allocations and make commitments accordingly. The forecast rate of expenditure in future years against any commitment will be subject to change.

The latest position for 1993-94 will be reflected in the main estimates to be published in March.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what countries currently receive United Kingdom bilateral aid assistance in relation to the control of human population growth.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are currently providing bilateral assistance to population programmes in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Zimbabwe; we are also providing assistance to a non-governmental organisation working in South Africa. We expect to begin financing population projects in Tanzania and Uganda in the near future. In addition we are supporting NGO population projects in 17 countries through the joint funding scheme. Our aim is to enable more women and men to choose when to have children and to help meet the considerable unmet demand for safe and effective family planning and reproductive health services in developing countries.

Brazil

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific activities have so far been conducted under the Overseas Development Administration-funded project in the Tapajos national forest in Brazil.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No logging activity has been started in the forest. An initial meeting of agencies involved in the project was held in Brazil on 15 December 1992, chaired by the director of the national forest. It was attended by representatives of the ODA, the International Tropical Timber Organisation (the managing agent) and all the Brazilian agencies involved. Two Brazilian environmental NGOs also attended. The meeting established the steering and consultative committees which will advise and monitor the project. A further meeting in February is planned to consider the work plan.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make available to the House a copy of an environmental impact assessment relating to the Overseas Development Administration-funded project in the Tapajos national forest in Brazil.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The objective of the project is to conduct controlled selective logging on a trial basis to see if it is possible to manage the forest for commercial purposes without causing long term environmental damage. The trial will be in an area of less than 1 per cent. of the national forest and will contribute to an on-going environmental impact assessment.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) of 19 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *695*, when the review of aid and trade provision will be published.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following the review of the aid and trade provision, Ministers decided in the context of last year's public expenditure discussions that the scheme should continue. An announcement about future policy will be made to the House shortly.

Developing Countries (Aid)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the net flow of private resources to developing countries for each year since 1979; and for each of these years what was the level of aid paid to these countries and the level of their debt interest payments.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The figures are as follows:

($ billion)	*Net Private Flows to Developing Countries*	*Aid (oda) to Developing Countries*	*Interest and Dividends Paid by Developing Countries*
1979	54·0	31·1	n/a
1980	66·2	37·8	63·6
1981	74·3	36·8	86·4
1982	58·2	33·8	95·3
1983	47·9	33·7	90·6
1984	31·6	34·7	89·5
1985	30·2	37·0	92·8
1986	26·5	44·5	80·3
1987	33·7	48·4	73·6
1988	43·9	51·5	93·4
1989	48·6	51·4	93·4
1990	52·6	63·0	93·3
[1]1991	55·4	62·0	96·1

Source: OECD.
[1] Provisional figure.

Russian Federation

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much funding from the know-how fund is being given to assist the current symposium in parliamentary democracy for members of the symposium in parliamentary democracy

for members of the supreme soviet of the Russian Federation organised by the department of politics of the University of Leeds; which parliamentary parties have been invited to participate; and what attention the symposium is paying *(a)* to the conflict in Ireland and *(b)* the role of regional parties in the House of Commons.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund has allocated £60,000 towards the costs of this symposium. I understand from the organisers that Members of Parliament from the following parties have been invited to participate in various stages of the course:

the Conservative Party
the Labour Party
the Liberal Democrat Party
the Ulster Unionist Party
the Scottish National Party
Plaid Cymru
the Democratic Unionist Party
the Social Democratic and Labour Party
the Ulster Popular Unionist Party

The symposium will include during its three week programme separate discussion, each of one and a half hours, on the situation in Northern Ireland and on the role of regional and nationalist parties in Parliament.

World Bank

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts have been made by his Department to secure greater public scrutiny of the activities of the International Development Association of the World bank.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The World bank circulates monthly an operational summary containing information about all projects which it is considering for possible financing, and their environmental categorisation. This includes projects financed under the International Development Association as well as those financed on normal Bank terms. Copies of the operational summaries are available in the libraries of the House. All financial decisions made by the board and a wide range of technical and policy papers are also published.

Bank procedures require that information on projects with potentially significant environmental impacts is made available to the local groups and non-governmental organisations in the borrowing country well in advance of consideration of the project in the board. We have supported the development of these arrangements.

Development Banks

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to publish the Government's voting position on all multilateral development bank board decisions.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The proceedings of the boards of the multilateral development banks are confidential so as not to inhibit full and frank discussion.

Liberia

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what humanitarian aid and other forms of assistance is being provided from his Department to the economic community of West African states and to United Nations and other agencies in their efforts to overcome the problems created by the spillover of the conflict in Liberia into Sierra Leone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have supported strongly in the UN and elsewhere the efforts made by ECOWAS to bring about peace in Liberia, which will also be an essential element in resolving Sierra Leone's problems. The UK's humanitarian aid to the region as a whole arising from the Liberian conflict amounts to some £8·4 million (including contributions made through the EC), of which £1·1 million has been provided for assistance to Sierra Leone.

Kenya

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will now press for suspended bilateral and multilateral aid to Kenya to be released.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain has not suspended bilateral aid to Kenya. Our development assistance programme, worth £29 million in 1991-92 continues.

In common with other donors, we have withheld provision of new balance of payments assistance pending economic and political reforms. Recent progress on the political front has been commendable culminating in the multi-party elections held last month which we and international observers believe constituted a major step on the road to democracy. Economic progress will be examined in a forthcoming IMF review of Kenya's economic reform programme. We and other donors will take account of the outcome of this review in considering future policy.

Overseas Aid Review

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reason statistics on official and private flows to developing countries, with breakdown, and the percentage shares of gross national product involved were dropped from the 1992 British overseas aid review; why the review's publication date was delayed until December 1992; and if he will make it his policy to reinstate the figures for official and private flows, broken down by categories as in the 1991 annual review, and expressed as percentages of gross national product, for subsequent years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 18 January 1993]*: Tables giving statistics on official and private flows to developing countries and the percentage shares of gross national product were not included in the 1992 edition of the "British Overseas Aid Annual Review" following an internal review of the format, presentation, content and style of the review.

Individual tables taken from "British Aid Statistics" are available free from ODA information department.

The review was published at a later date than in the past to coincide with the availability of "British Aid Statistics" which was published later this year following the decision to show tables on a financial rather than calendar year basis.

A decision of the format of the 1993 annual review and the information to be contained within it will be taken later this year, taking account of all views expressed on the 1992 review.

ENVIRONMENT

Waste Disposal

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he had held or plans to hold with the National Association of Waste Regulation Officers relating to inconsistency of penalties for waste disposal offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: None. We understand that the National Association of Waste Regulation Officers is looking into this issue following some recent court cases, but it has so far made no representations to the Department. Within the maxima laid down by Parliament, it is for the courts to determine the most suitable sentence in the light of all the circumstances of the offence and the offender.

Drinking Water

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans there are to bring down the amount of lead in United Kingdom drinking water in line with the World Health Organisation guideline of 10 micrograms per litre.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 20 January, at column *265*.

Climate Change

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been made by his Department to the United Nations on the provision of verification of compliance within the framework convention on climate change following the United Nations conference on environment and development.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom believes that effective mechanisms for reporting and review of measures taken under the framework convention on climate change are vital for its effective implementation. We reiterated this point at the December 1992 meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee on the convention—INC—which took decisions on a plan of work in preparation for the first meeting of the parties to the convention. Among the issues which the INC will consider is the review of information communicated by developed countries on policies and measures for the mitigation of climate change.

Pit Closures

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to recognise special needs in coal mining areas more quickly; and how quickly it is intended to make such assistance available where collieries close arising from the current coal review.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department is making available £5 million under the coalfield areas fund for assistance for areas which may be affected by possible closures. A total of £1·8 million is being made available to the Tyne and Wear development corporation, to support projects aimed at making land quickly available for manufacturing jobs. We are considering enterprize zone designation in areas affected by the possible closures.

These initiatives are part of the substantial packages of measures announced by the President of the Board of Trade on 13 and 19 October 1992. Decisions on the implementation of these measures will be taken in the light of the outcome of the coal review.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consultations he has had with local authorities and their associations concerning the conduct of the review of urban programme authorities and the use of 1991 census information; and what plans he has for further consultations;

(2) what work has so far been undertaken by his Department in relation to the review of the list of authorities eligible for funding under the urban programme and successor arrangements;

(3) what draft criteria have so far been devised for use with the 1991 census data for reviewing the list of authorities eligible for funding from the urban programme and successor arrangements.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has commissioned research into the compilation of an index of urban conditions using 1991 census and other data. The purpose of the index is to consider the needs of urban areas, and it will be used to inform decisions on the future share of urban policy, including the review of urban priority areas. The local authority associations were represented on a steering group to oversee preliminary work on the index. We have since done further work to produce a range of indicators, which will include factors such as unemployment, housing and education. We will be offering the local authority associations the chance to comment on these shortly.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of all letters sent out by his Department dealing with bids for urban programme funding for 1993-94 between 15 October and 13 November 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each urban programme authority how much funding Gateshead has received under the urban programme at 1992 prices for each of the last three years; how many projects have been supported; and how many people have been employed by them in jobs and in training schemes.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to my replies to his previous questions on 14 January, *Official Report*, column *766*, and 13 January, *Official Report*, column *656*.

Whales

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to support proposals prepared by the French Government for discussion at the next meeting of the International Whaling Commission in relation to the creation of a whale sanctuary in the seas around Antarctica.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

The French proposal for a whale sanctuary in the Antarctic, put to the International Whaling Commission

—ICW—at its 44th meeting in Glasgow last June, is due for further consideration when the Commission meets in Kyoto in May of this year. The United Kingdom was one of the countries which encouraged the IWC to undertake further work on this and related issues. We shall play a full part in its further consideration, liaising with other IWC contracting parties and with the environmental organisations with whom we work closely.

Oil and Gas Exploration

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to protect wildlife sites and sites of special scientific interest in the Wash, north Norfolk coast, Cardigan bay, the Dorset heritage coastline and Flamborough head from oil exploration and possible oil contamination arising from the Department of Trade and Industry's 14th round of offering oil and gas exploration licences.

Mr. Maclean: I am satisfied that the consultations carried out before issue of oil and gas exploration licences, and the special conditions attached to those issued by my right hon. and learned Friend safeguard such environmentally sensitive areas.

Local Government Review

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the costs to the Exchequer in connection with the present local government review.

Mr. Robin Squire: The main cost to the Exchequer is that of the Local Government Commission, estimated at £3·259 million for 1993-94, its first full year of operation. A small staff commission is also planned. Within this Department there are seven administrative staff working mainly on local government reorganisation issues, at an annual salary cost of around £160,000.

Frogs and Toads

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of any change in the population of frogs and toads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Within Great Britain the Joint Nature Conservation Committee advise that the conservation status and recent trend for each species is as follows:

	Population status	*Trend*
Common frog	Widespread	Slight increase
Common toad	Widespread	Slight decrease
Natterjack toad	Threatened	Slight decrease

All three species are given protection by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The common frog and common toad are covered by provisions relating to sale. As a species, the natterjack toad is fully protected under the Act. In 1992, English Nature announced that the natterjack toad would be included in its "recovery" programme. The objectives of the recovery project are to maintain existing populations and re-establish the species on suitable sites.

Waste Management

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many court cases have occurred to date relating to section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and of these cases, how many have resulted in successful prosecutions.

Mr. Maclean: The offences provided by section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 were partially implemented on 1 April 1992; summary information on prosecutions for this period is not, as yet, available.

Housing Revenue Account Subsidy

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the entitlement to housing revenue account subsidy for each local housing authority in England in 1993-94, indicating separately the housing element and the housing benefit element and the amount by which HRA subsidy falls short of the total to which the authority would be entitled if rent rebate costs were met in full by subsidy and also the housing stock in the area and the average weekly contribution per tenancy towards the cost of rent rebates in each authority.

Mr. Baldry: While broad estimates can be made at national level, it is not possible to provide the information requested for each authority. The housing benefit element of HRA Subsidy claims for 1993-94 will depend on yet to be taken decisions by local authorities on their rents for that year and on the take up of benefit. The housing element of HRA subsidy claims will also, to a lesser extent, be affected by authorities' own decisions. I will write to the hon. Member after April when information on 1993-94 subsidy claims is available.

Council Tax

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to provide that builders of new houses are not liable to make council tax payments unless they are designated occupiers of the new-build houses.

Mr. Robin Squire: No.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue new guidance to local authorities on defining "substantially completed", in the context of the building of new houses and the liability of builders for community charge and council tax payments.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. For the purposes of the council tax, billing authorities will serve a completion notice where the new building in question can reasonably be expected to be completed within three months.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to simplify the certification procedures for the buildres of new houses currently in force in relation to the council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: Billing authorities will serve a completion notice on the owner of a new building when the work remaining to be done can reasonably be expected to be completed within three months. This brings the procedure for serving completion notices in respect of domestic property into line with current practice in respect of non-domestic property.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reduction in council tax will be available to disabled persons in band A properties.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the written answers I gave the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) on 5 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *370*, and 18 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *203*.

Water Metering

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received to his consultation paper "Using Water Wisely" to date; and how many of these representations have expressed opposition to a United Kingdom water metering scheme.

Mr. Maclean: We have received 343 responses to the consultation paper. Forty-eight respondents indicated opposition to metering. It is for each company to decide the method of charging its customers.

Birds

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has as to changes in the population of robins and other species of British birds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The British Trust for Ornithology's common bird census report for 1991 revealed significant declines in the populations of 20 species, including robins, little owls, skylarks, blackbirds, songthrushes, house martins, bullfinches and yellowhammers. Five species including sparrowhawks and kestrels had increased in numbers. The BTO report indicated declines over a wide range of habitats.

For many species the declines are considered to be normal fluctuations and numbers could be expected to be regained quickly. The bad climatic conditions in the spring of 1991 was a factor and some migrant warbler species wintering in Africa were affected by drought conditions there.

Timber

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made to the convention on international trade in endangered species to secure the inclusion of additional timber species on its lists, since May 1992.

Mr. Maclean: None. Additions to the appendices to the convention are considered at the biennial conferences of the parties. At the conference last March, we proposed successfully that African teak *(Pericopsis elata)* should be listed. We also supported the listing of American mahogany *(Swietenia mahogani)*, *Lignun vitae (Guaiacum officinale)*, and Brazilian rosewood *(Dalbergia nigra)*.

We shall be considering what proposals to put to the 1994 conference in due course, on the basis of scientific evidence.

Manchester Olympics Bid

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Government support for the Manchester 2000 Olympics bid.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are backing wholeheartedly Manchester's bid for the 2000 Olympic games and the Prime Minister and other Ministers are actively involved in promoting it. We are providing up to £75 million support. Of this, £2 million is in aid of the bid itself, matching private funds raised; and up to £73 million is towards the construction of an Olympic arena, a national cycling centre and the acquisition and preparation of the site for the main Olympic stadium.

We look forward to welcoming members of the International Olympic Committee when they visit Manchester over the coming months in preparation for their decision on the host city in September 1993.

Valuation Officers

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to valuation officers with regard to rating as one unit households which include a granny flat so that children can care for their parents at home.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Council Tax (Chargeable Dwellings) Order 1992—SI 1992/549—requires listing officers to treat as a dwelling for the purposes of council tax each self-contained unit constructed or adapted for use as separate living accommodation. Granny flats are therefore treated in the same way as all other domestic property. The council tax bill for one resident will be subject to a 25 per cent. discount. The bill will be further reduced—in some cases to zero—by council tax benefit, depending on the income and circumstances of the resident.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families were placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, annually, in each year since 1987, *(a)* England and *(b)* each English housing authority.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates for the calendar years 1987 to 1991 of the average number of households in England who were being dealt with under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985 and were temporarily placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are given in the table.

Average for year ending December	*Households in bed-and-breakfast*
1987	10,430
1988	11,080
1989	11,500
1990	11,810
1991	12,470

At 30 September 1992 the number of households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation had fallen to 10,390 households.

I have today placed in the Library a table giving the information as reported by local authorities in England for each year from 1987 to 1991, the last complete year available.

Councillors (Attendance Allowances)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority councillors have claimed attendance allowance in the last financial year.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department does not collect this information.

Thorne Moors

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to sign the English Nature/Fison's/Department of Environment agreement on Thorne Moors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 8 December 1992 to the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes), at column *575*.

PSA Building Management

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will offer the PSA Building Management businesses for sale.

Mr. Redwood: I am pleased to announce that I am today offering the five PSA Building Management businesses for sale by competitive tender. This follows the sale of PSA Projects last month, and marks the start of the final stage in the privatisation of PSA Services.

The sale will be advertised in the United Kingdom and other EC countries from tomorrow. Copies of the sale memoranda will be available from my advisers, Coopers and Lybrand. These will be sent, on request, to all bona fide prospective purchasers.

I would prefer to sell each of the five BM businesses to a different purchaser. However prospective purchasers will be permitted to bid for more than one business.

Preliminary bids need to be submitted by 9 March. Shortlisted bidders will then be provided with more detailed information and invited to make final offers.

Earth Summit

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those nations known by her Majesty's Government to have ratified agreements made at the Earth summit, stating for each which agreements have been ratified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[pursuant to the reply, 4 December 1992, c. 580.]:* I understand that Canada has also ratified the conventions on climate change and biological diversity.

Helping the Earth

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the cost of the Helping the Earth campaign.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The cost of the three-year domestic publicity campaign is about £14 million. Each reduction of 1 per cent. in the country's energy expenditure saves some £500 million.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the difference in expenditure, for each new Commonwealth child, required and identified within standard spending assessments; and how this figure was calculated.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* There are a number of elements within standard spending assessments—SSAs—where ethnicity is used in combination with other factors as a measure of social conditions. At no point are the children of heads of household born in the new Commonwealth identified as a separate ethnic category. It is not therefore possible to identify the separate contribution of these children to SSAs. The weight given to social indices within SSAs follows extensive analysis and discussion with local authority representatives.

Mains Drainage

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many communities *(a)* in England and Wales and *(b)* in the Thames Water Utilities Ltd. area, and having 125 or more close-built properties, are not on mains drainage; whether it is his policy to ensure that such communities are put on mains drainage; and in what circumstances any communities will be put on mains drainage other than by requisition.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* Information about the numbers of communities of 125 or more close-built properties not on mains drainage is not held centrally.

The circumstances in which communities may be connected to mains drainage other than by requisition are explained by the Office of Water Services, in its "Information Note (No. 11) on First Time Rural Sewerage", copies of which have been placed in the Library.

The Department encourages first time connections to mains drainage and mains water supplies in rural areas by providing a grant covering 35 per cent. of eligible scheme costs in response to requisitions by local authorities or owners or occupiers.

In the light of concerns that have been expressed to me about the arrangements for rural water and sewerage services I am considering whether any changes to the legal and financial framework are desirable.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 January 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what information he has on the proportion of cases postponed by magistrates because of the non-appearance of essential people or documents.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not collected centrally.

Legal Aid

Mr. Michael: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department into which category of offence the six most expensive legally aided cases or groups of cases fell in each of the last five years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information is available for only the last four years. An analysis of criminal legal aid payments in respect of cases heard in the Crown court indicate that the six most expensive cases fell into the following offence categories:

Offence type	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Fraud	2	2	4	4
Obtaining by deception	1	2	1	1
Handling stolen goods	1	1	—	—
Revenue law offences	1	—	1	—
Murder	—	—	—	1
Drugs offences	—	1	—	—
Other offences	1	—	—	—

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will estimate for each area committee the number of applicants who will no longer be eligible for legal aid after 1 April.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Whether or not an individual is eligible for legal aid depends both on the details of his or her financial means and the merits of the case he or she wishes to bring or defend. The only estimates that are made are of the number of certificates likely to be issued in England and Wales as a whole.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to introduce new rules regarding the granting of legal aid in complex fraud cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Legal aid will continue to be granted, subject to the applicant's means, where the court considers that it is in the interests of justice.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list for each area committee for each year since 1985 *(a)* the annual budget for legal aid in current and 1985 prices, *(b)* the number of legal aid cases granted aid and *(c)* the number of legal aid cases not granted aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It has not been possible to obtain the information requested in the time available. However, I will write to the hon. Member.

Fraud Trials

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to reduce the time taken to conclude long fraud trials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department, the Home Office and the Law Officers' Department issued a consultation paper on 3 December seeking views on how to reduce the length of criminal trials, particularly those involving fraud. The consultation paper considers the causes of all types of long trials and seeks views on a wide range of options available which might help to reduce their length. The paper asks for responses by 28 February 1993. A view will then be taken as to which particular proposals and options commend themselves. In addition, we await with interest the report of the Royal Commission on criminal justice.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to introduce a properly structured system of plea bargaining, with safeguards, for long fraud trials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. and learned Member to my reply to him on 7 July 1992, at columns *93-94*. The Lord Chancellor and I are considering the matter, but there are no plans to introduce a structured system of plea-bargaining in long fraud trials, or any others, at the present time. However, our recent evidence to the Royal Commission on criminal justice has explored the issues raised by this suggestion.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Recruitment and Assessment Services

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of the cost per job created in the civil service by the use of Recruitment and Assessment Services in Basingstoke.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the chief executive of Recruitment and Assessment Services. I have asked him to write in reply.

Letter from Michael D. Geddes to Mr. David Hanson, dated 25 January 1993:

I have been asked to reply to your recent question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster enquiring about the cost per job created through the use of this Agency. I assume that you are referring to the cost per vacancy filled.

It is not possible to give a precise answer to your question as RAS provides a wide range of recruitment and related services. In some cases we prepare only further particulars of a post and place an advertisement; in other cases we provide a full service including perhaps an individual assessment service or a full-scale Assessment Centre. Departments and the Civil Service Commissioners are not required to use the

services of RAS. We negotiate an agreed price for each particular project which we undertake which reflects the amount of work requested by the customer department.

In 1991/92 we processed more than 100,000 applications as well as over 150,000 general enquiries. We filled 2,989 vacancies through the provision of comprehensive recruitment schemes (Many of which were for multiple vacancies) and participated in one way or another in a further 66 partial schemes. We also provided 803 consultancy days. The total cost of the Agency, including overheads, was £11·9 million. Statistics for the current year will be given in our 1992/93 Annual Report, which will be published in the middle of the year.

I hope that this provides you with the information which you require, but please let me know if you would like any further details.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those occasions in each of the past five years in which officials with responsibility for placing printing contracts in *(a)* HMSO headquarters and *(b)* HMSO, Llanishen, Cardiff, have been subject to disciplinary proceedings leading to (i) suspension on full pay,
(ii) suspension without pay, (iii) summary dismissal and (iv) criminal proceedings.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to HMSO under its chief executive. I have asked him to write to the hon. Member direct.

Letter from Paul Freeman to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 25 January 1993:

As you are aware, your Parliamentary Question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, about disciplinary action against officials with responsibility for placing printing contracts, has been referred to me for reply.

There has been just one such case at HMSO Headquarters during the past five years. The officer concerned was dismissed, and criminal proceedings are pending. There was also one such case at HMSO Cardiff. In this case the officer concerned was also dismissed, but I understand that the police, who have seen the papers, are not pursuing the matter further.

I should add that both officers were dismissed for using their official position to personal advantage, and not for any improprieties in the placing of printing contracts.

Research Council

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the meeting of European Research Ministers on 9 December 1992 and on the United Kingdom's presidency of the Research Council.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am pleased to report that following the meeting of Research Ministers on 9 December under my chairmanship, member states were able to reach agreement on a common orientation to supplement the funding of the third R and D framework programme by 900 million ecu in the years 1993 and 1994. This supplement increases the total funding guaranteed from 5·7 becu to 6·6 becu and represents an important interim measure to ensure the continuity of R and D activities under the objectives for the third framework programme, in the approach to the implementation of a successor programme, thereby avoiding a potential reduction in R and D funding over this period.

In addition, I chaired an in-depth discussion at the Council meeting on 12 October, on the evaluation of the second framework programme on the basis of a report prepared under United Kingdom chairmanship, in preparation for a first orientation debate on the fourth framework programme at the Council on 9 December.

There was also an informal discussion at the December Council of how to improve the management of EC research programmes on the basis of a paper presented by the United Kingdom. The Commission agreed to respond to these ideas before the next Council of Research Ministers.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing, Sandwell

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total provision from central funds received by the Sandwell metropolitan borough authority in support of capital expenditure on housing for each year since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: The amounts of capital grants paid to Sandwell MBA in the years 1981-82 to 1991-92 in support of housing capital expenditure, including any adjustments for over or under payment in previous years, were as follows:

Years	*£ thousand*
1981-82	110
1982-83	233
1983-84	328
1984-85	187
1985-86	119
1986-87	238
1987-88	88
1988-89	94
1989-90	−5
1990-91	3,826
1991-92	8,360

Figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The significantly higher payments in 1990-91 and 1991-92 reflect the revised arrangements for private sector renovation grants introduced on 1 April 1990.

The Government also influence housing capital expenditure by local authorities through housing investment programme—HIP—allocations and supplementary credit approvals. Those for Sandwell for the years since 1979-80 are given in the table, which also gives total housing capital expenditure by Sandwell MBA in these years.

Housing investment programme allocations and supplementary credit approvals and capital expenditure for Sandwell metropolitan borough authority 1979-80 to 1992-93

£ thousand

	[1] Housing investment programme allocations and supplementary credit approvals	*Housing capital expenditure*
1979-80	18,119	n/a
1980-81	19,869	n/a
1981-82	14,684	n/a
1982-83	15,834	18,004
1983-84	16,668	22,728

	[1] Housing investment programme allocations and supplementary credit approvals	Housing capital expenditure
1984-85	14,664	22,390
1985-86	13,153	17,597
1986-87	13,382	20,898
1987-88	12,057	24,079
1988-89	10,849	41,287
1989-90	10,124	42,058
New capital finance system[2]		
1990-91	20,431	26,659
1991-92	[3]23,229	[3]22,140
1992-93	[4]21,156	[5]32,866

[1] Allocations for 1989-90 and earlier years are final allocations, i.e. the initial allocation plus any increases to the initial allocation made in-year. The figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years cover the housing investment programme allocations (housing annual capital guidelines and specified capital grants) issued prior to the start of the financial year and any supplementary credit approvals subsequently issued.
[2] From 1990-91, under the new capital finance system, the housing investment programme allocation is an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure rather than a direct borrowing approval. Borrowing approval is now conveyed by the single, all service, basic credit approval.
[3] Provisional.
[4] Includes only supplementary credit approvals for 1992-93 already issued.
[5] Estimated.
n/a—Not available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will recalculate his proposals for 1993-94 standard spending assessments for every authority on the notional basis of the Isle of Wight becoming a unitary authority comprising the present county council and district councils from 1 April 1993; and if he will make a statement on the effects on SSAs of local government reorganisations, in particular any changes in SSAs of those authorities not being reorganised being brought about by the impact on non-linear SSAs of data in respect of reorganised authorities being aggregated or disaggregated.

Mr. Howard: No; it is too early to produce such figures. The detailed implications of local government reorganisation for standard spending assessments will be discussed with representatives of the local authority associations in due course.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the increase in the area cost adjustment factor compared to the overall increase in standard spending assessment for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: These figures are not yet available. I will write to the hon. Member when final 1993-94 standard spending assessments are announced.

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the total number of pupils used in the calculation of standard spending assessments, *(b)* the allocation of standard spending assessment for primary, secondary and post-16 pupils and *(c)* the standard spending assessment per pupil for (i) Essex, (ii) Hampshire, (iii) Kent, (iv) Lancashire and (v) all shire county education authorities.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is as follows, on the basis of provisional SSAs for 1993-94.

Local authority	Total pupils	Primary Education SSA £ million	Secondary Education SSA £ million	Post-16 Education SSA £ million	Total of primary secondary and post-16 Education SSA £ per pupil
Essex	205,308	203·468	240·749	34·788	2,333
Hampshire	191,786	203·178	219·978	11·352	2,266
Kent	206,183	201·057	235·907	47·953	2,352
Lancashire	190,639	193·978	211·551	18·347	2,223
All shire counties	3,900,976	3,827·319	4,317·165	658·495	2,257

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates of the number of elderly people on income support for each local authority area in 1992-93 and 1993-94 were used in determining standard spending assessment levels.

Mr. Robin Squire: Estimates of the number of elderly people on income support in shire counties, metropolitan districts and London boroughs are produced by the Department of Social Security from its quarterly 1 per cent. sample inquiries of claimant records for use in the calculation of standard spending assessments. The estimates relate to the average number of persons over eight quarters who are, or whose partner is, aged 60 years and over and in receipt of income support. For 1992-93 SSAs, the eight quarters cover the period May 1989 to February 1991; and for 1993-94, they cover the period May 1990 to February 1992.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to change the standard spending assessment formula to include direct measures of unemployment and proxies for wealth, including levels of car ownership.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Secretary of State will shortly be announcing his final decisions regarding the 1993-94 revenue support grant settlement. For 1994-95 there will be a review of the indicators used in the calculation of standard spending assessments as a result of the new information available from the 1991 census.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the area cost adjustment factor as a percentage of the standard spending assessment for each year from 1990-91 to 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total amounts allocated on the basis of the area cost adjustment factor as a percentage of standard spending assessments for each of the last three years is as follows:

	Total SSA *£ million*	*Total allocated on area cost adjustment factors* *£ million*	*Percentage allocated on area cost adjustment factors*
1990-91	29,805·3	836.5	2·8
1991-92	35,586·7	1,152·1	3·2
1992-93	37,992·7	1,314·5	3·5

Final standard spending assessments for 1993-94 will be announced shortly. I will write to the hon. Member with the corresponding figures for 1993-94 when these are available.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average standard spending assessment for each year from 1990-91; and which local authorities and by how much in each case benefited from the area cost adjustment factor in that year.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total of standard spending assessments and the average per head of resident population for each year since 1990-91 is as follows:

	Total SSA (£ million)	*Average per head (£)*
1990-91	29,805·3	627
1991-92	35,586·7	746
1992-93	37,992·7	794
1992-93[1]	35,584·3	744
1993-94[2]	36,622·2	762

[1] Adjusted.
[2] Provisional.

There was a reduction in SSAs between 1992-93 and 1993-94 because of the transfer of some local authority responsibilities, mainly in respect of further education. The table also, therefore, shows 1992-93 figures on an adjusted basis, taking account of these transfers for comparison with the 1993-94 figures. The 1993-94 figures are based on those announced on 26 November for the purposes of consultation. Final settlement figures will be announced shortly.

On the area cost adjustment, I have placed in the Library a table showing the figures requested in respect of the three years 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93. Corresponding figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. I will write to the hon. Member with final figures for 1993-94 shortly.

Urban Programme

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what central Government support Coventry can expect in addressing its inner-city problems.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department and others have a range of complementary programmes to address the problems of Coventry and other urban priority areas totalling some £4 billion a year. As far as my own Department's programmes are concerned, in addition to substantial resources to tackle housing problems, in the current financial year, Coventry has been allocated £4·6 million under the urban programme and task force funding of almost £1·3 million.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the urban programme as a source of support for voluntary organisations in Coventry working in the poorer areas; how much has been provided to those organisations under the urban programme; and what arrangements he has made to continue support for voluntary organisations when the urban programme is phased out.

Mr. Robin Squire: The urban programme—UP—has, and will continue to, support in Coventry and other urban priority areas some excellent projects developed by voluntary sector and other organisations. The city council's annual report indicates that £2·1 million was spent on voluntary sector projects in Coventry in 1991-92. Commitments arising from voluntary sector projects approved as part of Coventry's UPs in 1992-93 and previous years will be honoured in full. In addition, the urban partnership fund, part of the capital partnership programme, will provide up to £20 million in 1993-94 in uncommitted UP resources to support capital and directly linked revenue projects in the 57 urban priority areas. It is open to local authorities to involve voluntary organisations in particular projects.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that Coventry will be granted inner area status from 1994-95 onwards.

Mr. Robin Squire: The circumstances of Coventry and all other authorities in England will be considered as part of a review of urban priority areas later this year using 1991 census and other data. The review will inform decisions on geographical targeting and the balance of programmes required to tackle the needs of urban areas.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what detailed studies were conducted prior to the Government's decision to wind up the urban programme; and if he will place copies of their findings in the Library.

Mr. Robin Squire: There will continue to be a substantial urban programme—UP—in 1993-94 amounting to £176 million which will fund existing commitments and provide £20 million for the urban partnership fund. Decisions on the new UP arrangements were taken having regard to all the relevant factors.

Repair Grants

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *167*, what steps he takes to monitor the effectiveness of the mandatory repair grant scheme in improving unfit houses.

Mr. Baldry: The Department collects regular quarterly and annual statistics of the number and value of mandatory renovation grants approved and paid by local authorities. It has recently completed research to monitor the early operation and effectiveness of the new grant system, including the extent of targeting of expenditure on unfit houses. The 1991 English house condition survey will also provide data on the impact of mandatory grant expenditure in improving housing conditions.

Crown Land (Planning Procedures)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been carried out by his Department concerning the effectiveness of the non-statutory planning procedures which have been operating over the development of Crown land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The non-statutory procedures for Crown development are generally considered to work well in practice. But in the interests of greater accountability and openness, the Government believe that a more formal system is now appropriate.

In reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon, (Mr. Whittingdale) my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning announced on 24 June 1992, Official Report, column *202*, that the Government believe that it is now appropriate to bring Crown exemption under the planning system largely to an end. A public consultation paper on the removal of Crown immunity from planning law was issued on 5 November 1992 and we are currently considering responses. Any changes will be embodied in primary legislation when a suitable opportunity arises.

Empty Homes

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to allow local authorities to buy empty housing properties from the private sector; and what evaluation he has made of the comparative cost-effectiveness of doing so as against using temporary accommodation.

Mr. Baldry: The provision of new social housing is now mainly the responsibility of housing associations, with local authorities concentrating on the management of their existing stock and on their broad enabling role. The Government expect local authorities to make the most efficient use of all permanent housing stock available to them, so as to reduce to a minimum the need for temporary accommodation. Nevertheless, authorities are able to acquire empty private sector housing, in line with their priorities for the use of available resources.

Building Regulations

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to amend part L of the Building Regulations 1991 to encourage the conservation of fuel and power; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I am today issuing a consultation paper setting out proposals for strengthening the requirements of part L of the Building Regulations 1991 for the conservation of fuel and power. The aim is to reduce the CO emissions from buildings by incorporating cost effective measures, but to do so in a way which does not introduce unacceptable technical risks and maintains some flexibility for designers. We estimate that adoption of these proposals would improve the energy performance of space and water heating in houses by some 25 to 35 per cent. compared with current building regulations standards, with similar improvements in the non-domestic sector.

Among the proposals is one to require an energy rating for all new dwellings and house conversions. This would be a major step forward in increasing energy awareness among house buyers. A copy of the consultation papers has been placed in the Library of the House.

Education Spending

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each education authority in England the standard spending assessment for education per pupil, the actual spending per pupil, the cash difference and the percentage of education SSA this difference represents for the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* The standard spending assessment for education consists of five sub-blocks, only three of which concern pupils—primary, secondary and post-16. It is not possible to provide expenditure figures on a basis which would allow comparison with these three elements.

TRANSPORT

Aircraft (Smoking)

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is Her Majesty's Government's policy with respect to the International Civil Aviation Organisation's recommendation to ban smoking in aircraft from 1996.

Mr. Norris: The Government believe that the question of smoking on aircraft should remain a matter for the airlines, which would have to implement any ban.

Nuclear Material (Transport)

Mr. Horam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the safety of the arrangements for nuclear waste to be transported by train; and if he will make it his policy to collect information about the quantity of nuclear material transported through each parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Freeman: Safety regulations for the transport of all radioactive materials in this country are based on stringent internationally agreed standards laid down by the International Atomic Energy Agency. These require safety to be "built in" to the design of the container used for transport, so that the contents would not present a significant radiological hazard even in the event of a severe accident. The IAEA standards are kept under continuous review, and major revisions take place every 10 years, the most recent one being in 1985. I have no plans to collect information about the quantity of nuclear material transported through each parliamentary constituency.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley), *Official Report*, 11 January, column *531*, on what basis he described the quantities of plutonium exported, to which he refers, as small.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Individual shipments of radioactive material are not notifiable to the Department when transported in type B(U) packages containing an

activity equal to or less than 3000 A_1 or 3000 A_2, as appropriate, or 1000 terabecquerels, whichever is the lower. The terms A_1 and A_2 are defined in the International Atomic Energy Agency regulations for the safe transport of radioactive material, a copy of which is available in the library of the House.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what inquiries are made in respect of fishing vessels requested to be registered as British to establish that beneficial ownership resides in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: The registrar has to make such inquiries as he considers necessary to establish that ownership of the vessel meets the qualifying criteria and that the vessel is operated and managed from within the United Kingdom.

For the latter he will usually look to any existing management agreement to see that the basic requirements of section 14(1)(b) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 are met.

Merchant Ships

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the registration of merchant ships under flags of convenience; and what steps he intends to take to assist the development of the British register of merchant ships.

Mr. Norris: The issue of flag state responsibility is better tackled by effective international action in the International Maritime Organisation and elsewhere aimed at ensuring that all flag states discharge their responsibilities properly. This is already in hand.

As for assisting the British register, we are implementing the recommendations of the joint working party on British shipping of 1990, and to this end the Government will be supporting the Merchant Shipping (Registration etc.) Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) at its Second Reading next month. We shall also continue to press in the European Community for measures to increase commercial opportunities for EC merchant fleets and to remove their competitive disadvantages.

Greater Manchester Buses

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations he has had about the future of Greater Manchester Buses from the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority; what reply is being sent; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Since the Secretary of State issued a direction that Greater Manchester Buses—GMB—should be split, I have met the chairman and other representatives of the Greater Manchester PTA and the chief executive of GMB. There has also been a meeting at official level.

We discussed the reasons for requiring GMB to be split, possible options, and how the splitting and subsequent sale might be progressed.

I am keeping in touch with the PTA.

Motorways

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those instances where two motorways travel side by side in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Many interchanges between motorways involve motorway slip roads running alongside the main carriageway with which they merge. In addition a skewed interchange between two motorways such as the M6 and M42 near Coleshill, or motorways merging such as the M26 where it joins both the M20 and the M25, can result in a short distance of parallel running.

M62, Ferrybridge

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the length of the proposed route of the A1 from the M62 junction 33 to the next proposed interchange with the M62 at Ferrybridge, West Yorkshire.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The proposed route of the A1(M) crosses over the M62 approximately half a mile west of junction 33. From this point, the new A1(M) would run alongside the M62 for a distance of approximately one mile to the proposed interchange at Ferrybridge.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the distance between the planned route of the A1 and the M62 where they run side by side in Ferrybridge, West Yorkshire.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The distance varies. While precise details of the separation will depend on detailed design, the routes would run as closely together as practicable.

A38

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends announcing the options for possible routes for the A38 trunk road improvement between Saltash and Trerulefoot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The public will be consulted on possible routes for the improvement of the A38 trunk road between Saltash and Trerulefoot later this year.

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects construction work to begin on the Dobwalls bypass section of the A38 trunk road improvement between Liskeard and Bodmin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Dobwalls bypass is one section of a much larger trunk road scheme which would link the A38 Liskeard bypass to the A30 Bodmin bypass. Construction could start in the latter part of the decade, depending on satisfactory progress with statutory procedures and the availability of funds at the time.

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends announcing his Department's preferred route for the A38 trunk road improvement between Liskeard and Bodmin immediately to the west of Dobwalls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I expect to announce the preferred route for the remaining section of the A38 Liskeard to Bodmin improvement scheme before Easter.

Pescado

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on developments in respect of investigations into the loss of the fishing vessel Pescado since the report of the marine accident investigation branch; what further information he has regarding submarine activity in the area at the time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Steven Norris: The circumstances surrounding the loss of the Pescado have been investigated by the marine accident investigation branch. Action on the seven recommendations made by MAIB is being urgently pursued. The Ministry of Defence provided details of warship movements in the area from 25 February to 5 March 1991. Two submarines were in surface transit during that period.

Eastgate to Bishop Auckland Line

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding environmental impact of transfer of current traffic from rail to road as a result of the planned closure of the Eastgate to Bishop Auckland line.

Mr. Freeman: I have received no specific representations about the withdrawal of cement traffic from the Eastgate to Bishop Auckland line. However, some correspondents have mentioned the loss of cement traffic when raising various rail freight issues generally with my Department.

Traffic Projection Figures

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish revised traffic projection figures.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The current national road traffic forecast was published in 1989. The forecast is kept under constant review, but I have no present plans to publish a revision.

MV Braer

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the product licence status in respect of each dispersant used to date in dispersing oil spilled from MV Braer.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is as follows:

Product	*Date approved*	*Tested and approved for*
Enersperse 1583	30 April 1986	Sea Rocky shores Sandy beaches
Dispolene 34S	25 March 1980 19 September 1985	Sea Sandy beaches
Dasic Slickgone	6 April 1984	Sea
LTSW	7 April 1989	Sandy beaches

NATIONAL FINANCE

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new lettings from investments under the business expansion scheme there were in *(a)* each region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole; and what percentage these figures represent of (i) all privately rented property and (ii) all rented property, for each year of its existence.

Mr. Dorrell: The business expansion scheme was extended to include investment in privately rented housing in 1988-89. Reliable estimates by regions are available for years up to 1990-91. These and preliminary estimates for the United Kingdom total in 1991-92 are shown in the table.

New lettings

	Total number[1]	*as a percentage of:* *All privately rented property (per cent)*	*All rented property (per cent)*
1988-89			
England:			
South-East	2,200	0·37	0·10
East Anglia	300	0·33	0·11
South-West	300	0·16	0·06
West Midlands	300	0·23	0·04
East Midlands	400	0·31	0·08
Yorkshire and Humberside	400	0·26	0·06
North-West	1,100	0·71	0·13
North	200	0·22	0·04
Wales	400	0·47	0·11
Scotland	800	0·58	0·07
Northern Ireland	neg	neg	neg
United Kingdom	6,400	0·36	0·08
1989-90			
England:			
South-East	1,200	0·20	0·05
East Anglia	100	0·11	0·04
South-West	100	0·05	0·02
West Midlands	100	0·08	0·01
East Midlands	200	0·16	0·04

	Total number[1]	as a percentage of: All privately rented property (per cent)	as a percentage of: All rented property (per cent)
Yorkshire and Humberside	400	0·26	0·06
North-West	500	0·33	0·06
North	neg	neg	neg
Wales	neg	neg	neg
Scotland	400	0·30	0·04
Northern Ireland	100	0·45	0·05
United Kingdom	3,100	0·18	0·04
1990-91			
England:			
South-East	2,500	0·42	0·11
East Anglia	1,100	1·24	0·43
South-West	500	0·26	0·10
West Midlands	100	0·08	0·01
East Midlands	400	0·31	0·08
Yorkshire and Humberside	100	0·07	0·01
North-West	500	0·33	0·06
North	neg	neg	neg
Wales	neg	neg	neg
Scotland	100	0·08	0·01
Northern Ireland	400	1·82	0·20
United Kingdom	5,700	0·33	0·07
1991-92			
United Kingdom	8,500	0·49	0·11

Note:
neg = Negligible.
[1] Estimates rounded to nearest 100.

Bicycles (Ministers)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to amend the rules for ministerial expenses to encourage the use of bicycles by Ministers on official duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: None.

Tobacco Sales

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the amount of tax the Government received from cigarettes sold illegally to people under age in the last financial year.

Sir John Cope: Evidence on the consumption of cigarettes by children aged under 16 is provided by the survey "Smoking among secondary school children in 1990" carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. But we have no estimate of the proportion of total consumption that is met from cigarettes illegally sold to people under age as children also acquire cigarettes from parents and other sources. Nor do we have an estimate of the proportion of cigarettes illegally sold to children for consumption by parents or other adults.

EC Sales Statements

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *378-79*, what authority to impose civil penalties for failure to submit EC sales statements is contained in *(a)* section 82 of the Finance Act 1992 and *(b)* paragraph 82 of schedule 3 to the Finance (No. 2) Act 1992.

Mr. Lamont: The authority to impose civil penalties for failure to submit European sales lists derives from an amendment to the Finance Act 1985—enforcement provisions in relation to value added tax. Section 82 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 1992 amends the 1985 Act by the introduction of a new section 17A covering European sales list penalties—for failure to submit.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 13 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *1003*, what is the maximum penalty under sub-paragraph 6(c) of paragraph 82 of schedule 3 to the Finance (No. 2) Act 1992, for failure to submit an EC sales statement.

Mr. Lamont: The maximum penalty—for third and subsequent default—is £1,500.

Tax Evasion

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many people have been employed by *(a)* the Inland Revenue and *(b)* Customs and Excise specifically to tackle tax evasion in each of the last five years;

(2) how much money has been allocated by his Department to *(a)* the Inland Revenue and *(b)* Customs and Excise to tackle tax evasion in each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: In Customs and Excise officials with responsibility for tackling tax evasion may have other duties. This is true, to a lesser degree, of the Inland Revenue, where most counter-evasion work is carried out by inspectors of taxes. On this basis, the approximate numbers of staff units/year engaged in such work, and the related costs to their respective Departments, were as follows:

	Staff Units		Cost £ million	
	IR	C&E	IR	C&E
1987-88	2,800	7,000	70	111
1988-89	3,100	7,100	79	125
1989-90	3,200	7,300	89	139
1990-91	3,300	7,300	102	152
1991-92	3,600	7,200	115	166

Foreign Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about bringing the tax regime and rates for foreign vessels registered in the United Kingdom and the companies running them into line with those applying to United Kingdom-owned vessels and companies.

Mr. Dorrell: We receive representations on this subject from time to time.

Autumn Statement

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish expanded versions of tables 2B.2, 2B.3 and 2B.4 of his "Autumn Statement 1992", Cm. 2096, which (i) subdivide technical adjustments into *(a)* transfers of function, *(b)* changes of financing responsibility, *(c)* classification changes reflecting changes in the way public expenditure is measures, *(d)* other technical changes and *(e)* cyclical social security; (ii) subdivide other changes into *(a)* revised estimates of the costs of existing policies, *(b)* expenditure changes resulting from policy changes and *(c)* other and (iii) provide technical notes as to which of these categories of adjustment have occasioned restatements of outturn-year figures in Cm. 2096;

(2) if he will publish *(a)* an analysis of the factors underlying the trend in table 2B.1 of his "Autumn Statement", Cm. 2096, of the net effects of the changes from charging all accruing superannuation costs to civil and defence departmental budgets over the period 1987-88 to 1994-95 and *(b)* an analysis by departmental programme of accrued pension liabilities at 31 March 1993; and for what reasons it is judged appropriate to take the differences between payments and accruals outside the new control total;

(3) if he will publish an analysis comparable to that in table B1 of Cm. 1920, of the accounting adjustments shown for the years 1987-88 to 1995-96 in table 2A.3 of his "Autumn Statement 1992", Cm. 2096, to show which components have been unaffected by the switch from the planning total to the new control total and which are a direct consequence of that switch;

(4) if he will publish in the statistical supplement to the 1992 "Autumn Statement" planning figures for total local authority expenditure in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 by territory and economic category, in the format of table 5.7 of Cm. 1920, and by function, in the format of table 5.8 of Cm. 1920;

(5) if he will publish a table, consistent with table 2A.11 of his 1992 "Autumn Statement", Cm. 2096, showing *(a)* local authority debt interest and *(b)* total local authority expenditure, for the planning years 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96;

(6) if he will publish an analysis of the effects of transfers of function between spending sectors, changes of financing responsibility between sectors, classification changes, estimating changes and policy changes on the 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 figures for (i) central Government support for local authorities and (ii) total local authority expenditure, as given in table 2.6 of his "Autumn Statement 1992", Cm. 2096;

(7) if he will publish a reconciliation between the figures given by table 2B.1 of his "Autumn Statement 1992", Cm 2096, for classification changes in 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 and those given by each of tables 2B.2, 2B.3 and 2B.4;

(8) if he will publish *(a)* a compositional analysis in the form of table 2A.3 of Cm 2096 of the figures provided by table 2A.1 for the new control total in 1984-85 to 1986-87, *(b)* a compositional analysis in the form of table 1A.3 of Cm 1729 of the figures provided by table 2A.1 for the new planning total, that is, after 1990 redefinition, in 1984-85 to 1993-94, and *(c)* totals for the old planning total, that is, pre-1990 redefinition, for whichever of the years 1963-64 to 1995-96 such data can be provided on the comparable public expenditure measurement basis as table 2A.1 of Cm 2096;

(9) if he will publish *(a)* the series of money GDP published in rounded form in table 2A.1 of his "Autumn Statement 1992", Cm 2096, *(b)* the adjusted money GDP figures which underly the calculated adjusted series, index (1990-91 = 100) in table 2A.1 and *(c)* the detailed adjustments to money GDP which constitute the difference between the two series, for the years 1963-64 to 1995-96, to the nearest pounds million; and how future such tables will be affected by the replacement of the community charge by the council tax on 1 April 1993.

Mr. Portillo: Analyses of public expenditure will be published in the "Statistical Supplement to the 1992 Autumn Statement" on 29 January 1993.

Corporate Taxation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to adjust the United Kingdom's corporate tax take in line with the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Dorrell: The level of tax on companies is considered each year in the Budget, and international comparison is one of the factors taken into account. The United Kingdom's main rate of corporation tax is currently the lowest of the EC and G7 countries, and one of the lowest of the OECD.

Underground Economy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate for the loss to the Exchequer due to the activities of the underground economy in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: Reliable estimates are not available.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will outline the measures taken by his Department to tackle the underground economy in the United Kingdom since 1986.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the chapter entitled "Deterring and tackling non-compliance" in the annual reports of the Board of Inland Revenue, which may be found in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to launch a commission of inquiry into the underground or ready-money economy in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government have no such plans. We do not believe that a commission of inquiry would add significantly to our knowledge and understanding of the "hidden economy".

VAT (Children's Clothes)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the size specifications governing VAT zero-rating of children's clothes, including shoes, were first fixed; and when they were last reviewed.

Sir John Cope: Since the inception of VAT, zero-rating for young children's clothing and footwear has been decided by reference to a schedule, published by Customs and Excise, of minimum measurements reflecting the average body sizes of children up to their 14th birthday. The continuing relevance of the size specifications in the schedule is monitored against the results from surveys by the British Standards Institution: the most recent of which is BS 7231/1990. The schedule of garment and shoe sizes was laid reviewed by Customs and Excise in 1985. A further review is currently in progress.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has as to what percentage of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom is accounted for by the underground economy.

Mr. Nelson: By its very nature, the underground economy cannot be measured directly or estimated with any precision. An evasion adjustment is made in the United Kingdom national accounts to allow for that part of income which is concealed but where the corresponding expenditure is not. This results in an addition to factor incomes of around 1¼ per cent. in recent years.

The evasion adjustment applied in the calculation of GDP does not attempt to encompass the whole of the underground economy. Estimates of the size of the underground economy made by a number of researchers show wide variation.

MEPs' Allowances

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the travel and office allowances for Members of the European Parliament will be treated for tax purposes in the same way as for hon. Members.

Mr. Dorrell: A ruling of the European Court of Justice in 1981 said that expense allowances paid by the European Parliament to its Members are not liable to United Kingdom tax. That ruling does not apply to Members of this House.

Gifts to Employees

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the Inland Revenue ensures that all additional gifts to employees are declared under the Taxes Management Act 1970.

Mr. Dorrell: Employers are required to make returns of taxable gifts to employees. Employees are required to declare their taxable income. The Inland Revenue audits the operation of PAYE by employers, and investigates possible under-declarations both in business accounts and personal tax returns.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total percentage contribution to gross domestic product in *(a)* the latest year for which figures are available, *(b)* 10 years previously and *(c)* 20 years previously of (i) manufacturing industry, (ii) the construction industry, (iii) banking, insurance and financial services and (iv) the energy industry.

Mr. Nelson: The available information is shown in the table:

Share of gross domestic product

Per cent.

Industry	*1971*	*1981*	*1991*
Manufacturing	31·2	25·1	21·0
Construction	6·4	6·0	6·8
Banking, insurance, finance, business services and leasing	10·3	11·4	17·7
Energy and water supply	5·3	10·8	5·7

Source: United Kingdom National Accounts, 1992 edition.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what has been the net United Kingdom/European Community trade balance, at current values, in all goods and services in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available;

(2) what has been the net United Kingdom trade balance, at current values, in all goods and services in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nelson: The United Kingdom's balance of trade in goods and services is available from published sources. The requested information is available in the 1992 edition of the Central Statistical Office's United Kingdom balance of payments publication—the Pink Book. The latest estimate for the United Kingdom's total balance on trade in services in 1991 is in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics". Copies of these publications are available in the Library of the House. The data can also be found on the Central Statistical Office's database which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library.

Industrial Investment

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much investment in manufacturing industry has grown in percentage terms in each of the OECD countries since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Data on manufacturing investment may be obtained from the OECD's "National Accounts, Volume II" and the Central Statistical Office's database which is accessible through the House of Commons Library.

Small Businesses

Mr. Simon Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the clearing banks on their policies on lending to small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: In recent months much concern has been expressed both that banks have been failing to pass on cuts in base rates to their small business customers and more generally that they have acted in a way that is damaging to the small business sector. That concern has been brought home to me in many letters from small firms and in representations from MPs. I therefore asked the Bank of England to repeat the survey of bank lending to small businesses that it undertook in June 1991. I have discussed the results with the main clearing banks and the president of the British Bankers Association.

The Bank has now carried out its study and I am placing a copy of its report in the Library. The main findings are:

- the number of small business accounts is about 4·1 million, of which two-thirds are in credit;
- around a quarter of continuing borrowers (ie those who were borrowing both in June 1991 and November 1992) have seen their bank facilities reduced, against a third who have seen an increase;
- around 60 per cent. of small business borrowers benefited from the full 4·5 per cent. reduction in base rates seen between June 1991 and the completion of the survey, and around a further 10 per cent. actually saw their borrowing margins reduced. Margins widened on 30 per cent. of accounts, about half by more than 0·5 per cent.;
- there has been little movement in average margins, but there is a wide variation in average margins between different banks;
- three banks operate minimum interest rate floors, but none have yet come into play;
- the trend towards greater implementation of fees and charges has been maintained and some banks have raised their levels;
- the proportions of lending at fixed rates and for specified terms (as opposed to overdrafts) has increased slightly.

The Bank's survey is the most comprehensive and recent guide to the interest rates charged by banks to small businesses. It confirms, as did the survey in June 1991, that the majority of small businesses have seen their interest rates come down in line with the reductions in base rates over the last year. This finding is supported by the Nottingham university study recently published by the Forum of Private Businesses. This is welcome news, because it means that the benefits of falling interest rates are being passed through to small businesses which have a vital part to play in bringing about economic recovery.

I welcome the moves a number of banks have made to increase the number of borrowers on term rather than overdraft finance. That can bring greater certainty to borrower and lender alike. I believe there is also a place for more fixed rate lending. I was disappointed, therefore, that the survey showed that interest rates offered on fixed rate loans had remained very much higher, at around 15 per cent., despite the fall in base rates and longer-term market rates. I am pleased that several banks have reduced their fixed rates since then and I hope that they will keep these rates under review.

Although the broad picture on interest rate margins is reassuring, there is no doubt that many small businesses remain dissatisfied with their banks, so, when I met the bank chairmen and chief executives, I explained the concern that has been expressed in letters to me and others.

The banks stressed the importance of the small business sector to them. They pointed out that the number of complaints is small by comparison with the overall number of customers and transactions and that tensions are bound to arise between banks and some customers in a recession. They argued also that they have had to make heavy provisions for losses on loans to small businesses and that they have to take that into account in their judgments on credit risk and pricing.

I pointed out that the complaints that I have received bear more widely on the quality of service offered to small businesses. It was in response to such complaints that I asked the banks to publish codes of practice for their small business customers and set out seven principles which codes should satisfy. All the major Scottish and English clearing banks have now produced such codes. Small firms and their representatives have generally welcomed this development and the willingness by banks to work to ensure greater transparency in relationships with customers. I know that the banks will continue to keep their codes under review and to assess how their relationships with their customers might be further improved; recently, for example, Lloyds substantially revised its code in response to customer pressure. I am pleased also that all the banks have introduced—or will introduce in the course of 1993—pre-notification of charges. This is a further positive step.

One important element of each code is to set up a clear procedure by which small businesses can take up complaints which cannot be resolved at branch level. The chairmen of the banks have assured me that they ensure that such complaints are looked into closely. Most have established special units to this end and the chief executives and chairmen themselves review a large number of cases personally. These procedures deal successfully and quickly with a great many complaints by explaining the basis of decisions clearly or by putting right mistakes that have been made. I hope therefore that small businesses, and MPs and others with whom they may correspond, will take up complaints directly with the banks, if necessary at the highest level.

There will, of course, be a number of customers who remain dissatisfied. Many will dispute the banks' judgment on how much they should be lent or on what terms. Such arguments have to remain a matter of negotiation between the banks and their customers. It is not for the Government or any other third party to second-guess the banks' commercial judgment on such matters.

However, a number of complaints I have received allege maladministration, for example charging incorrectly or the changing of terms without proper warning. In most cases, complaints of this sort can be resolved through the banks' internal procedures. But in the minority of cases where that is not so, personal customers and unincorporated businesses can take their case to the banking ombudsman. Small incorporated businesses cannot.

The Jack committee on banking services in 1989 recommended that the ombudsman scheme should be extended to cover incorporated businesses because they often faced identical problems and constraints. At that time, the change was resisted by the banks and not accepted by the Government. In view of the continuing level of complaints, I have taken the matter up again with the largest banks and with the president of the British Bankers Association. They have agreed that the scheme should be extended to cover small incorporated businesses

with a turnover of less than £1 million a year. They will now propose this change to the council and board of the banking ombudsman.

Given the continuing interest in the financing of small firms, I have also asked the Bank to continue to monitor from time to time developments in the provision of bank finance to this sector.

Central Government Staff

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government Departments at 1 October 1992.

Mr. Portillo: On 1 October 1992 there were 567,850 staff in post in central Government. Of those 510,651 were non-industrials and 57,199 were classified as being in industrial work. A summary showing staff in post by Department has been placed in the Library.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining the position underlying the oral statement of the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), on 18 January, *Official Report*, column 144, concerning a possible obligation on the United Kingdom to rejoin the exchange rate mechanism at any particular date.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* I have nothing to add to the memoranda submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee—appendices 1 and 5 to the first report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee for the Session 1992-93, HC 201.

European Community

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates have been made of the additional cash contributions from the EC which will accrue to each member state in consequence of the decisions taken at the Edinburgh meeting of the European Council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The Edinburgh European Council agreed the following allocation of expenditure from the European Community budget:

	(billion ecu—1992 prices) 1992	1999	*increase*
(a) Commitment ceilings			
Agriculture (guideline)	35·30	38·40	3·00
Cohesion Fund	—	2·60	2·60
Structural Funds—Objective 1	11·00	19·30	8·30
Other Structural operations	7·50	8·10	0·60
Other internal policies	3·90	5·10	1·20
External policies	3·90	5·60	1·70
Administrative expenditure	3·20	3·90	0·70
Repayments	0·90	—	−0·90
Monetary reserve	1·00	0·50	−0·50
Reserves for external policies	—	0·60	0·60
Total expenditure commitments	66·90	84·10	17·20
(b) Own resources ceiling			
as percentage of GNP	1·20	1·27	
becu[1 2]	64·90	80·60	15·70

[1] The own resources ceiling expressed in ecu is calculated using the Commission's growth assumptions which were available to the European Council.

[2] The expenditure commitment ceilings sum to more than the own resources ceiling. Although the Edinburgh European Council conclusions limit the own resources ceiling (and hence payments from the Community budget) to 1·27 per cent. of community GNP in 1999, commitments were constrained to 1·335 per cent. of GNP. This is possible because first, some commitments will in practice not be taken up and so will not result in payments being made; and second, there is in some cases, a considerable time-lag between commitments and payments. As long as the European economy continues to grow in nominal terms, such expenditure commitments will represent a smaller proportion of Community GNP when the payments are made than when the commitments were given.

As the existing financial perspective ended with 1992, it is not possible to say what would have happened to Community expenditure over the next seven years if no agreement had been reached at Edinburgh.

However, until there was agreement the revenue available to the Community would have continued to be subject to the 1988 own resources decision, with the own resources ceiling limited to 1·20 per cent. of GNP. The revenue which the Community could call up could therefore have grown in line with growth in the Community economy. On the basis of the growth assumptions available to the Edinburgh European Council, the revenue from a 1·20 per cent. own resources ceiling would allow payments of up to 76·1 billion ecu in 1999. In effect, therefore, the decision of the European Council to increase the own resources ceiling from 1·20 per cent. to 1·27 per cent. of GNP increased the permissible level of payments from the Community budget by 4·5 billion ecu a year by 1999.

It is not possible to estimate with any certainty how each member state would benefit from this additional 4·5 billion ecu by comparison with decisions which might have been made in the absence of agreement in Edinburgh.

Debt Relief

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *49-50*, if he will provide figures on the amount of United Kingdom debt relief provided under the Trinidad terms which has been counted as official bilateral development assistance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

The Paris club has so far granted Trinidad terms to 13 countries. After a framework agreement is reached at the Paris club, each creditor must negotiate a separate bilateral agreement with the debtor. Not all of the United Kingdom's bilateral agreements have been concluded, but provisional figures suggest that these agreements will reduce debts to the United Kingdom by around £200

million. In accordance with directives agreed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, all debt relief under Trinidad terms is counted as bilateral official development assistance.

SCOTLAND

Community Care

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the preparedness of local authorities in Scotland to implement the new community care arrangements in April.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities have been implementing the new community care arrangements in phases since 1991. All authorities now have complaints procedures and arm's length inspection units. The mental illness specific grant introduced in 1991-92 has built up community facilities for mentally ill people. All authorities, except one, have prepared community care plans which form the basis of discussions between them and the Scottish Office community care implementation unit. In the next phase, starting in April 1993, local authorities will assume responsibility for assessing individual's needs and purchasing residential and nursing home care. Preparations for this are well in hand, but systems will continue to develop and be refined with experience of the new arrangements.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the individuals and organisations which he consults on matters relating to the needs and rights of disabled people in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of bodies consulted on these important matters is extremely lengthy and I am therefore arranging for a list to be placed in the Library of the House.

Constituency Sizes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, in descending order, the geographical area, expressed in hectares, of parliamentary constituencies in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Parliamentary constituency	*Area by hectares*[1]
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	954,680
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	870,708
Caithness and Sutherland	788,297
Argyll and Bute	661,362
North Tayside	485,104
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	441,883
Western Isles	308,717
Kincardine and Deeside	261,106
Orkney and Shetland	247,928
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	242,811
Gordon	229,485
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	226,956
Moray	224,399
Stirling	219,243
Dumfries	200,662
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	198,818
Banff and Buchan	153,278
Perth and Kinross	152,963
Clydesdale	138,829
Angus East	121,034
Cunninghame North	77,188
North East Fife	76,125
East Lothian	71,682
Dumbarton	53,127
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	37,521
Midlothian	36,128
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	33,812
East Kilbride	28,613
Livingston	27,117
Clackmannan	24,142
Linlithgow	23,512
Dunfermline West	19,733
Eastwood	17,003
Falkirk East	15,547
Ayr	15,501
Dunfermline East	14,727
Motherwell North	13,576
Monklands East	13,463
Monklands West	11,388
Cunninghame South	11,302
Central Fife	10,874
Falkirk West	10,610
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	10,511
Kirkcaldy	10,414
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	9,451
Edinburgh Pentlands	8,630
Hamilton	7,703
Clydebank and Milngavie	6,381
Motherwell South	3,807
Paisley South	3,801
Aberdeen North	3,552
Aberdeen South	3,342
Glasgow Rutherglen	2,997
Dundee East	2,587
Edinburgh South	2,585
Edinburgh West	2,554
Dundee West	2,511
Greenock and Port Glasgow	2,438
Glasgow Shettleston	2,388
Paisley North	2,325
Glasgow Pollok	2,220
Glasgow Provan	2,188
Glasgow Maryhill	1,910
Edinburgh East	1,832
Glasgow Springburn	1,824
Glasgow Govan	1,734
Glasgow Cathcart	1,658
Edinburgh Leith	1,506
Glasgow Hillhead	1,461
Edinburgh Central	1,426
Glasgow Central	1,380
Glasgow Garscadden	1,270

[1] Land and inland water.

Further Education Colleges (Creches)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines he has issued, or plans to issue, to further education colleges regarding creche facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Provision of creche facilities in further education colleges is currently the responsibility of education authorities. From 1 April 1993 that responsibility will rest with individual college boards of management.

We have no plans to issue guidelines to boards of management on the provision of creche facilities.

NHS Trusts

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* names, *(b)* place of residence, *(c)* salary, honorarium or allowance and *(d)*

expected weekly time-commitment of each (i) executive and (ii) non-executive director of each hospital trust in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

		Annual remuneration £
Trusts already in operation:		
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. Bryan Broomfield	Aberdeen	19,285
Non-executive Directors		
Professor Graeme Catto	Aberdeen	5,000
Professor Michael Meston	Aberdeen	5,000
Mr. Harold Tocher	Aberdeen	5,000
Dr. Fiona Lyle	Laurencekirk	5,000
Mrs. Ann D. Scott	Aberdeen	5,000
South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. J. D. Brown	Ayr	17,145
Non-executive Directors		
Mr. William M. Mowatt	Ayr	5,000
Mr. Harold J. Currie	Mauchline	5,000
Mr. Graeme McKinstry	Ayr	5,000
Mrs. Anne Wilson	Girvan	5,000
Mrs. Dorothy McLellan	Symington	5,000
Royal Scottish National Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. Adrian Ward	Uplawnmoor	17,145
Non-executive Directors		
Mr. William Hughes	Falkirk	5,000
Ms. Valerie Smart	Falkirk	5,000
Professor Averil Stewart	Linlithgow	5,000
Mr. David Tarr	Bridge of Allan	5,000
Dr. Peter Williams	Bridge of Allan	5,000
Trusts coming into operation on 1 April 1993		
Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Care NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mrs. Aileen Bates	Galston	17,145
Non-executive Directors		
Mr. Ian Allison	Ayr	5,000
Mr. David Gall	Ayr	5,000
Mr. Robert Johnston	Beith	5,000
Dr. Susan Kinnaird	Troon	5,000
Mr. W. Scott McConnell	Strathaven	5,000
Caithness and Sutherland NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. George Bruce	Thurso	15,125
Non-executive Directors		
Mr. John Gunn	Wick	5,000
Rev. Alexander Murray	Lairg	5,000
Dr. Elizabeth MacKenzie	Skerray by Thurso	5,000
Mr. John Rosie	Thurso	5,000
Ms. Wilma Taylor	Wick	5,000
Dundee Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. Stuart Fair	Dundee	19,285
Non-executive Directors		
Mrs. Maureen Cane	Broughty Ferry	5,000
Mr. Gordon Lowden	Dundee	5,000
Mr. Robert Lyon	Dundee	5,000
Mrs. Jacqueline Wood	Dundee	5,000
Professor Heather Dick	Dundee	5,000
Moray Health Services NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. James Snedden	Elgin	17,145
Non-executive Directors		
Mrs. Marjory Adams	Elgin	5,000
Mr. Russell Anderson	Elgin	5,000
Mrs. Lydia King	Lossiemouth	5,000
Mr. William Phillips	Elgin	5,000
Mr. James Royan	Elgin	5,000
North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. William Ritchie	Kirkoswald	19,285
Non-executive Directors		
Mrs. Angela Dunbar	Saltcoats	5,000
Mrs. Kim Donald	Fenwick	5,000
Mr. James Grier	West Kilbride	5,000
Mr. Alan Stewart	Kilmarnock	5,000
Mr. Keith Tulloch	Monkton	5,000
Raigmore Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. James Kyle	Gairloch	17,145
Non-executive Directors		
Mr. James Gray	Fortrose	5,000
Mrs. Flora Hunt	Inverness	5,000
Mr. Alexander Morrison	Golspie	5,000
Professor George McNicol	Rosemarkie	5,000
Mrs. Judith Robertson	Inverness	5,000
Royal Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. Tom Gibson	Paisley	17,145
Non-executive Directors		
Mrs. Audrey Burns	Houston	5,000
Mr. Allan Durward	Bridge of Weir	5,000
Mrs. Marion Ford	Paisley	5,000
Mr. Alec MacDonald Gaunt	Paisley	5,000
Mr. George Murray	Paisley	5,000
Stirling Royal Infirmary NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. George McKelvie	Auchterarder	17,145
Non-executive Directors		
Mrs. Agnes Bowie	Stirling	5,000
Mr. Graham Houston	Dunblane	5,000
Mrs. Doris Littlejohn	Bridge of Allan	5,000
Mr. Graeme Simmers	Balfron	5,000
Mrs. Anne Walker	Deanston	5,000
Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust		
Chairman: Dr. John Dall	Glasgow	19,285
Non-executive Directors		
Dr. Robert Colville	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Danielle Glasser	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Lorna Howieson	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Joan Mackenzie	Glasgow	5,000
Mr. Desmond O'Brien	Glasgow	5,000
West Lothian NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. Robert Watt	Edinburgh	19,285
Non-executive Directors		
Mr. Thomas Bennie	Linlithgow	5,000
Mr. Jack Cunningham	Armadale	5,000
Mrs. Irene Douglas	West Calder	5,000
Mr. Peter Johnston	Livingston	5,000
Mrs. Carole Stevenson	Livingston	5,000
Southern General Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mr. Andrew Garland	Glasgow	19,285
Non-executive Directors		
Mr. Robert McEwan	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Ann Moore	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Agnes Stewart	Glasgow	5,000
Mr. Henry Tankel	Glasgow	5,000
Mrs. Susan Bell	Biggar	5,000
Grampian Health Care NHS Trust		
Chairman: Dr. Alex Taylor	Fyvie	19,285
Monklands and Bellshill NHS Trust		
Chairman: Dr. George Bell	Bellshill	19,285
Yorkhill NHS Trust		
Chairman: Mrs. Joan Cameron	Glasgow	19,285

My right hon. Friend expects to announce shortly the names of the non-executive directors of the Grampian HealthCare, Monklands and Bellshill, and Yorkhill trusts.

Trust boards themselves appoint, and determine the salaries of, executive directors and information on this is not held centrally.

In addition to the remuneration payable, the chairmen and non-executive directors are entitled to claim travelling and subsistence allowances at rates set for members of public bodies. There is no specific weekly time commitment but trust board directors are expected to give about three days per month to the board's work.

Crime, Paisley

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will visit Paisley to discuss policing and crime.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. It is the responsibility of the chief constable of Strathclyde police to take operational decisions on the policing of Paisley. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State had a meeting with the hon. Members for Paisley, South and for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) on 20 October 1992 in the course of which he described the initiatives being taken by Strathclyde police to deal with Paisley's crime problems.

Hardy Nursery Stock

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to launch an initiative to promote the export of hardy nursery stock, including roses, heaths and heathers, from Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce an export promotion initiative for Scotland's hardy nursery stock.

I am pleased to say that this sector of the industry continues to demonstrate steady progress and, by its own efforts, is responding positively to the opportunities afforded at home and by the opening up of European Community markets.

Excellent examples of this progressive attitude to marketing are the Scotgrow exhibition, now an established annual event, and the Scotgrow's directory of Scotland's ornamental nursery stock growers. Both these and other initiatives are proving to be highly successful in promoting quality Scottish produce.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to give victims of abuse, or their representatives, forewarning of the release date from prison of the offenders.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Directors of social work are notified in advance of the release of offenders when a person has been convicted of an offence under schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 against children under the age of 17 years. This includes incest or other forms of sexual assault and cruel and unnatural treatment of children. Local authority social work departments will determine in the light of individual cases if victims or their representatives should be advised of the release of an offender. In addition the Scottish Prison Service informs the police and social work departments of the release of all prisoners on parole.

Poll Tax

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were *(a)* registered to vote and *(b)* registered to pay the poll tax in each Scottish parliamentary constituency in the financial year 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information about electoral registrations by parliamentary constituency in 1992 is given in OPCS's "1992 Electoral Statistics"—series EL NO 19—published by HMSO, a copy of which is in the Library. Electoral registers in Scotland are published on 16 February each year.

No information is available centrally about the number of persons within parliamentary constituency areas who are on the community charge register.

Ecological Steering Group

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he has made to set up the ecological steering group referred to in his statement of 11 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I plan to establish as soon as possible an ecological steering group on the oil spill in Shetland with the terms of reference shown below. Professor W. Ritchie, professor of physical geography, vice principal of the university of Aberdeen, has accepted my invitation to be the chairman. I shall make a further announcement about the membership of the group in due course. The terms of reference are as follows:

To monitor environmental work arising from the incident and to provide a focus for liaison and advice;

To assess the impact of the incident on the ecology of the Shetland Islands;

To develop urgently the best strategies in the short and longer term for dealing with the implications of the incident as they affect the ecology of the Shetland Islands and to report to the Secretary of State for Scotland on these at an early date;

To oversee special studies for monitoring the impact on and subsequent recovery of the environment in order to advise the Government of the lessons to be learned which could be applied more widely, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

Water Services

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much capital investment on water services in Scotland has been paid for by private finance.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* Identified private sector contributions to capital investment on water sewerage services in Scotland amounted to £1·5 million in the financial year 1991-92.

Land Access

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public access agreements have been concluded in Scotland in each of the last three years in respect of Forestry Commission holdings sold to the private sector; and what percentage of total sales these figures represent.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* The arrangements for securing continued public access to woodlands sold by the Forestry Commission were introduced in October 1991. Three of the woodland areas considered under these arrangements have been sold so far. None of the sales was subject to an access agreement.

Museums and Galleries (Attendance)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the attendance figures for 1992 reported by the national museums and galleries in Scotland, broken down into the individual institutions but including their outstations, with figures in each case of the percentage increase or decrease on the attendances figures for 1991.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The information is as follows:

	1992	*Percentage change since 1991*
National museums of Scotland	1,005,316	-6·12
National galleries of Scotland	759,102	+10·00

The national museums of Scotland comprise the Royal Museum of Scotland buildings at Chambers street and Queen street, Edinburgh, the Scottish agricultural museum, the Scottish united services museum, the Museum of Flight and the Museum of Costume. The national galleries of Scotland comprise the National Gallery of Scotland, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

National Testing

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to implement national testing in schools in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: *[pursuant to his reply, 2 November 1992, c. 153-54]:* National testing is an essential part of the Government's education strategy. It ensures for parents that the progress of their children in school is checked against national standards.

The new arrangements for national testing announced last November and set out fully in The Scottish Office Education Department's circular 12/92, were widely welcomed in Scotland. National tests will now be given in primary schools in Scotland whenever pupils are considered by their teachers to have largely completed a level of the curriculum in mathematics, reading and writing. From January 1994, these arrangements will apply also to pupils in S1 and S2.

Education authorities were asked to confirm that they would implement these arrangements. They have now done so, in response to which regulations have been laid before Parliament today to revoke the regulations on national testing currently in force.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Yugoslavia

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the United Kingdom contribution to United Nations funds for United Nations relief in the former Yugoslavia; and whether these funds came from the existing Overseas Development Administration budget.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Out of a total of £70·5 million so far committed towards humanitarian relief for the former Yugoslavia, £23·6 million has been provided for the United Nations humanitarian relief programme. These funds come from the United Kingdom aid programme.

UN Relief Operations

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for additional help for United Nations relief operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1992 we committed £8·25 million to Afghanistan, of which £4·5 million was provided for United Nations relief operations; £10·84 million to Iraq of which £6·5 million was provided for UN relief operations; and £70·5 million to the former Yugoslavia, of which £23·6 million was provided for UN relief operations. Our future responses towards these crises depend on the assessment of needs and we are maintaining a close dialogue with the UN on this.

Aid-Trade Ratios

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the ratio of the amount supplied as British overseas aid to the amount generated in extra trade; and if he will set out the basis for the estimate.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1991, 74 per cent—£934 million—of our bilateral aid commitments were tied to British goods and services. We estimate that for every £1 we commit to multilateral agencies—£918 million in 1991—an average of £1·40 is spent on British goods and services. More widely our aid supports economic growth and liberalisation in developing countries, helping to provide a better climate for trade and investment.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Treaties

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 12 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *932-44*, which of the treaties listed, under each of the side headings, have been signed but not ratified by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The treaties in question are as listed. Command Paper references are given for ease of reference.

Animals and conservation

European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter.
Signed at Strasbourg on 10 May 1979.
Miscellaneous Series No. 002/1980, Cmnd. 7776.

European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes.
Signed at Strasbourg on 18 March 1986.
Miscellaneous Series No. 004/1986, Cmnd. 9884.

Convention on the Protection and the Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.
Signed at Helsinki on 17 March 1992.
Miscellaneous Series No. 005/1993 to be published 5 February 1993.

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.
Signed at Helsinki on 17 March 1992.
Certified copy of Convention awaited..

Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas.
Signed at New York on 17 March 1992.
Miscellaneous Series No. 002/1993, Cmnd. 2119.

Convention on Biological Diversity.
Adopted at Nairobi on 11 May 1992.
Miscellaneous Series No. 003/1993, Cmnd. 2127.

Human rights
Protocol No. 4 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, signed at Rome on 4 November 1950.
Signed at Strasbourg on 16 September 1963.
Miscellaneous Series No. 006/1964, Cmnd. 2309.
Protocol amending the European Social Charter.
Signed at Turin on 21 October 1991.
Miscellaneous Series No. 005/1992, Cmnd. 1940.
Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level.
Signed at Strasbourg on 5 February 1992.
Miscellaneous Series No. 008/1992, Cmnd. 1964.
Protocol No. 10 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, signed at Rome on 4 November 1950.
Signed at Strasbourg on 25 March 1992.
Miscellaneous Series No. 012/1992, Cmnd. 2031.

Disarmament
Treaty on Open Skies.
Signed at Helsinki on 24 March 1992.
Miscellaneous Series No. 013/1992, Cmnd. 2067.
Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects.
Concluded at Geneva on 10 October 1980.
Miscellaneous Series No. 023/1981, Cmnd. 8370.

Pollution
Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution concerning the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary Fluxes.
Adopted at Geneva on 18 November 1991.
Miscellaneous Series No. 010/1992, Cmnd. 1970.
Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage resulting from Exploration for and Exploitation of Seabed Mineral Resources (with Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage from Offshore Operations 20-31 October 1975 and 13-17 December 1976).
Signed at London on 1 May 1977.
Miscellaneous Series No. 008/1977, Cmnd. 6791.
Protocol of 1984 to amend the International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, 1971.
Adopted at London on 25 May 1984.
Miscellaneous Series No. 007/1986, Cmnd. 9926.
Protocol of 1984 to amend the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, 1969.
Adopted at London on 25 May 1984.
Miscellaneous Series No. 008/1986, Cmnd. 9927.
Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.
Adopted at Basel on 22 March 1989.
Miscellaneous Series No. 004/1990, Cm. 984.
Protocol [further] amending the Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft, done at Oslo on 15 February 1972.
Signed at Oslo on 5 December 1989.
Miscellaneous Series No. 010/1990, Cm. 1039.
Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.
Adopted at Espoo (Finland) on 25 February 1991.
Miscellaneous Series No. 015/1991, Cm. 1645.

Iran

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the relationship of Iran with the Hizbollah and Hamas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Hizbollah has itself stated the importance it attaches to its relationship with Iran. Both Hizbollah and Hamas attended the conference the Iranian Government organised in October 1991 in opposition to the middle east peace process.

Iraq

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 January, *Official Report*, columns *853-54*, what consultations he had with representatives of the telecommunications company concerned before allowing the visas to be issued.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs wrote to a representative of the parent company twice during 1992 and stressed that he would not be prepared to put forward a project of the type proposed to the United Nations sanctions committee.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 January, *Official Report*, columns *853-54*, what steps he took to ensure that any equipment being discussed was incapable of military application before granting the visas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It was made clear to representatives of the company concerned on a number of occasions that only goods approved by the United Nations sanctions committee could be exported to Iraq.

Gibraltar

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Spanish Government as to transport/passenger delays at the Spanish-Gibraltar border.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Spaniards are well aware of our view that there should be the maximum possible free movement of EC nationals at internal borders commensurate with controlling the movement of terrorists, drug smugglers, other international criminals and illegal immigrants.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to announce the name of the future Governor of Gibraltar; and what discussions on this appointment he has had with the Government of Gibraltar.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We hope in the near future to be in a position to announce the name of the new Governor of Gibraltar. The appointment is a matter for Her Majesty's Government, but we are in touch with the Gibraltar Government.

Immigration

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in *(i)* Bombay, *(ii)* New Delhi, *(iii)* Karachi and *(iv)* Islamabad, were seeking entry visas to join spouses in the United Kingdom as at 14 January; and what is the average current waiting time at each post.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of men and women waiting for an interview for entry clearance to join their spouses in the United Kingdom in Bombay, New Delhi, Karachi and Islamabad on 14 January, and the waiting time for interview, was as follows:

	Men Numbers	*Women Numbers*	*Waiting Time Months*
Bombay	87	90	3
New Delhi	10	105	3
Karachi	44	42	2
Islamabad	1,195	411	3

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining the kinds of transactions which may be undertaken with Iraq and Iraqi nationals on humanitarian grounds under the current sanctions regime for Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The only transactions with Iraq permitted in the UK are those humanitarian exceptions permitted under UN Security Council resolutions 661 and 687 agreed on a case-by-case basis by the UN sanctions committee. Such exceptions include foodstuffs, medicine, medical and surgical equipment, basic human requirements—for example, toiletries, cooking requisites, tents, blankets and other items for the construction of basic shelter—and equipment necessary to restore basic local services—clean water, sanitation and agriculture.

Israel

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in sequence the actions taken by Her Majesty's Government over the decision of the Israeli Government to expel the Palestinians to the Israeli-occupied south Lebanon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since the decision of the Israeli authorities to expel the Palestinians, we have issued two EC statements as presidency and supported United Nations Security Council resolution 799. In addition, the Foreign Secretary has written to the Israeli Foreign Minister, I have made our views clear to the Israeli ambassador, and EC ambassadors in Tel Aviv have made representations to the Israeli Foreign Minister. On 23 January RAF helicopters provided support to an International Committee of the Red Cross humanitarian mission to the deportees. Our position on the deportations remains clear: they are illegal and we will continue to urge the Israelis to comply with Security Council resolution 799 which calls for the immediate and safe return of the deportees.

EDUCATION

Behaviour Policies

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many local education authorities have developed strategies for supporting the behaviour policies of their schools which meet the standards expected by his Department;

(2) how many local education authorities have schools which have whole school behaviour policies, as recommended in the Elton report on discipline in schools; what information he has on the percentage of such schools in each LEA; and to what extent they meet the standards expected by his Department.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Parents' Civil Liabilities

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research he has commissioned on the impact of imposing on parents' civil liabilities for the acts of their children in schools.

Mr. Forth: None.

Languages (Communication)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of how many local education authorities and schools in each of these local education authorities communicate with parents in languages other than English in accordance with the recommendations of the Elton report.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally. It is for local authorities and schools to consider the need for communication with parents in languages other than English in the light of local needs and circumstances. The Government have made the necessary statutory provisions to enable schools and LEAs to make governors' annual reports, pupils' reports and other documents for parents available in translation where this is appropriate.

Nursery Education

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what criteria are employed by his Department in distinguishing full-time and part-time nursery education for statistical and other purposes.

Mr. Forth: There is no statutory definition of these terms and the Department has not attempted to define full-time or part-time nursery education as such for statistical purposes. In its published pupil statistics it distinguishes those nursery pupils who usually attend for the length of the school day throughout the week, from those—the majority—who attend on mornings or afternoons only or on some other pattern.

Counselling Courses

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many LEAs have provided courses on basic counselling skills in the last two years; what information he has on the percentage of staff in each LEA which have been on such courses; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of such courses.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Management Consultancy Services

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities provide management consultancy services for head teachers and support services for the professional development of teachers which meet the standards expected by his Department.

Mr. Forth: It is for individual local education authorities to decide what services of these kind to provide, in the light of demand from the schools and colleges which they maintain.

School Discipline

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made, following the Elton report of discipline in schools, of the equitable distribution of teaching and other resources across the ability range in schools and of how local education authorities are taking this recommendation into account when funding schools.

Mr. Forth: None.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *573*, if he will take steps to introduce a DFE grant for new projects to meet the education needs of the ethnic minority population of all ages.

Mr. Forth: No. My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce a separate DFE grant for new projects to meet the educational needs of the ethnic minority population.

Ballots

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in what circumstances a parent entitled to a list of parents who can vote in a school's opt-out ballot may be required to give an undertaking before receiving a copy of such a list.

Mr. Forth: The Education Reform Act provides that where a parent makes a request in connection with any proposal that a ballot should be held in accordance with section 61 of this Act, the parent is entitled to a copy of the list of the names and addresses of other parents. An appropriate fee may be charged for the cost of supply of the list.

Special Needs Education

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures he is taking to reduce the time taken in the issuing of statements of special needs for children.

Mr. Forth: The Education Bill presently before the House provides for the Secretary of State to set statutory time limits governing local education authorities' conduct of assessments and the making of statements of special educational needs. The Bill also provides for a statutory code of practice including criteria and guidance to which LEAs should have regard in carrying out those duties.

Home Economics

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning the practical input in home economics in the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received conflicting representations about the place of aspects of home economics in the national curriculum. In addition to those aspects included in national curriculum mathematics and science, the proposals for a revised national curriculum technology order, which my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales issued for consultation in December, make clear their view that pupils should learn to apply designing and making skills to textiles and food, as to other materials, as part of the programmes of study for this subject.

English Test Papers

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he was first aware that national newspapers were in possession of this summer's key stage 3 English test papers; if he will carry out an inquiry into the circumstances; and if he will now defer the tests or treat them as a pilot exercise.

Mr. Forth: The tests for English will go ahead as planned. In the light of the leak of the current question, my right hon. Friend has asked Lord Griffiths, chairman of the School Examinations and Assessment Council, to draw up new test papers, based on the successful model developed over the last two and a half years.

My right hon. Friend first learnt that the current tests for English had become public on 20 January. He fully expects SEAC to establish how the leak occurred, to ensure that it does not happen again.

Truancy

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) on 20 January, *Official Report*, column *282*, if he intends to provide schools with a national definition of what constitutes *(a)* truancy and *(b)* an unauthorised absence.

Mr. Forth: Truancy and unauthorised absence are terms which are largely interchangeable. They may be defined as absence from school without leave from a duly authorised person. Guidance as to what constitutes authorised absence was given in DFE circular 11/91, published in July 1991. A copy is available in the Library.

Child and Family Guidance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy towards the funding of child and family guidance services by local education authorities.

Mr. Forth: It is for individual local education authorities to make provision for child and family guidance services in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Lord Griffiths

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will dismiss Lord Griffiths from his post as chairman of the School Examinations and Assessment Council.

Mr. Forth: No.

DEFENCE

Vulcan Bombers

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) of 16 November 1992, *Official*

Report, column *44*, what sustainable sponsorship proposals to accept financial responsibility for keeping the Vulcan XH 558 in flying condition he has received; what would be the required annual financial contribution and any non-recurring costs; what steps he has taken to inform potential sponsors of these costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Officials have met and corresponded with representatives of the campaign to keep the Vulcan flying on a number of occasions since 16 November, to explain in detail the implications of its continued operation. We have received no new sponsorship proposals during this period.

The estimated costs of continuing to operate the Vulcan remain as set out in the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend on 26 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *507*.

I have decided that, without viable sponsorship, there is no further justification for delaying the sale of the aircraft, and tenders will be issued during the next week.

European Defence

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment he has made of a continuing role for NATO alongside an independent European defence policy;

(2) what is his policy in respect of the establishment of permanent forces of the WEU, in respect of their effect on the role and position of NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government welcome the development of a European defence identity and fully support the development of the Western European Union (WEU) as a means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic alliance. NATO will remain the principal guarantor of stability throughout the North Atlantic area and the forum for agreement on policies bearing on the security and defence commitments of its members. We do not advocate the establishment of permanent WEU forces or headquarters. Our approach, which is reflected in the WEU's Petersberg declaration of June 1992, is that WEU member states should make available military units from the whole spectrum of their conventional armed forces for the WEU's use in situations where NATO is not involved. These units will be drawn from forces with national and NATO roles, in the latter case after consultation with the alliance.

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the effect of the new European defence proposals, involving rapid deployment of forces, potentially over long distances, on the United Kingdom defence budget.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Petersberg declaration of June 1992 made it clear that military units which will be made available to the Western European Union will be drawn from the forces with national and NATO roles. NATO's new strategic concept emphasises the need for armed forces to be mobile and flexible. The defence budget agreed in the 1992 public expenditure survey took account of the restructuring of Britain's armed forces in line with the requirements of the strategic concept.

HMS Ark Royal

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated initial and subsequent cost of the deployment of the Ark Royal group and the units deployed therewith; and how much of that cost will be reimbursed to his Department by the Foreign Office.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated additional cost is expected to be some £30 million if the deployment lasts for one year. It is not possible at this early stage to produce a meaningful breakdown of costs given the variable nature of the operation. No decision has yet been taken on which Department will bear the cost.

Merchant Seamen

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to mark the 50th anniversary of the battle of the Atlantic by taking steps to commemorate the contribution to the war effort made by merchant seamen.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department is working closely with the Chamber of Shipping to ensure that the Merchant Navy and merchant seamen are properly represented at the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the battle of the Atlantic on Merseyside at the end of May.

Anti-air Warfare Frigate

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future development of the Franco-British anti-air warfare frigate.

Mr. Aitken: A preliminary co-operative phase for a common Franco-British AAW frigate, to enter service early in the next decade, was launched in November 1991 and is due to conclude in the autumn of this year. I am pleased to be able to inform the House that the French Minister of Defence, Mr. Pierre Joxe and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence have recently agreed proposals for the procurement and project management of project Horizon, as it is now termed. Discussions are continuing with Italy. The three chiefs of staff of the French, Italian and Royal Navy signed a joint staff requirement for the frigate in December 1992.

Joint Planning and Training

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards joint planning and training between the members of NATO and the other members of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Areas of defence co-operation agreed by all members of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC) are outlined in the "Statement issued at the meeting of Defence Ministers at NATO Headquarters on 1 April 1992" and in the NACC statement of 18 December 1992. Both these documents are in the Library of the House. These guidelines cover discussion with NACC partners on members' approaches to planning and training, but not on joint planning and training.

Defence Trade

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made towards a NATO code of conduct in defence trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Discussions are continuing with out allies on a NATO code of conduct in defence trade, with the aim of moving towards a more open defence equipment market within the alliance. We fully support this objective.

NATO

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to receive the results of the review currently being undertaken of NATO's force structure.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO Ministers expect to see an interim report on the implications for the new NATO structure of changing force levels among alliance members at their next meeting in the spring.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the consequences for NATO's force structure of the proposals by Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain to reduce their domestic forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: An assessment of the consequences of our allies' proposals for NATO's force structure will be made once their reviews have progressed.

Polaris

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the technical maximum number of warheads capable of deployment on Polaris missiles when they first entered service; what change took place in connection with the deployment of Chevaline; and what is the technical maximum currently.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 16-missile Polaris submarines each entered service with the Royal Navy carrying 48 warheads. The Chevaline development provided warheads that are hardened against the effects of anti-ballistic missile defences, together with penetration aids, and the ability to manoeuvre the payload in space. It is long-standing policy not to divulge specific warhead numbers either current or planned; but the Government made clear at the time that Chevaline did not involve any increase in the number of warheads associated with the Polaris force.

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the refit of the royal yacht Britannia in 1987 was spent on *(a)* the superstructure, *(b)* the engines and *(c)* the royal apartments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The work carried out during Britannia's refit in 1987 falls into the following categories:

	Per cent.
Structure	22·0
Propulsion	7·2
Royal apartments	17·3
Other	53·5

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the annual costs published for the royal yacht Britannia include the cost of personnel; and what is the personnel cost for the latest available year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The annual costs published for the royal yacht Britannia do include the cost of personnel. The personnel costs for 1991-92 were £3,904,000.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the planned service life of the royal yacht Britannia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMY Britannia had a routine refit in Portsmouth last year costing some £6 million to £7 million. This was designed to keep her safe, seaworthy and up to date for the next few years. In view of her age, it is obviously sensible to consider her future. This consideration is at an early stage and it is too soon to speculate as to its outcome.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many days the royal yacht Britannia was used by members of the royal family for public engagements and private purposes in each year since 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the period specified, HMY Britannia has been used by members of the royal family, as follows:

	Total number of days
1989	55
1990	42
1991	31
1992	27

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many days the royal yacht Britannia was used for military manoeuvres in each year since 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the period in question HMY Britannia was not required to participate in military manoeuvres.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many sea-days the royal yacht Britannia was used for conferences and seminars to attract business for Britain in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMY Britannia hosted six such sea-days during the period in question, three in each year.

Royal Flight

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many flights were undertaken by the royal flight in 1991; and how many aircraft of what type are in the flight.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Queen's Flight undertook 1,220 passenger-carrying flights in 1991. The flight currently comprises three BAe 146-100 executive jet aircraft and two Wessex helicopters.

Parachute Training

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of training in first aid, and specifically in the symptoms of head injury, given to personnel involved in the supervision of service men and women undertaking parachute training.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All non-commissioned officer parachute training instructors are required to obtain a first aid certificate during basic training as a physical training instructor; this includes recognition of some forms of concussion.

Trainees have immediate access to fully qualified medical officers the moment they feel unwell and during all forms of parachute training a fully qualified medical attendant and ambulance are available at all times. Furthermore, individual trainees are instructed to report sick if they consider themselves unfit to continue further training.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Waste Exports

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *587*, if he will indicate *(a)* the type of waste sent to each country, *(b)* the ports utilised to transfer the waste, *(c)* the original producer of the waste within the United Kingdom, *(d)* the responsible authorities for each producer of waste and port of exit for waste exports and *(e)* the companies receiving the waste after its export.

Mr. Eggar: It is not possible to answer the question without disproportionate cost. However, a certain amount of the information is available in the public domain, and may be obtained from HM Customs and Excise through their appointed marketing agents. Broad statistics on exports of waste products are contained in Business Monitor (MM20)—"Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Plugs

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent statements his Department has made on the Plug and Socket (Safety) Regulations 1987 in respect of pre-fitted plugs; and when he expects to lay further regulations.

Mr. Leigh: Following my Department's review of the Plugs and Sockets (Safety) Regulations 1987, I announced on 30 January 1992 a proposal to revise these regulations and to include a requirement that domestic electrical appliances be supplied fitted with a correctly fused 13-amp plug. This matter is currently the subject of consultation.

No decision on the progress of the revised regulations can be taken until full consideration has been given to the responses received from the public consultation.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he is considering an application made under section 172 of the Insolvency Act for the removal of the liquidators of BCCI.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Representations have been made which ask that the liquidators be removed under the powers contained in section 172 of the Insolvency Act 1986 and these are being considered.

Computer Programmes Regulations

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has received from the EC Commission regarding the wording of the draft Copyright (Computer Programmes) Regulations 1992; and if it is his intention to reconsider the wording of the regulations;

(2) if the draft Copyright (Computer Programmes) Regulations 1992 meets all the requirements of the relevant EC directive.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* No representations have been received from the European Commission on the draft regulations laid before Parliament, but the wording of those regulations took account of representations from the Commission and from interests in the United Kingdom on an earlier, consultative draft. Following approval of the draft regulations by both Houses, they have been published as the Copyright (Computer Programs) Regulations 1992 (SI 1992 No. 3233). The Government consider that the regulations meet all the requirements of the relevant Council directive and have no plans to reconsider their wording.

Oilseed

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what current research projects are being undertaken by his Department to study the viability of producing oilseed for non-food uses, with particular reference to the development of bio-diesel.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* My Department has commissioned work at the energy technology support unit which assesses the economics of the production of oilseed rape and its conversion to bio-diesel. This review of the potential of bio-diesel as a transport fuel will be published shortly by HMSO.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has held with his European counterparts about the development of bio-diesel through the growth of oilseed; and if he will list the number of hectares devoted to oilseed growth specifically for the development of bio-diesel in each EC member state.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* I chaired the Council of Energy Ministers on 30 November 1992 which discussed a proposal for a decision concerning the promotion of renewable energy sources in the Community (ALTENER programme). The United Kingdom presidency secured political agreement to this programme which, inter alia, aims to secure for bio-fuels, such as bio-diesel, a market share of 5 per cent. of total consumption by motor vehicles by 2005. Bio-diesel can be derived from any oil-seed rape, thus areas grown specifically for bio-diesel cannot be separately indentified.

Logic Control Systems

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has received a report from the disqualification unit of the insolvency service following the move into receivership of Logic Control Systems of Clowne, Derbyshire, in July 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* The Insolvency Service, acting on behalf of the Secretary

of State for Trade and Industry, has responsibility for considering reports made by insolvency practitioners on the conduct of directors of failed companies to determine, with advice from lawyers as appropriate, whether it is expedient to bring disqualification proceedings. This process, with regard to Logic Control Systems Ltd, is continuing.

"Managing into the '90s"

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many workshops have been held in Wales as part of his Department's "Managing into the '90s" campaign to date; and how many are planned for 1993.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 25 January 1993]*: Since the launch of the "Managing into the '90s" programme in 1989 there have been 12 events held in Wales under the programme variously described as conferences, seminars and workshops. A further four are so far planned for 1993.

In addition, workshop-type activities occur in visits to demonstration companies—63 in the period 1989-92, with a further 43 planned for 1993—and at the presentations at the touring Strategy Roadshow—12 in the period 1989-92, with a further 16 so far planned for 1993.

Iraq

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) on 11 January, *Official Report*, column *555*, if he will supply the corresponding information about the export of machine tools to Iraq in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 18 January 1993]*: For ease of reference the information requested for the major countries supplying machine tools to Iraq from 1985 to 1990 is set out in the table:

G6 and Swiss exports of machine tools to Iraq 1985-1990

US$ 000s

	USA	*Japan*	*France*	*Germany*	*Italy*	*Switzerland*	*United Kingdom*
1990							
728·1	0	0	0	2,124	1,270	578	570
731	537	645	1,279	22,209	2,783	7,666	8,278
733	5,891	911	499	6,992	1,070	2,762	246
735	2,377	39	1,331	6,286	10,824	1,743	2,955
TOTAL	8,805	1,595	3,109	37,611	15,947	12,749	12,049
1989							
728·1	43	N/A	61	1,530	1,601	69	991
731	2,272	2,816	609	57,486	1,545	20,505	18,990
733	1,857	2,268	1,385	18,948	6,890	3,375	1,208
735	7,080	451	2,637	20,007	4,391	13,203	3,138
TOTAL	11,252	5,535	4,692	97,971	14,427	37,152	24,327
1988							
728·1	168	504	111	832	1,287	550	529
731	N/A	77	239	59,372	10,920	21,772	53,951
733	N/A	1,627	5,922	34,316	7,306	594	2,160
735	N/A	263	4,711	21,166	2,754	20,497	6,436
TOTAL	168	2,471	10,983	115,686	22,267	43,413	63,076
1987							
728·1	116	39	63	135	208	55	359
736[1]	33	1,991	1,161	16,740	5,244	13,871	5,130
TOTAL	149	2,030	1,224	16,875	5,432	13,926	5,489
1986							
728·1	294	15	117	674	1,040	10	334
736[1]	267	3,054	812	7,886	1,358	3,176	2,078
TOTAL	561	3,069	929	8,560	2,398	3,186	2,412
1985							
728·1	510	56	483	464	1,323	18	137
736[1]	50	2,903	3,915	10,578	3,090	3,902	5,249
TOTAL	560	2,959	4,398	11,042	4,413	3,920	5,386

Code	*Description*
728·1	Machine tools specialised for particular industries.
731	Machine tools operated by laser or other light beam process.
733	Forgoing or die-stamping machines (inc. presses) and hammers.
735	Tool holders and self-opening dieheads.
736	Metal working machine tools.

[1] SITC Rev 2—Replaced by codes 731, 733 and 735 from 1988 onwards.

Airline Bookings

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward proposals to require that bookings made and confirmed with airlines can be changed only on the personal instructions of the passenger.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

There are circumstances in which airlines have to change confirmed reservations for reasons beyond their control. The Government do not wish to introduce undue rigidities, but we are aware of cases in which passengers with confirmed reservations have been transferred to alternative flights before they have presented themselves for boarding, even though the flight on which they were booked had not been cancelled. Unlike passengers who are transferred at the check-in desk, such passengers are at present not entitled to compensation under EC law (Council Regulation (EEC) No. 295/91 on Denied Boarding Compensation).

My Department is looking into this matter to see whether a change to the EC regulation might be desirable and practicable.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is making official visits to India and Oman.

Population Conference

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister will be heading the British delegation to the European population conference to be held in Geneva in March; and which Government officials and experts will make up the British delegation to the conference.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

These matters have not yet been finally decided. An announcement will be made shortly.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Prime Minister if the country statement for Britain for the European population conference will be made available to hon. Members before the conference.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom country statement will be placed in the Library before the conference begins.

Agencies

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the latest up-to-date list of next steps agencies, together with a list of further agencies that it is intended to set up.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The information is as follows:

Next steps—executive agencies established to date

Agency	*Launch date*
Accounts Services Agency	1 October 1991
ADAS Agency	1 April 1992
Building Research Establishment	2 April 1990
Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)	2 April 1991
Central Office of Information	5 April 1990
Central Science Laboratory	1 April 1992
Central Statistical Office	19 November 1991
Central Veterinary Laboratory	2 April 1990
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment	2 April 1991
Civil Service College	6 June 1989
Companies House	3 October 1988
Compensation Agency	1 April 1992
Defence Analytical Services Agency	1 July 1992
Defence Operational Analysis Centre	1 July 1992
Defence Postal and Courier Services	1 July 1992
Defence Research Agency	2 April 1991
Directorate General of Defence Accounts	1 April 1991
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	2 April 1990
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency	1 April 1992
Driving Standards Agency	2 April 1990
Duke of York's Royal Military School	1 April 1992
DVOIT	1 April 1992
Employment Service	2 April 1990
Fire Service College	1 April 1992
Forensic Science Service	1 April 1991
Historic Royal Palaces	1 October 1889
Historic Scotland	2 April 1991
HMSO	14 December 1988
Hydrographic Office	6 April 1990
Insolvency Service	21 March 1990
Intervention Board	2 April 1990
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	30 October 1989
Land Registry	2 July 1990
Medicines Control Agency	11 July 1991
Meteorological Office	2 April 1990
Military Survey	2 April 1991
National Physical Laboratory	3 July 1990
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	18 April 1989
Natural Resources Institute	2 April 1990
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation	1 April 1992
NEL	5 October 1990
NHS Estates	1 April 1991
NHS Pensions	20 November 1992
Occupational Health Service	2 April 1990
Ordnance Survey	1 May 1990
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland	1 April 1992
Patent Office	1 March 1990
Planning Inspectorate	1 April 1992
Public Record Office	1 April 1992
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	6 July 1989
Queen Victoria School	1 April 1992
Radiocommunications Agency	2 April 1990
RAF Maintenance	2 April 1991
Rate Collection Agency	1 April 1991
Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency	2 April 1991
Registers of Scotland	6 April 1990
Royal Mint	2 April 1990
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency	1 April 1992
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	12 April 1991
Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)	24 April 1991
Social Security Agency (NI)	1 July 1991
Social Security Benefits Agency	2 April 1991
Social Security Contributions Agency	2 April 1991
Social Security Information Technology Services Agency	2 April 1990
Social Security Resettlement Agency	24 May 1989
Teachers' Pensions Agency	1 April 1992
The Buying Agency	31 October 1991
Training and Employment Agency (NI)	2 April 1990
Transport Research Laboratory	2 April 1992
United Kingdom Passport Agency	2 April 1991
Valuation Office	30 September 1991
Vehicle Certification Agency	2 April 1990
Vehicle Inspectorate	1 August 1988
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	2 April 1990
Warren Spring Laboratory	20 April 1989
Wilton Park Conference Centre	1 September 1991

Agency	Launch date
Customs and Excise (30 Executive Units)	1 April 1991
Inland Revenue (34 Executive Offices)	1 April 1992

Next Steps—activities announced by Ministers as candidates for agency status

Army Logistics
Chessington Computer Centre
Child Support Agency (NI)
Defence Animal Centre
Defence Central Services
Directorate Information Technology Bureau Services
Driver and Vehicle Licensing (NI)
Equipment Test and Valuation
Fisheries Research Services
Fuel Suppliers Branch
Her Majesty's Prison Service
Human Factors Research
Meat Hygiene Service
MOD Police
Naval Training and Recruitment
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys
Paymaster General's Office
Pesticide Safety Directorate
Property Division
Property Holdings Portfolio Management
RAF Training
Royal Parks
Scottish Office Superannuation Division
Scottish Prison Service
Social Security Child Support Agency
Surveyor General's Organisation
Transport and Security Services Division
Valuation and Lands Office (NI)
Youth Treatment Service

Treaty of Rome

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list each of the provisions of the treaty of Rome which confer on the institutions of the Community a power *(a)* to pass legislation by regulation or by directive or *(b)* to incur expenditure, binding on member states, indicating in each case where applicable the principal United Kingdom Government Departments and areas of policy involved; and if he will give the same information in respect of the treaty on European Union.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

It is clear from the wording of the articles of the treaty of Rome which of them authorise the Council or the Commission to adopt legislative measures. The same is true of the additional articles inserted into the treaty by title II of the treaty on European union. The articles do not, however, determine whether or not measures adopted under them are capable of involving expenditure from the Community budget. This depends on the nature of the individual measure concerned. Indeed, any measure is capable of having implications for the Community budget, even if only in terms of administrative costs. Nor is it possible to detail in advance which Government Departments will have principal responsibility for areas of Community legislation. This information is supplied in the explanatory memorandum submitted to Parliament in respect of each specific proposal for EC legislation.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Allowances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many case files for *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobility allowance and *(c)* disability living allowance were lost within the Benefits Agency handling system during 1992.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr David Hinchliffe, dated 25 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many claim files for *(a)* Attendance Allowance (AA), *(b)* Mobility Allowance (MobA) and *(c)* Disability Working Allowance (DWA) were lost within the Agency during 1992.

For AA and MobA I should explain that there are no central records available on the number of case files which are mislaid. I am sure you will appreciate, however, that when vast numbers of cases are being handled it may sometimes be difficult to locate a particular file immediately.

When files have been mislaid a special search is instigated as soon as possible so that the enquiry can be answered. If the procedures for locating mislaid files are unsuccessful a duplicate file is created and replacement evidence gathered to determine the claim with the aim of minimising any further delay.

The measures we have introduced to clear the backlog of AA claims have already reduced the number of outstanding cases to manageable proportions and location of files should be more straightforward in future.

There have been no instances of DWA case files being lost.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations his Department has had from the Alzheimer's Disease Society in regard to the independent living fund; what reply has been sent; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Department received a letter from Mr. Harry Cayton, the director of the Alzheimer's Disease Society, on 8 December 1992. We also received several letters from the Alzheimer's Disease Society (Scotland). Replies have been sent to all letters, explaining the new arrangements for independent living.

The principal concern raised in the letters is that of the restriction of the fund to new applicants aged between 16 and 65. This decision was taken in order that the fund could be targeted towards people whose usual pattern is to live and work in the community and who have therefore often lost the opportunity to earn and save.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what advice he has received from registered pools promoters about the effects of the National Lottery Bill on their business if enacted unaltered.

Mr. Brooke: Since the publication of the Bill, the pools companies have directed their concerns to the press.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what further research he has commissioned from the GAH Consulting Group since 7 October 1992, into the effects of a national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of pools turnover is retained by the promoters as profit after payment of pool betting duty and contributions to the Football Trust and Foundation for Sport and the Arts.

Mr. Brooke: That is a matter for the individual companies.

Press Regulation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has had from the Guild of Newspaper Editors in relation to the Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* We have received no representations from the Guild of British Newspaper Editors specifically relating to the Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill. But earlier this month the guild joined forces with the Newspaper Society to produce "*Blindfolding the Watchdog*", a pamphlet on freedom of the press, copies of which were sent to the Department.

EMPLOYMENT

European Works Council

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she next expects to discuss with other EC member states and the European Commission the proposed Council directive on the establishment of a European Works Council in Community-scale undertakings or groups of undertakings for the purposes of informing the counselling employees; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The proposed European works council directive has not been discussed by the Labour and Social Affairs Council of the European Community since December 1991. I am not aware of any plans for EC Ministers to discuss this proposal in the near future.

Equitable Wages

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions she has had with representatives of other EC member states and the European Commission on the proposed opinion on the introduction of an equitable wage by the member states; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The draft opinion is mainly concerned with improving the transparency of the labour market, removing discrimination and encouraging high skill, high productivity jobs in member states. The UK Government endorse these principles. However, the opinion will represent only the views of the European Commission and will have no legal force whatsoever. Member states do not have to endorse it or take any action that is not appropriate in light of their own circumstances. The Commission has not discussed the draft opinion with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or with other European Community Ministers.

Greenbank Project

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will visit the Greenbank project in Mossley Hill, Liverpool, to discuss the provisions of training places for disabled people on Merseyside.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to visit Liverpool in the near future.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what information she has concerning the percentage of the work force, whole-time equivalent, which is currently employed in manufacturing industry in *(a)* each member country of the European Community, *(b)* the United States of America and *(c)* Japan;

(2) what information she has concerning the percentage of the work force, whole-time equivalent, which is currently employed in the banking, finance and insurance industry in *(a)* each member country of the European Community, *(b)* the United States of America and *(c)* Japan;

(3) what information she has concerning the percentage of the work force, whole-time equivalent, which is currently employed in the construction industry in *(a)* each member country of the European Community, *(b)* the United States of America and *(c)* Japan.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not provide estimates of whole-time equivalents.

The information required is available from the civilian employment tables in "Labour Force Statistics 1970-1990" (OECD), a copy of which is in the Library. For Great Britain, the latest estimates for 1990 of civilian employment as a percentage of total civilian employment are as follows:

Great Britain: June 1990—not seasonally adjusted

	Per cent
Manufacturing	20.7
Banking, finance and insurance	12.2
Construction	6.9

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people, whole-time equivalent, have been employed in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available in *(a)* the construction industry, *(b)* manufacturing industry and *(c)* banking, finance and insurance industry; and what percentage of the total work force those figures represent in each of those years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not provide estimates of whole-time equivalents.

The available information is for Great Britain. Employees in employment data can be obtained from the

NOMIS database which is accessible from the Library. Historical data for self-employed people is available in the Library on page 54 of Historical Supplement No. 3, issued with the June 1992 edition of *Employment Gazette*. Recent estimates for the self-employed are as follows:

Self-employed people—Industrial Analysis: June 1992

Great Britain	*Thousand*
Construction	585
Manufacturing industries	279
Banking, Finance and insurance	416

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current United Kingdom figure for unemployment on the International Labour Organisation International basis.

Mr. McLoughlin: Estimates of unemployment on the ILO definition are available from the Department's labour force survey (LFS) which is conducted quarterly for Great Britain and annually for Northern Ireland. In addition the OECD uses the quarterly LFS estimates as benchmarks to calculate a monthly seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the United Kingdom on the ILO definition. The latest available information is as follows:

Labour Force Survey

	Spring 1992/Summer 1992			*OECD November 1992*
Level of unemployment (thousands)	*Great Britain*	*United Kingdom*	*Great Britain*	*United Kingdom*
Unadjusted	2,649	2,732	2,797	—
Seasonally adjusted	2,649	[1]—	2,758	—
Unemployment rate (percentage of the labour force)				
Unadjusted (per cent)	9·6	9·6	10·0	—
Seasonally adjusted (per cent.)	9·5	[1]—	9·9	10·5

[1] LFS figures for United Kingdom compiled at spring of each year only, therefore not seasonally adjusted.

Industrial Employment

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will make a statement outlining those steps which have been taken by her Department since 9 April 1992 specifically to encourage employment in the United Kingdom construction industry; and what future action she intends to take to assist the construction industry;

(2) if she will make a statement outlining those steps which have been taken by her Department since 9 April 1992 specifically to encourage employment in the United Kingdom manufacturing industry; and what future action she intends to take to assist the manufacturing industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: The overall policy of the Department is to promote a free and flexible labour market that is designed to help encourage employment in all sectors. In addition, the Department provides a range of employment and training programmes and local initiatives, through the employment service and training and enterprise councils to help people increase their skills, and equip themselves for work in all sectors including manufacturing. From April 1993 this range of measures is being enhanced and expanded.

Employment Training

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of people graduating from employment training courses have gone on to full-time work in each year since the scheme was set up.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information required is given in the following table:

Employment training: Great Britain
Full-time work—Three months after leaving
Trainees completing agreed training

Period of leaving	*In full-time work[2] Per cent.*
July 1989[1] to March 1990	35
April 1990 to March 1991	29
April 1991 to March 1992	26

Source: Employment Training National Follow-up Survey.
[1] First month follow-up results available.
[2] Including self-employment.

Disabled People

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to introduce an employment White Paper in respect of measures to revise and improve employment prospects for disabled people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A consultation paper will be issued as soon as possible following our review of the funding arrangements for the sheltered employment programme.

Unemployment Benefit Disqualification

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes Alyn and Deeside.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Barry Jones, dated 26 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the Alyn and Deeside area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Careers Service

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to increase the profile and the role of the careers service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: New legislation which opens up a range of options for management of careers services is proposed in clause 33 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill. These options are intended to make careers services more responsive to local needs and conditions.

The Government intend to set and ensure the meeting of challenging standards of service. Careful attention is being paid to the issue of quality in the context of the arrangements resulting from the new legislation.

Fraud

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people were prosecuted for fraud by her Department in the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) what is the number of whole time equivalent staff employed by her Department and its agencies to detect and prosecute suspected fraud; and what is the cost of their employment;

(3) how much her Department has saved from the investigation of fraud in the latest year for which figures are available; and what are the targeted savings for the next financial year.

Mr. McLoughlin *[pursuant to his answer, 28 October 1992, column 716]:* The chief executive of the Employment Service has written further to the hon. Member.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 26 February 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Questions about

(i) how many people were prosecuted for fraud by the Department in the latest year for which figures are available,

(ii) what is the number of whole time equivalent staff employed to detect and prosecute suspected fraud, and what is the cost of their employment,

(iii) how much the Department has saved from the investigation of fraud in the latest year for which figures are available, and what are the targeted savings for the next financial year.

Unfortunately our reply of 28 October contained a factual error about the cost of the fraud operation. The original reply quoted the half yearly cost which was £13·24 million, however, the total yearly cost of the operations was £21·54 million. The following reply now contains the correct information. Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience this has caused.

The latest year for which figures are available is that of the financial year ending 31 March 1992 during which a total of 2,265 people were prosecuted for fraud. We currently have 1,300 people, of whom 780 are Inspectors, employed in the detection and prosecution of benefit fraud. The total cost of our fraud operations amounted to £21·54 million. The net savings from our investigations into benefit fraud amounted to £34·34 million. We do not set targets for benefit savings accrued from benefit fraud investigation. Our performance is measured by the number of claims withdrawn following investigation by Inspectors and our target is for 58,000 such claims to be withdrawn by the end of the present financial year.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Community Care

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provisions are made for residential care and treatment for drug and alcohol misuse under the new community care arrangements to be introduced in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: From April 1993 the needs of drug and alcohol misusers in Northern Ireland will be met through revised community care arrangements. Health and social services boards will be responsible for assessing individual needs and for arranging appropriate care, including residential care, to meet that need. All care costs will be met from a board managed budget which will include the social security resources which would have been used to support people entering residential accommodation under existing arrangements. Services available to alcohol and drug misusers will not therefore be diminished as a result of the new arrangements for community care.

Child Care

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many day nurseries, playgroups or childminders have registered with each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: At 31 March 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, the information requested is as follows:

Type of Facility	*Number of Premises*
Eastern Board	
Day nursery	21
Pre-school play group	244
Child minding	2,231
Northern Board	
Day nursery	11
Pre-school play group	148
Childminding	874
Southern Board	
Day nursery	14

Type of Facility	Number of Premises
Pre-school play group	90
Child minding	373
Western Board	
Day nursery	9
Pre-school play group	102
Child minding	381
Total	4,498

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the new grant to support the start-up costs of new day care services for school age children will apply in Northern Ireland; who will be responsible for the administration of the grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The recently announced arrangements for Great Britain are presently being examined in the light of Northern Ireland's needs.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by area the number of day nurseries, play groups or childminders who have been refused registration by the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what actions have been taken by his Department in relation to the proposed electricity interconnector with Scotland.

Mr. Atkins: The decision to sign heads of agreement for an electricity interconnector to Scotland was taken by the board of Northern Ireland Electricity and being a major project the approval of the Department of Economic Development was obtained. NIE and the Department jointly submitted an application to the EC for funding under the structural funds programme.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications from *(a)* male and *(b)* female Roman Catholics were made for posts in the RUC and RUC Reserve in each year since1974; what was the percentage figure of all applications; what numbers were recruited; and what percentage this represents of the total recruited.

Mr. Mates: Comprehensive statistics about the religious composition of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary reserve, full time and part time, have been collected only since January 1990 when religious monitoring was introduced by the force.

The information available is set out in the following tables and is derived from information provided by applicants as to which schools they attended. This means that the figures provided are to some extent still based on perceptions. This form of monitoring is consistent with the requirements of the fair employment legislation.

Table 1
Applications and recruits to the Royal Ulster Constabulary from individuals perceived to be Roman Catholic

Year	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of total applications	Total applications
Applications					
1990	85	31	116	10·42	1,113
1991	128	63	191	11·21	1,704
1992	168	63	231	9·97	2,316
Recruits					
1990	10	3	13	7·14	182
1991	12	5	17	9·44	180
1992	30	9	39	9·26	421

Table 2
Applications and recruits to the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve (full-time) from individuals perceived to be Roman Catholic

Year	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of total applications	Total applications
Applications					
1990	60	7	67	9·01	744
1991	97	18	115	9·58	1,200
1992	140	35	175	9·27	1,888
Recruits				*Percentage of overall intake*	*Total intake*
1990	12	1	13	11·40	114
1991	21	2	23	12·30	187
1992	18	2	20	6·7	296

Table 3
Applications and recruits to the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve (part-time) from individuals perceived to be Roman Catholic

Year	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of total applications	Total applications
Applications					
1990	16	18	34	6·30	540
1991	15	8	23	5·57	413
1992	23	7	30	5·02	598
Recruits				*Percentage of overall intake*	*Total intake*
1990	7	2	9	7·96	113
1991	7	2	9	9·57	94
1992	1	1	2	2·78	72

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table of all ranks in the RUC and the RUC reserve for each year since 1974 indicating the total number and numbers of males and females in each rank, and the number of Roman Catholics, male and female, in each rank as a percentage and as an absolute figure.

Mr. Mates: Comprehensive statistics about the religious composition of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Ulster reserve, full time and part time, have been collected only since January 1990 when religious monitoring was introduced by the force.

The information available is as follows:

Table 1—Royal Ulster Constabulary

Year and rank	Male	Female	Total	Roman Catholics Number	Roman Catholics Percentage
1974					
ACPO	9	0	9	—	—
Chief superintendent	34	0	34	—	—
Superintendent	57	1	58	—	—
Chief inspector	89	3	92	—	—
Inspector	248	5	253	—	—
Sergeant	762	21	783	—	—
Constable	3,082	252	3,334	—	—
Totals	4,281	282	4,563	—	—
1975					
ACPO	10	0	10	—	—
Chief superintendent	35	0	35	—	—
Superintendent	64	1	65	—	—
Chief inspector	103	4	107	—	—
Inspector	275	4	279	—	—
Sergeant	799	22	821	—	—
Constable	3,263	322	3,585	—	—
Totals	4,549	353	4,902	—	—
1976					
ACPO	9	0	9	—	—
Chief superintendent	33	1	34	—	—
Superintendent	70	1	71	—	—
Chief inspector	107	4	111	—	—
Inspector	295	3	298	—	—
Sergeant	857	27	884	—	—
Constable	3,442	406	3,846	—	—
Totals	4,813	442	5,253	—	—
1977					
ACPO	10	0	10	—	—
Chief superintendent	33	1	34	—	—
Superintendent	75	2	77	—	—
Chief inspector	121	4	125	—	—
Inspector	319	4	323	—	—
Sergeant	921	32	953	—	—
Constable	3,661	509	4,170		
Totals	5,140	552	5,692		
1978					
ACPO	10	0	10	—	—
Chief superintendent	34	1	35	—	—

Year and rank	Male	Female	Total	Roman Catholics Number	Roman Catholics Percentage
Superintendent	93	2	95	—	—
Chief inspector	129	4	133	—	—
Inspector	347	5	352	—	—
Sergeant	989	35	1,024	—	—
Constable	3,893	568	4,461	—	—
Totals	5,495	615	6,110	—	—
1979					
ACPO	11	0	11	—	—
Chief superintendent	36	1	37	—	—
Superintendent	97	2	99	—	—
Chief inspector	138	4	142	—	—
Inspector	377	4	381	—	—
Sergeant	1,038	38	1,076	—	—
Constable	4,241	627	4,868	—	—
Totals	5,938	676	6,614	—	—
1980					
ACPO	12	0	12	—	—
Chief superintendent	36	1	37	—	—
Superintendent	113	2	115	—	—
Chief inspector	142	4	146	—	—
Inspector	401	5	406	—	—
Sergeant	1,112	46	1,158	—	—
Constable	4,408	653	5,061	—	—
Totals	6,224	711	6,935	—	—
1981					
ACPO	12	0	12	—	—
Chief superintendent	34	1	35	—	—
Superintendent	112	2	114	—	—
Chief inspector	140	3	143	—	—
Inspector	421	5	426	—	—
Sergeant	1,165	52	1,217	—	—
Constable	4,738	649	5,387	—	—
Totals	6,622	712	7,334		
1982					
ACPO	12	0	12	—	—
Chief superintendent	39	1	40	—	—
Superintendent	113	2	115	—	—
Chief inspector	150	3	153	—	—
Inspector	440	2	442	—	—
Sergeant	1,202	58	1,260	—	—
Constable	5,061	634	5,695	—	—
Totals	7,017	700	7,717	—	—
1983					
ACPO	12	0	12	—	—
Chief superintendent	38	1	39	—	—
Superintendent	114	2	116	—	—
Chief inspector	160	2	162	—	—
Inspector	450	2	452	—	—
Sergeant	1,237	60	1,297	—	—
Constable	5,317	608	5,925	—	—
Totals	7,328	675	8,003	—	—
1984					
ACPO	14	0	14	—	—
Chief superintendent	40	1	41	—	—
Superintendent	114	2	116	—	—
Chief superintendent	159	2	161	—	—
Inspector	459	2	461	—	—
Sergeant	1,226	61	1,287	—	—
Constable	5,475	572	6,047	—	—
Totals	7,487	640	8,127	—	—
1985					
ACPO	13	0	13	—	—
Chief superintendent	40	1	41	—	—

Year and rank	Male	Female	Total	Roman Catholics Number	Roman Catholics Percentage
Superintendent	114	2	116	—	—
Chief inspector	161	1	162	—	—
Inspector	479	2	481	—	—
Sergeant	1,235	69	1,304	—	—
Constable	5,568	574	6,142	—	—
Totals	7,610	649	8,259	—	—
1986					
ACPO	13	0	13	—	—
Chief superintendent	41	1	42	—	—
Superintendent	118	2	120	—	—
Chief inspector	160	1	161	—	—
Inspector	472	4	476	—	—
Sergeant	1,237	74	1,311	—	—
Constable	5,540	571	6,111	—	—
Totals	7,581	653	8,234	—	—
1987					
ACPO	13	0	13	—	—
Chief superintendent	38	2	40	—	—
Superintendent	120	0	120	—	—
Chief inspector	160	2	162	—	—
Inspector	465	9	474	—	—
Sergeant	1,250	73	1,323	—	—
Constable	5,545	559	6,104	—	—
Totals	7,591	645	8,236	—	—
1988					
ACPO	14	0	14	—	—
Chief superintendent	39	2	41	—	—
Superintendent	119	0	119	—	—
Chief inspector	160	2	162	—	—
Inspector	473	11	484	—	—
Sergeant	1,251	72	1,323	—	—
Constable	5,516	572	6,088	—	—
Totals	7,572	659	8,231	—	—
1989					
ACPO	13	0	13	—	—
Chief superintendent	39	2	41	—	—
Superintendent	119	0	119	—	—
Chief inspector	159	2	161	—	—
Inspector	468	14	482	—	—
Sergeant	1,299	72	1,371	—	—
Constable	5,474	598	6,072	—	—
Totals	7,571	688	8,259	—	—
1990					
ACPO	14	0	14	3	21·43
Chief superintendent	42	2	44	8	18·88
Superintendent	123	0	123	17	13·82
Chief inspector	159	2	161	22	13·66
Inspector	464	17	481	43	8·94
Sergeant	1,292	70	1,362	119	8·74
Constable	5,441	617	6,058	427	7·05
Totals	7,535	708	8,243	639	7·75
1991					
ACPO	14	0	14	3	21·43
Chief superintendent	43	1	44	7	15·91
Superintendent	119	0	119	16	13·45
Chief inspector	161	2	163	20	12·27
Inspector	461	21	482	42	8·71
Sergeant	1,311	69	1,380	124	8·99
Constable	5,405	615	6,020	423	7·03
Totals	7,514	708	8,222	635	7·72
1992					
ACPO	14	0	14	2	14·29
Chief superintendent	41	1	42	6	14·29

Year and rank	Male	Female	Total	Roman Catholics Number	Roman Catholics Percentage
Superintendent	121	1	122	17	13·93
Chief inspector	161	2	163	20	12·27
Inspector	467	22	489	45	9·20
Sergeant	1,324	75	1,399	125	8·93
Constable	5,500	661	6,161	438	7·11
Totals	7,628	762	8,390	653	7·78

Note: ACPO denotes all ranks of Assistant Chief Constable and above.

Table 2
Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve (Full-time)

Year and rank	Male	Female	Total	Roman Catholics Number	Roman Catholics Percentage
1974 Constable	496	14	510	—	—
1975 Constable	612	49	661	—	—
1976 Constable	816	54	870	—	—
1977 Constable	956	46	1,002	—	—
1978 Constable	1,148	40	1,188	—	—
1979 Constable	1,262	43	1,305	—	—
1980 Constable	1,649	36	1,685	—	—
1981 Constable	2,045	15	2,060	—	—
1982 Constable	2,167	6	2,173	—	—
1983 Constable	2,295	0	2,295	—	—
1984 Constable	2,533	0	2,533	—	—
1985 Constable	2,755	0	2,755	—	—
1986 Constable	2,753	0	2,753	—	—
1987 Constable	2,983	4	2,987	—	—
1988 Constable	2,963	30	2,993	—	—
1989 Constable	2,980	30	3,018	—	—
1990 Constable	2,945	45	2,990	163	5·45
1991 Constable	2,980	62	3,042	177	5·82
1992 Constable[1]	3,070	114	3,184	189	5·94

[1] To 27 November 1992.

Table 3—Royal Ulster Constabulary reserve (part-time)

Year and rank	Male	Female	Total	Roman Catholics Numbers	Roman Catholics Percentage
1974 Constable	2,896	454	3,350	—	—
1975 Constable	3,477	681	4,158	—	—
1976 Constable	3,148	679	3,827	—	—
1977 Constable	3,009	675	3,684	—	—
1978 Constable	2,753	664	3,417	—	—
1979 Constable	2,562	647	3,209	—	—
1980 Constable	2,474	593	3,067	—	—
1981 Constable	2,304	506	2,810	—	—
1982 Constable	2,217	449	2,666	—	—
1983 Constable	1,810	388	2,198	—	—
1984 Constable	1,5709	337	1,907	—	—
1985 Constable	1,444	309	1,753	—	—
1986 Constable	1,373	287	1,660	—	—
1987 Constable	1,338	31	1,659	—	—
1988 Constable	1,305	356	1,661	—	—
1989 Constable	1,219	387	1,606	—	—
1990 Constable	1,152	404	1,556	60	3·86
1991 Constable	1,088	429	1,517	62	4·09
1992 Constable[1]	1,021	419	1,440	56	3·89

[1] To 27 November 1992.

WALES

Trauma Treatment Centres

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospitals in Wales designated as major trauma treatment centres indicating which of them have *(a)* intensive care units and *(b)* resuscitation units.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: At present there are no designated major trauma treatment centres in Wales, within the definition of the Royal College of Surgeons report on the management of patients with major injuries in November 1988.

A decision on whether to designate such a Welsh centre will be made once the results of the pilot project in England are evaluated.

Disability

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is currently undertaken by his Department to monitor the application by social services departments of the sections within the Children Act 1989 and the subsequent guidance notes relating to disability issues in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The social services inspectorate, Wales, published in October 1992 the report of a survey conducted in August 1991 "Organisation of Social Services for Children with a Disability", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The inspectorate proposes to hold a follow-up workshop for local authority staff in the early part of this year. Social services departments' reports on inter-agency collaboration under the Children Act, including services to children in need who are disabled, have begun to arrive in the Welsh Office in response to the request for such returns in the Department's circular 26/91. A summary of the information provided by authorities will appear in a future report to Parliament under section 83(6) of the Act.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of additional resources have been granted to social services departments in Wales to enable them to carry out obligations relating to disability issues laid out in the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authorities' responsibilities under the Children Act are taken into account in setting standard spending assessments as part of the annual local government revenue settlement. These resources are not hypothecated to individual services. In addition, a specific grant was introduced to support the training of staff to implement the Act's provisions. Grant available for that purpose was £200,000 in 1990-91 and £240,000 in 1991-92 and is included within the child care staff training grant of £635,000 for 1992-93.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been allocated by his Department to publicise the Children Act 1989 and the relevant guidance notes to organisations of and for disabled people in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Some £70,000 has been spent on guidance about the Children Act—including volume 6 on children with disabilities—which was distributed free of charge to local authorities and relevant voluntary organisations in Wales.

Oral Hygiene

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to make children aware of the importance of oral hygiene.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The protocol for investment in health gain covering oral health issued in November 1992 contained many challenging targets to secure health gain in this area. One of the targets specifically aimed at children is that:

"Family Health Service authorities and health authorities will by 1997 be able to report that at least 50 per cent. of children by the age of 5 have an understanding of basic oral health principles and at least 75 per cent. by 2002."

This advice is being taken forward in the local strategies for health prepared jointly by those authorities in collaboration with others.

The Health Promotion Authority for Wales is presently developing a health promotion resource entitled "Cledwyn's Castle" aimed at pre-school children. The package is currently being produced following extensive testing. One module of the programme covers dental health which includes oral hygiene. The authority has also held a symposium on dental health education in the national curriculum. A further symposium is expected to be held in the forthcoming financial year. These aim to ensure that consistent advice is given within the curriculum. A range of dental health promotion literature is available from the authority.

The Department is also providing financial support for Pembrokeshire NHS trust community dental service to carry out two pilot projects aimed at improving the oral health of children. The first aims to produce cross-curriculum health promotion materials in both English and Welsh for each attainment target group in primary education. The second project aims to produce materials which can be used in each season of the year in playgroups.

Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of houses built by local authorities, housing associations and the private sector in 1979, 1990, 1991 and 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information is published in "Welsh Housing Statistics Volume 12", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Graduate Engineers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy for funding for postgraduate study for graduate engineers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The funding that we are making available to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales includes provision for postgraduate study within higher education in Wales. In addition, the Science and Engineering Research Council makes discretionary awards availble to postgraduate students in the engineering field.

Used Motor Oil

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the waste disposal authorities in Wales which currently provide no facilities for the collection of used motor oil from the public.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not maintained centrally.

Valleys Initiative

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the design and printing contract for the valleys initiative leaflets was put out to tender; if the tender was advertised as an open competition; how many firms made bids; and if the winning bid was the lowest tender.

Mr. David Hunt: Time available for the production of the original publicity material in 1988 for the valleys initiative was very limited. The companies which carried

out the printing and design work, and which also did subsequent revisions of the publicity material, were not selected by competitive tender.

Publicity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was his total expenditure on each of *(a)* exhibitions, *(b)* leaflet design, production and distribution, *(c)* stationery supplies and general publicity for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 2 June 1992. Records do not enable expenditure on leaflet design, production and distribution to be separately identified.

Figures for expenditure on stationery are not available for the years 1981-82 to 1985-86. Figures for expenditure on exhibitions cannot be disaggregated for the years 1981-82 to 1989-90. Expenditure for succeeding years is set out in the following table.

£000

	Stationery	*Exhibitions*
1986-87	205·6	n/a
1987-88	260·9	n/a
1988-89	301·9	n/a
1989-90	340·1	n/a
1990-91	353·0	193·4
1991-92	446·0	96·2

Mr. Roy Bichen

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *198*, if he was aware of the legal action being taken against Mr. Roy Bichen in the United States of America when he appointed him deputy chairman of the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have nothing to add to the answer which I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 19 January at column *198*.

Contracts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the 10 largest design, printing, publicity or stationery supply contracts awarded by his Department since 1 April 1988 and the names and business addresses of the suppliers.

Mr. David Hunt: Records are kept in a form which would not enable this information to be extracted except at disproportionate cost.

Charter Contracts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what dates contracts for designing and printing the leaflets for the patients charter and parents charter were put out to tender; on what dates and in which publications the tender was advertised; how many design and printing companies were invited to tender; and if the winning bid was the lowest tender.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Design work

Tenders were invited for the parents charter on 23 August 1991 and the specification was revised on 6 September 1991. Three companies submitted prices and work was commissioned from the firm which offered the lowest hourly price. Work for the similarly designed patients charter was undertaken within one month by the same company on the basis of the hourly charge quoted for the parents charter.

Printing work

Printing contracts were managed by the Central Office of Information. Quotations were invited for the patients charter on 1 October 1991 and the specification was revised on 2 October 1991 and 21 October 1991. Eleven printing firms were invited to quote and the work was awarded to the company offering the lowest price. Quotations were invited for the parents charter on 12 September 1991. The specification was revised on 19 September 1991 and a revised tender issued on 30 September 1991. Eight printing firms were invited to quote. The company offering the lowest price proposed a printing process which required a "web" or roll of paper which was not immediately available; the tender was awarded to the company offering the lowest price for printing on normal paper sheets.

It is not normal practice to advertise tenders for work of this type and value.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm Employees

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of people employed full time in the farming industry in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Curry: The number of people employed full-time on agricultural holdings in England as at June for each of the last 10 years is shown in the table.

People employed full-time on Agricultural holdings in England as at June of each year[1]

thousands

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Salaried managers[2]	6·6	6·7	7·1	7·1	7·0	7·0	6·9	7·2	7·1	7·0
Whole-time regular hired workers	113·0	108·0	104·0	96·6	91·5	87·3	84·1	81·5	77·5	74·2
Seasonal or casual workers[2]	78·4	75·8	76·7	75·7	74·1	73·1	68·6	70·6	67·2	66·8
TOTAL workers	198·0	190·5	187·8	179·4	172·5	167·4	159·6	159·3	151·9	148·0

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Whole-time farmers, partners, directors (doing farm work)	132·9	131·7	129·8	128·7	126·7	124·5	122·4	118·9	115·0	113·9
TOTAL	330·9	322·2	317·6	308·2	299·2	291·2	282·0	278·3	266·9	261·9

[1] Spouses of farmers, partners, directors are excluded. Family workers without a contract of employment are also excluded.
[2] All salaried managers and seasonal or casual workers are included. The numbers of these which are full-time are not known.

Inshore Fishing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received, and from whom, against the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Carriage of Monofilament Gill Nets) (Scotland) Order 1986.

Mr. Curry: I received recently representations from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations drawing attention to their continued concern about the effect of the order, which prohibits the carriage or use of monofilament gill nets within six miles of Scotland by any United Kingdom fishing vessel, on the Grimsby gill net fleet. I replied on 15 January 1993.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the net farm income figures for *(a)* English, *(b)* Welsh, *(c)* Scottish and *(d)* Northern Irish hill livestock farm enterprises over the past five years for which figures are available, at constant prices, shown as a percentage of full-time manual earnings for the United Kingdom for the same period.

Mr. Curry: Net farm income is not a measure of farmers' cash earnings which in general will be higher. It is not, therefore, comparable with the average earnings of manual workers. The following table shows the latest estimates of the level of farm income for each accounting year since 1988-89 and the average earnings of full-time adult manual workers as at April each year in nominal terms and deflated by the retail prices index.

£ thousand per year

		1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93[1]
Net farm income on hill and upland livestock farms						
Nominal terms	England	12·4	8·0	5·9	10·0	11·0
	Wales	14·3	8·8	7·6	11·7	13·9
	Scotland[2]	11·0	8·9	8·6	8·2	8·9
	Northern Ireland	5·9	3·1	2·9	3·8	6·1
United Kingdom full-time adult manual earnings						
Nominal terms (April each year)		9·7	10·6	11·5	12·2	12·9
Net farm income on hill and upland livestock farms						
Real terms[3]	England	12·4	7·4	5·0	8·0	8·5
	Wales	14·3	8·2	6·4	9·4	10·8
	Scotland[2]	11·0	8·2	7·3	6·6	6·9
	Northern Ireland	5·9	2·9	2·4	3·0	4·7
United Kingdom full-time adult manual earnings						
Real terms[3] (April each year)		9·7	9·8	9·7	9·8	10·0

[1] Forecast.
[2] Average for LFA mainly sheep, LFA mainly cattle and LFA mainly cattle and sheep.
[3] Deflated by RPI (March 1988 to February 1989 = 100).

Hill Farming

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the subsidy and price support available to hill farming enterprises over the last five years for which figures are available; and how they have varied in value at constant prices in relation to farm input costs and retail prices index over the same period.

Mr. Curry: The figures on the following table show the information requested for the direct livestock subsidies available to hill farmers. Support for beef producers has also been available through intervention during this period, but it is not possible to apportion this to hill farmers.

Rates of subsidies available to hill farmers—United Kingdom

£/head

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Current prices					
Sheep					
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances					
SDA Sheep (higher rate)	6·75	6·75	7·50	8·75	8·75
SDA Sheep (lower rate)	4·50	4·50	4·50	4·90	4·90
DA	2·25	2·25	2·25	2·45	2·45
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme[1]	6·11	6·94	9·88	12·91	[2]17·25

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
LFA supplement to SAPS	—	—	—	3·12	[2]5·78
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg (dead weight)[1]	58·76	45·37	41·39	63·36	[3]—
Beef					
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances					
SDA	54·50	54·50	54·50	63·30	63·30
DA	27·25	27·25	27·25	31·65	31·65
Suckler Cow Premium[1]	33·40	47·43	51·69	59·64	59·64
Beef Special Premium[4,5]	—	29·19	31·81	31·81	35·90
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg [1,6]					
Dead weight	16·09	18·50	—	—	—
Live weight	8·73	9·95	—	—	—
1988 prices—deflated by Agricultural Input Prices Index					
Sheep					
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances					
SDA Sheep (higher rate)	6·75	6·36	6·79	7·62	7·44
SDA Sheep (lower rate)	4·50	4·24	4·07	4·27	4·17
DA	2·25	2·12	2·04	2·13	2·08
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme[1]	6·11	6·54	8·95	11·24	[2]14·67
LFA supplement to SAPS	—	—	—	2·72	[2]4·92
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg (dead weight)[1]	58·76	42·77	37·48	55·18	[3]—
Beef					
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances					
SDA	54·50	51·38	49·35	55·13	53·84
DA	27·25	25·69	24·67	27·57	26·92
Suckler Cow Premium[1]	33·40	44·71	46·80	51·94	50·73
Beef Special Premium[4,6]	—	27·52	28·80	27·71	30·54
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg[1,6]					
Dead weight	16·09	17·44	—	—	—
Live weight	8·73	9·38	—	—	—
1988 prices—deflated by Retail Prices Index					
Sheep					
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances					
SDA Sheep (higher rate)	6·75	6·26	6·36	7·01	6·75
SDA Sheep (lower rate)	4·50	4·17	3·81	3·92	3·78
DA	2·25	2·09	1·91	1·96	1·89
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme[1]	6·11	6·44	8·37	10·34	[2]13·31
LFA supplement to SAPS	—	—	—	2·50	[2]4·46
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg (dead weight)[1]	58·76	42·08	35·07	50·74	—
Beef					
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances					
SDA	54·50	50·55	46·18	50·69	48·82
DA	27·25	25·27	23·09	25·34	24·41
Suckler Cow Premium[1]	33·40	43·99	43·80	47·76	46·00
Beef Special Premium[4,5]	—	27·07	26·95	25·48	27·69
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg[1,6]					
Dead weight	16·09	17·16	—	—	—
Live weight	8·73	9·23	—	—	—

[1] GB figures.
[2] Estimate for 1992. Final instalment to be paid in spring 1993.
[3] Sheep Variable Premium Scheme phased out in 1991.
[4] Figure as at December each year.
[5] Beef Special Premium Scheme started 1st April 1989.
[6] Beef Variable Premium Scheme ended March 1989

Bananas

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of whether the agreement on bananas reached at the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 17 December 1992 will be carried through and agreed unchanged by the Council by 1 March.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking with the Danish Presidency and other Community members to ensure that the agreement on bananas reached in December 1992 should be carried forward along with the new single market regime for bananas; and what representations he had received from Caribbean Governments on this issue.

Mr. Curry: I understand that the Danish presidency will invite the Agriculture Council on 9-10 February to consider a complete text of the proposed common regime for bananas which incorporates the external trade provisions agreed by the Council under the United Kingdom presidency. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has had extensive contacts with a wide range of Caribbean interests about bananas.

School Milk

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the EC subsidy for school milk will continue after March 1994.

Mr. Curry: The Commission has indicated that it has no plans to end the EC subsidy on school milk after March 1994.

Tenant Farmers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to alter the legislation regarding tenant farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) on 3 December 1992 at column *368*.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on farm incomes.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to the reply 5 November 1992, column 340-41]:* A brief summary of the provisional estimates of income, output and productivity of United Kingdom agriculture in 1992 is set out in three tables which I have placed in the Library of the House. I am pleased to say that the forecasts of income show a welcome recovery in real terms from the downward trend in recent years.

Real total income from farming, after declining during the 1980s, rose by more than 10 per cent. in 1992. Moreover, this was from a higher level for 1991 than was predicted this time last year. This has been a difficult period for farmers and we should not overstate this improvement, however welcome. But now that the reform of the CAP has been decided and a number of other uncertainties, such as the future of the agrimonetary system resolved, I believe that farmers will be able to build on these results and plan for the future with more confidence.

In detail, the figures show the following changes relative to 1991:

the values of the industry's gross output and gross input at current prices have risen by 2·3 per cent. and 1·4 per cent. respectively, largely as a result of price rises in both cases. The volume of the industry's output, as indicated by gross output at constant prices, has risen by 0·5 per cent. while the volume of the industry's gross input has fallen by 1·0 per cent. These changes have resulted in increases of 3·2 per cent. in gross product and 5·2 per cent. in net product, at current prices;

with the continued decline in interest rates the industry's interest charges fell by a further 16·1 per cent. However, although the number of farm workers continued to fall, the total cost of hired labour rose by 1·4 per cent.;

as a result of these changes total income from farming, representing the total income from agriculture of farmers, partners, directors and their spouses and family workers, is forecast to have risen by 15·5 per cent. or by 11·4 per cent. expressed in real terms (deflating by the retail prices index). Farming income, which covers only farmers and their spouses, is forecast to have risen by 23·6 per cent. or by 19·2 per cent. in real terms;

the two corresponding measures of cash flow, which may reflect more closely the variations perceived by farmers and farm households, show much smaller increases between 1991 and 1992. Cash flow for the wider group is forecast to have risen by 3·6 per cent., while that for farmers and their spouses has risen by 3·8 per cent. In real terms however, these measures have remained virtually unchanged since 1991;

the industry's productivity has continued to rise. The index of gross product per whole-time man equivalent is forecast to have risen by 3·8 per cent. over the last year and by 47·7 per cent. over the last decade. However, this index does not take into account changes in inputs other than labour. An alternative measure, gross output per unit of all inputs, is forecast to have risen by 3·3 per cent. over the last year and by 23·9 per cent. over the last decade;

Incomes were higher on most types of farm over the last year though, as usual, there was some variation in the fortune of different types of farm throughout the United Kingdom. The net farm income on dairy farms has risen and higher levels of subsidy have contributed to increases on most hill and upland livestock farms over the past two years. However, on lowland livestock farms there is considerable variation between different parts of the country and from year to year, with farms having a higher proportion of cattle than sheep tending to perform better. Cropping farms, particularly those specialising in cereals, have benefited from higher output prices. The intensive livestock sector has been affected by low egg prices and increasing feed costs which have almost offset the effects of higher pigmeat prices.

The tables also contain revised estimates for 1991. These show that total income from farming rose in 1991 by 4·3 per cent. rather than fell by 6 per cent.—the forecast last year. Similarly, farming income is now estimated to have risen by 1·1 per cent. in 1991, against last year's forecast of a fall of 14 per cent.

More detailed information will be contained in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1992" which this year will be available in March. This change in the month of publication is designed to improve the quality of the forecasts for the latest year. "Farm incomes in the United Kingdom 1991-1992", which contains details for individual farm types and aggregate dates for each country of the United Kingdom, will also be available in March.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Service

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the costs incurred in cancelling the contract for the new prison service headquarters in Derby.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It will not be possible to assess the full cost of cancelling the development agreement for the new prison service headquarters until the developer's claim for compensation has been examined and discussed with him. This is likely to take some time. We have spent a little over £11·5 million so far.

Gambling

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the per capita spending on gambling in other EC countries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No figures on net consumer expenditure on gambling—that is, amount staked less winnings—in other EC countries is held by the

Department. However, a report published by the European Commission in July 1992, "Gambling in the Single Market—A study of the current legal and market situation", contained estimates for gross expenditure—that is amount staked—in each member state in 1989. The figures expressed on a per capita basis are as follows:

Country	Estimated gross turnover ECU (million)	£ (million)[1]	Population[2] (million)	Turnover/ head/year £
Belgium	1,032	693	9·9	70·0
Denmark	343	230	5·1	45·1
France	9,254	6,217	56·0	111·0
Germany	9,269	6,227	61·7	100·9
Greece	996	669	10·0	66·9
Ireland	588	395	3·5	112·9
Italy	2,565	1,723	57·5	30·0
Luxembourg	78	52	0·4	130·0
Netherlands	315	212	14·8	14·3
Portugal	525	353	10·3	34·3
Spain	7,781	5,227	38·9	134·4
United Kingdom	13,111	8,808	57·2	154·0

[1] £1 = 1·4886 ECU (1989 average).
[2] Estimates 1989.

These figures should be treated with caution for two reasons. First, the authors of the report pointed to the difficulty in obtaining reliable information on gambling turnover. Secondly, it is in the nature of gambling that, because there are winning as well as losing bets, any sum of money may be gambled several times over before it is lost. Consequently, the total amount staked is not a reliable guide to actual consumer expenditure.

Crime, Northumbria

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many house burglaries were reported in Blyth Valley in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992; and what was the crime detection rate for house burglary in Blyth Valley in each of those years;

(2) what was the total number of crimes committed in Blyth Valley in each year since 1983.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not collected centrally for the Blyth Valley area.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes involving the use of firearms have been committed in Blyth Valley and in the Northumbria police area in the last five years.

Mr. Jack: Information is not available centrally on the number of crimes in Blyth Valley. The number of notifiable offences recorded by the Northumbria police in which firearms were reported to have been used was:

	Number
1987	387
1988	319
1989	472
1990	447
1991	448

Prevention of Terrorism

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average detention time of persons held without charge in Great Britain under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in each year since 1974.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information which is readily available dates from 1979 and is as follows:

Average time for which persons were detained without charge under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Great Britain

	Hours
1979	33
1980	32
1981	37
1982	31
1983	36
1984	37
1985	37
1986	35
1987	34
1988	27
1989	25
1990	24
1991	24
1992	21

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been *(a)* charged and *(b)* detained in Great Britain under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in each year since 1974.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Information on the numbers detained and charged in Great Britain under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act is published quarterly in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin, "Statistics on the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism legislation", copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been excluded from mainland United Kingdom under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in each year since 1974.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Information on the number of exclusion orders made in Great Britain under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act is published quarterly in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin, "Statistics on the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism legislation", copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons are at present excluded from mainland United Kingdom under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There are at present 80 individuals excluded from Great Britain under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had with regard to the Prevention of Terrorism Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received representations on this subject on many occasions, both from Members of this House and from the public. On 19 January, column *142*, I invited interested parties to submit written observations by 5 February to Viscount Colville of Culross who is currently conducting the annual review of the Act. The House will shortly have the opportunity to debate the Act when it is laid before Parliament for renewal.

Child Abuse

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to amend the law in potential child abuse cases when it is impossible to determine which parent was responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Government have no current plans to amend the law in this area. The privilege against self-incrimination, which may sometimes be a relevant factor in cases of this kind, is, however, a matter within the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice and the Government will wish to consider carefully any general recommendations the commission may make concerning that privilege.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many records are permanently retained by the security services only for the purpose of resolving complaints, concerning the content of the record, made under the Security Service Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not the practice to disclose such information which is, in any event, not readily available because of changes in record-keeping procedures by the security service in order to meet the needs of the Complaints Tribunal and the Security Service Act.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* business frauds, *(b)* cheque, credit and cash card frauds, *(c)* thefts from companies, *(d)* thefts from employees, *(e)* offences of shoplifting, *(f)* offences of vandalism against business and *(g)* assaults at the work place were committed (i) in England and Wales and (ii) in each police force area in 1991.

Mr. Jack: The only available information for notifiable offences is contained in the table. The British crime survey provides an estimate of some 350,000 assaults which occurred at the work place in 1991, many of which will have been between co-workers. There were about 80,000 incidents said to be because of the nature of the work being undertaken, most of them perpetrated by clients and customers.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area England and Wales 1991

Police force area	*Theft by an employee*	*Theft from shops*	*Fraud by a company director*
Avon and Somerset	641	6,625	0
Bedfordshire	152	2,417	0
Cambridgeshire	186	4,822	0
Cheshire	484	4,248	0
Cleveland	124	3,263	2
Cumbria	101	4,531	0
Derbyshire	207	3,860	0
Devon and Cornwall	392	7,087	0
Dorset	381	2,865	3
Durham	219	2,683	0
Essex	356	7,424	1
Gloucestershire	173	8,320	0
Greater Manchester	708	18,547	0
Hampshire	750	8,959	1
Hertfordshire	260	4,125	0
Humberside	345	7,729	0
Kent	410	9,218	0
Lancashire	510	6,022	1
Leicestershire	233	3,752	0
Lincolnshire	168	5,659	0
City of London	76	281	0
Merseyside	328	9,351	0
Metropolitan Police District	3,168	31,765	10
Norfolk	209	4,616	1
Northamptonshire	174	2,895	0
Northumbria	411	10,595	0
North Yorkshire	205	5,119	0
Nottinghamshire	399	8,653	1
South Yorkshire	334	6,382	0
Staffordshire	423	4,778	3
Suffolk	358	4,309	0
Surrey	292	2,280	0
Sussex	699	7,948	0
Thames Valley	640	11,009	1
Warwickshire	95	1,692	0
West Mercia	142	5,451	0
West Midlands	562	12,911	0
West Yorkshire	954	11,335	0
Wiltshire	194	3,262	0
Dyfed-Powys	103	2,158	0
Gwent	146	2,768	0
North Wales	187	2,478	0
South Wales	365	7,084	0
England and Wales	17,264	281,276	24

Fines

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the unit fine system introduced under the Criminal Justice Act 1991; if he will list the drawbacks or unfair effects that have been indentified by practical experience of the operation of the Act; and what steps he intends to take to ensure that the system operates with increased fairness and efficiency.

Mr. Jack: The unit fine scheme was successfully trailed before its full scale introduction in all magistrates' courts on 1 October 1992. Full details of the pilot project are given in Home Office Research Paper 59 in 1990. It is too early to make any meaningful assessment of its effectiveness nationally, but the scheme is being closely monitored.

Seized Assets Fund

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on how much money is in the seized assets fund; where the money has been spent to date; and where it will be targeted in future.

Mr. Jack: A total of £3·2 million has been distributed from the seized assets fund in 1992-93, the first year of its operation, to enforcement agencies and a variety of individual projects directed against drug misuse. We are considering the possibility of further funding being made available from this source for similar purposes during the next financial year. The final amount available to the fund for distribution will depend on the success of international operations to confiscate the assets of drug traffickers.

Drug-related Crimes

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of people serving prison sentences for drug-related crimes in total, and as a percentage of all prisoners, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Figures for the population in Prison Service establishments by offence group are published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales", Table 1.8 of the Volume for 1990 (CM1800). Provisional figures for 30 June 1991 show that 2,850 prisoners were recorded centrally as being sentenced for drug offences, nearly 10 per cent. of the total sentenced population for which an offence was recorded.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the seizures of class A drugs made in the last full 12-month period for which figures are available by weight and as a percentage increase on the previous year.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is contained in Table 2.4 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Statistics of Drugs Seizures and Offenders Dealt With, United Kingdom, 1991", a copy of which is in the Library. There was a 27 per cent. percentage increase in the weight of class A drugs seized in 1991 over 1990 excluding LSD and MDMA ("Ecstasy"). From 1991 onwards only dosages have been recorded for LSD and MDMA, and thus no comparable figures are available.

Criminal Justice

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will introduce legislation to amend section 10 of the Criminal Justice Act 1987 to enable judges to direct, where appropriate, that the prosecution's notice to admit facts, and a defendent's response to it, should be put before the jury; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to allow the prosecution to present the jury with a short document briefly setting out their case before the commencement of a long fraud trial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Lord Chancellor's Department, the Home Office and the legal secretariat to the Law Officers issued a consultation paper on 3 December 1992, seeking views on a number of proposals for reducing the length of some criminal trials, particularly those involving fraud. These include a proposal that case statements should be provided to the jury, by both the prosecution and the defence. Such case statements would aim to clarify the issues involved before the commencement of a trial. The consultation paper also seeks views on the effectiveness of preparatory hearings in fraud trials and the need to provide greater assistance to the jury in understanding the case.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to create a general fraud offence to cover those types of fraudulent conduct which are not adequately caught by the existing scheme of substantive offences and to replace the existing common law offence of conspiracy to defraud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We are not aware of deficiencies in the substantive criminal law in this area and as a consequence have no plans to amend it.

HEALTH

Homerton Hospital, Hackney

12. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she next plans to visit Homerton hospital, Hackney to discuss health needs in Hackney.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have visited all the main hospitals serving Hackney in recent weeks including two visits to both the Homerton and St. Bartholomew's.

NHS Trusts

13. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has received of the response of patients to NHS trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A survey of patient satisfaction in eight trust hospitals, commissioned by the Central Office of Information, showed that 96 per cent. of patients were satisfied with the quality of service they had received, 48 per cent. felt that the service had improved and 44 per cent. felt that the service had remained the same.

20. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last met representatives of North East Thames regional health authority to discuss progress in establishing NHS trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have regular meetings with all regional health authority chairmen at which many issues, including national health service trusts, are discussed. The last meeting took place on Wednesday 20 January.

26. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effects on patients of the introduction of national health service trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the first 12 months of the reforms, the number of patients treated in the national health service as a whole increased by 7·2 per cent. In trust units the increase was 8·2 per cent. Waiting time figures for the first wave trusts show that in the six months to March 1992

trusts reduced their numbers of over one year waiters by nearly 60 per cent. compared with just 50 per cent. in directly managed units.

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals or units became national health service trusts in *(a)* April 1991 and *(b)* April 1992; how many will become trusts in April 1993; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Fifty-seven national health service trusts became operational from 1 April 1991 and a further 99 from 1 April 1992. The 133 third wave trusts already announced will become operational from 1 April 1993 bringing the total to 289. This confirms that trusts are clearly the right way to manage hospitals and with each successive wave, enthusiasm and support among management, medical staff and patients themselves is increasing.

Hospitals (Bed Closures)

14. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital beds were temporarily closed in the three months October to December 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The health service measures performance by patients treated not number of beds. More patients are being treated than ever before and long waiting times are coming down. These are achievements to be proud of.

Tomlinson Report

15. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the total cost of implementing the Tomlinson report for *(a)* the reconfiguration of remaining hospitals, *(b)* the cost of redundancy payments, *(c)* the cost of primary care facilities and *(d)* the cost of retraining and redeployment of staff.

16. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates have been made of the range of possible costs relating to redundancies arising from implementation of all or part of the Tomlinson report.

23. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the total costs of Government proposals for implementing the Tomlinson report for *(a)* reconfiguration of remaining hospitals, *(b)* cost of redundancy payments, *(c)* cost of primary care facilities and *(d)* cost of retraining and redeployment of staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: We intend to make a statement on the future of the health service in London shortly. This statement will make clear the Government's response to Tomlinson's proposals and will set out how we wish to see the NHS in London evolve and improve.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the capital sums required by London FHSAs for the number of new primary care facilities required to implement Tomlinson report proposals; and if she will list the number of new facilities required, by FHSA.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) today.

Post-operative Convalescence

17. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health districts in London provide beds in the community or attached to hospitals for post-operative convalescence.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally. It is up to each health authority to commission appropriate health care for its patients. If necessary that could include post-operative convalescent care.

Diabetic Insulin

18. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to ensure that all diabetic insulin delivery systems, including needles, are available free of charge.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since insulin-dependent diabetics are exempt from prescription charges disposable syringes with needles are available to them on general practitioner prescription free of charge. The inclusion of insulin injection pens and needles in the GP prescribable list must, like other new additions to the list, be subject to the availability of resources.

Hospital Beds, West Midlands

19. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of hospital beds in the west midlands *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: Between 1979 and 1991-92 the number of patients treated in hospital in the west midlands increased by 55 per cent.; the number of day cases by 202 per cent. and the number of out-patients treated by 14·9 per cent.

West Midlands RHA

21. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make public the reports received by her Department in the last 18 months with respect to the affairs of the South Birmingham and West Midlands regional health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department frequently receives a wide range of reports on health and management matters from West Midlands regional health authority and districts. Where appropriate these have been made public.

28. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the terms of Sir Donald Wilson's appointment as temporary chair of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appointed Sir Donald Wilson as chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority until 30 April 1993.

NHS Services

22. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her plans to improve the quality of NHS services.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government have taken a number of measures designed to improve the quality of services to patients, and this was the driving force behind the reforms.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently announced a continuous quality improvement initiative. As part of this we aim to take the very best examples of good quality service and disseminate them widely. The initiative will also incorporate the experiences and perspectives of service users.

Mentally Handicapped Patients

24. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement regarding the quality of care given to mentally handicapped patients in mental hospitals and the quality of management in such hospitals.

Mr. Yeo: Over the years there has been a significant improvement in standards in the long-stay hospitals, but there is no room for complacency. Guidance issued last October reminded health authorities of the need to ensure that whilst these hospitals remain a satisfactory level of care must be maintained. They should aim to ensure through contracts with providers that the quality of care in these hospitals improves at least in line with improvements in the quality of care generally.

Junior Doctors

25. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she is monitoring the progress of the regions in implementing the new deal for junior doctors; and if she will make a statement.

27. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in reducing the hours of duty of junior doctors.

Dr. Mawhinney: The ministerial group on junior doctors' hours, which I chair, receives regular reports from regional task forces which were established to oversee and support implementation of the new deal at local level.

We have set a target date of 1 April 1993 for eliminating posts with maximum contracted hours of more than 83 per week. The latest reports from task forces show that at 31 August 1992, 3,234 junior hospital doctors and dentists, out of a total of more than 25,000 in England, were contracted for a maximum average of more than 83 hours a week. This represents a fall in the number of doctors contracted for the longest hours of more than 2,000 since last February and more than 10,000 since September 1990.

We look to authorities and trusts to continue their progress in eliminating these posts and then to deliver the next phase of the hours reduction programme. This involves reducing maximum average contracted hours to no more than 72 per week for those junior doctors working on on-call rotas in hard-pressed posts—the busiest jobs; 64 per week for juniors working on partial shifts; and 56 per week for juniors working on full shifts.

We are determined that junior doctors will see real and demonstrable benefits from the new deal and as well as reporting progress in reducing hours I am pleased that task force reports show significant progress in improving the living and working conditions of junior doctors and dentists.

Beds Shortage (Emergencies)

29. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the yellow bed alert issued in early January in the North East Thames health region because of a shortage of beds for emergency admissions.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave the hon. Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on Monday 18 January at columns *85-86*.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will hold an urgent inquiry into the running of the Mersey regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to do so.

Community Care

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the implications of the creation of health trusts for the implementation of the community care changes.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service trusts will play their full part in implementing the community care reforms, together with the rest of the NHS.

GP Fund Holders

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the management fee paid, or estimates thereof, to *(a)* first, *(b)* second and *(c)* third wave GP fundholders per family health service authority/regional health authority and nationally in each year since their establishment up to 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information held centrally is in the table. The number of fourth wave fund holders is not yet available as the application period is still open. Information about numbers at FHSA level is held by regional health authorities.

	1st wave fundholders			*2nd wave fundholders*			*3rd wave fundholders (estimate)*
Region	*Number of fundholders*[1]	*Number of practices*	*Number of GPs*	*Number of fundholders*[1]	*Number of practices*	*Number of GPs*	*Number of fundholders*[1]
Northern	27	29	168	11	11	63	32
Yorkshire	34	39	208	25	27	154	54
Trent	28	28	155	28	32	157	83
East Anglia	9	9	57	4	4	27	36
North West Thames	22	23	123	21	26	110	48
North East Thames	13	13	73	8	8	43	29
South East Thames	15	15	85	15	15	77	51
South West Thames	21	21	125	17	18	100	28
Wessex	17	18	98	17	18	109	25
Oxford	25	25	155	21	23	124	31

Region	1st wave fundholders			2nd wave fundholders			3rd wave fundholders (estimate)
	Number of fundholders[1]	Number of practices	Number of GPs	Number of fundholders[1]	Number of practices	Number of GPs	Number of fundholders[1]
South Western	20	21	127	18	20	108	32
West Midlands	26	26	144	31	33	178	75
Mersey	20	21	107	24	30	121	60
North Western	16	17	88	13	15	72	37
Totals	293	305	1,713	253	280	1,443	621

[1] The number of fundholders is less than the number of practices as some have joined together in groups.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many first, second, third and fourth wave fund-holding GPs and GP partnerships there are in each family health service authority and region.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available centrally is in the table.

GP fundholders management allowance payments

£000s

FHSA	1990-91 (1st wave preparatory fundholders)	1991-92 (2nd wave preparatory and 1st wave full fundholders	1992-93 Estimates (2nd wave and 1st wave full fundholders)	1992-93 Estimates (3rd wave preparatory fundholders)
Cleveland	146,685	189,966	173,000	69,000
Cumbria	31,999	115,423	173,000	86,000
Durham	111,900	308,000	380,000	172,000
Northumberland	210,674	231,010	236,000	3,000
Gateshead	32,098	82,498	103,000	104,000
Newcastle	33,968	49,500	69,000	35,000
North Tyneside	16,000	49,454	35,000	35,000
South Tyneside	16,000	33,000	35,000	0
Sunderland	16,000	33,000	52,000	0
Northern RHA	615,324	1,091,851	1,256,000	504,000
Humberside	112,000	339,563	483,000	259,000
North Yorkshire	65,977	247,500	345,000	207,000
Bradford	120,847	138,182	207,000	69,000
Calderdale	44,296	99,000	102,000	36,000
Kirklees	0	16,493	35,000	86,000
Leeds	146,072	338,273	483,000	189,000
Wakefield	121,720	310,578	414,000	86,000
Yorkshire RHA	610,912	1,489,589	2,069,000	932,000
Derbyshire	138,179	445,500	656,000	535,000
Leicestershire	85,044	276,995	380,000	127,000
Lincolnshire	48,000	196,449	310,000	190,000
Nottinghamshire	59,201	166,179	217,000	114,000
Barnsley	0	0	0	51,000
Doncaster	64,000	132,000	109,000	56,000
Rotherham	14,328	49,500	56,000	45,000
Sheffield	35,892	95,829	101,000	127,000
Trent RHA	444,644	1,353,452	1,829,000	1,245,000
Cambridgeshire	37,170	71,000	190,000	69,000
Norfolk	75,318	165,000	207,000	276,000
Suffolk	42,197	107,650	380,000	0
East Anglian RHA	154,685	343,650	777,000	345,000
Bedfordshire	76,000	148,500	173,000	155,000
Hertfordshire	208,640	549,754	872,000	327,000
Barnet	0	0	17,000	70,000
Brent and Harrow	16,000	33,000	35,000	155,000
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	46,028	118,598	138,000	52,000
Hillingdon	32,000	99,478	138,000	0
Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea	16,000	81,542	165,000	50,000
North West Thames RHA	394,668	1,030,872	1,538,000	809,000
Essex	80,646	287,164	449,000	345,000
Barking and Havering	16,000	49,500	121,00	17,000

FHSA	1990-91 (1st wave preparatory fundholders)	1991-92 (2nd wave preparatory and 1st wave full fundholders	1992-93 Estimates (2nd wave and 1st wave full fundholders)	1992-93 Estimates (3rd wave preparatory fundholders)
Camden and Islington	19,310	78,489	69,000	0
City and East London	32,000	66,000	69,000	17,000
Enfield and Haringey	30,812	75,061	100,000	50,000
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	12,241	33,000	35,000	17,000
North East Thames RHA	191,009	589,214	843,000	446,000
East Sussex	39,197	126,422	173,000	414,000
Kent	174,880	363,000	552,000	328,000
Greenwich and Bexley	46,699	82,500	104,000	69,000
Bromley	32,000	66,000	69,000	0
Lambeth, Southwark West and Lewisham	43.346	99,000	156,000	0
South East Thames RHA	336,122	736,922	1,054,000	811,000
Surrey	226,684	453,467	604,000	224,000
West Sussex	97,404	217,862	310,000	138,000
Croydon	0	33,000	69,000	35,000
Kingston and Richmond	78,274	143,868	209,000	0
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	49,989	146,286	173,00	69,000
South West Thames RHA	452,351	994,483	1,365,000	466,000
Dorset	18,461	172,400	311,000	86,000
Hampshire	443,176	467,458	621,000	242,000
Wiltshire	41,195	49,000	102,000	102,000
Isle of Wight	46,486	111,193	138,000	0
Wessex RHA	549,318	800,051	1,172,000	430,000
Berkshire	295,270	318,394	380,000	259,000
Buckinghamshire	178,924	410,731	552,000	190,000
Northamptonshire	31,371	205,434	311,000	86,000
Oxfordshire	194,878	251,660	347,000	33,000
Oxford RHA	700,443	1,186,219	1,590,000	568,000
Avon	47,998	165,000	242,000	207,000
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	26,221	97,007	138,000	86,000
Devon	110,786	317,783	449,000	155,000
Gloucestershire	145,071	142,000	207,000	86,000
Somerset	63,961	198,000	276,000	17,000
South Western RHA	394,037	919,790	1,312,000	551,000
Hereford and Worcestershire	130,952	336,354	449,000	259,000
Shropshire	17,670	98,849	173,000	138,000
Staffordshire	153,279	282,537	345,000	423,000
Warwickshire	58,486	205,740	311,000	207,000
Birmingham	81,420	130,734	207,000	121,000
Coventry	0	33,000	69,000	69,000
Dudley	0	0	0	69,000
Sandwell	31,981	117,537	190,000	0
Solihull	93,991	169,500	242,000	225,000
Walsall	16,000	33,000	35,000	86,000
Wolverhampton	0	0	0	0
West Midlands RHA	583,779	1,407,251	2,021,000	1,597,000
Cheshire	282,834	604,622	725,000	431,000
Liverpool	12,220	124,000	173,000	113,000
St. Helens and Knowsley	99,140	172,931	207,000	103,000
Sefton	131,139	261,532	276,000	86,000
Wirral	8,000	111,897	138,000	121,000
Mersey RHA	533,333	1,274,982	1,519,000	854,000
Lancashire	75,268	250,259	276,000	138,000
Bolton	48,000	115,227	138,000	86,000
Bury	0	0	0	87,000
Manchester	22,253	42,000	34,000	35,000
Oldham	0	16,494	35,000	17,000
Rochdale	25,564	84,242	104,000	17,000

FHSA	1990-91 (1st wave preparatory fundholders)	1991-92 (2nd wave preparatory and 1st wave full fundholders	1992-93 Estimates (2nd wave and 1st wave full fundholders)	1992-93 Estimates (3rd wave preparatory fundholders)
Salford	5,900	97,382	172,000	0
Stockport	32,000	66,000	104,000	115,000
Tameside	69,552	82,500	103,000	35,000
Trafford	0	0	34,000	69,000
Wigan	26,422	0	0	35,000
North Western RHA	304,959	754,104	1,000,000	634,000
England	6,265,584	13,972,430	19,345,000	10,192,000

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that the full details of the budget allocations to general practitioner fund holders will be published annually.

Dr. Mawhinney: The total amount of resources allocated to fund holders forms part of the annual financial statement of each regional health authority and family health services authority, which are public documents.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce legislation to make general practitioner fund holders legally liable in the event of inadequate community care services being provided to their clients after 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fund holders will be responsible for purchasing within the resources available a range of community health services, including district nursing and health visiting. Regional health authorities will be required to set budgets for this purpose and ensure that the level of services purchased is consistent with the level of funding. Local authorities and district health authorities will be responsible for purchasing other community care services.

Tobacco Advertising

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) of 28 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *728*, what estimate she has made of the direct effect of tobacco advertising on consumption.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department's discussion document on the effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption was published on 28 October 1992. Comments on the report have been invited before 29 January 1993. It is unclear whether additional restrictions on tobacco advertising in the United Kingdom would contribute to a further reduction in tobacco consumption given the fall in smoking in the United Kingdom from 45 per cent. of the population in 1974 to 30 per cent. in 1990, and the existing controls on tobacco advertising through the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and promotion.

Smoking

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will introduce legislation to protect non-smokers against passive smoking in public places and at work.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. The "Health of the Nation" White Paper sets targets of 80 per cent. of public places being covered by effective no-smoking policies by 1994 and for the large majority of employees to be covered by a no-smoking policy by 1995. Good progress is being made by voluntary means, but, if this does not continue, we will consider taking statutory powers.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many working days are lost to British industry, per year, from smoking-related sick leave; and how much this costs.

Dr. Mawhinney: In its report "Smoking or Health" published in 1977, the Royal College of Physicians estimated that as many as 50 million working days may be lost in industry every year as a consequence of cigarette smoking. No current estimate is available.

Tuberculosis

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions are made for regional health authorities that have terminated the universal BCG immunisation programme of children to inform parents of their rights to have their children vaccinated against tuberculosis.

Mr. Sackville: Local arrangements for childhood immunisations, and for providing information on their availability, are the responsibility of individual health authorities.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many regional health authorities have informed her Department that they have terminated the blanket immunisation programme for children against tuberculosis due to lack of resources; and if she will name those regional health authorities which no longer offer the BCG vaccination to children on a universal basis.

Mr. Sackville: No regional health authority has terminated the BCG immunisation for school children although an anonymised study by the public health laboratory service published in the "British Medical Journal" on 29 August 1992, reported that a small number of district health authorities are no longer routinely immunising children.

Children in Care

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of the working of the Children Act 1989 as it relates to young persons leaving local authority care;

(2) what reports she has prepared under section 83(6) of the Children Act 1989 relating to research and returns of information.

Mr. Yeo: We are closely monitoring how local authorities are exercising their powers and duties under the Act as a whole, including their responsibilities to young people leaving care. This has been achieved through special commissioned research, new statistical returns and a number of surveys, including a national monitoring survey of all local authorities undertaken by the social services inspectorate. Information derived from these sources will form the basis of the Government's first report to Parliament on the working of the Act in England and Wales. We expect to publish the report next month.

There will be a further response under section 83(6) later in 1993 which will draw more extensively on the regular statistical sources and provide the first in the statistical abstracts reporting the position after the Act was implemented. These will replace the reports covering children in care of local authorities for periods before the Act was implemented. The report of the year ending 31 March 1990 was published in July 1992 under section 83(6) and the last of these reports, for the year ending 31 March 1991, will be published this week under section 83(6).

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to ensure that all young people leaving local authority residential care are monitored until social services departments are confident they are housed and able to manage by themselves.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 to prepare all children for the time when they are to leave care, and have a range of powers and duties to provide aftercare support to care leavers who seek their help. Comprehensive guidance has been issued on ways in which these powers and duties might best be exercised. The implementation of the Act will continue to be kept under review.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in care have been child migrants in each year from 1967 up until the present; from which areas of the country they came; and what countries were their destinations.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not collected centrally.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of recorded *(a)* perforations and ruptures of the uterus following abortion and *(b)* ectopic pregnancies for 1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987 and the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Figures relating to perforation of the uterus following abortion are shown in table 1 for the years 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987 and 1991. Table 2 shows the available data relating to ectopic pregnancies for the years 1982, 1987-88 and 1990-91. The number of ectopic pregnancies increased gradually between 1987-88 and 1990-91 due in part to the improvement in data recording in the hospital episodes statistics (HES) system. Data for 1967, before legal abortions were performed, and the full time series requested for ectopic pregnancies cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Table 1
Recorded cases of perforation of the uterus following abortion
England and Wales
Residents and non-residents

Year	Number
1972	226
1977	131
1982	202
1987	186
1991	138

Source: Abortion notifications.
Figures supplied by OPCS.

Table 2
Estimated number of episodes where ectopic pregnancy (ICD 633) is the principal diagnosis
England

Year	Number
1982	[1]4,344
1987-88	[2]4,941
1990-91	[2]7,674

[1] *Source:* Hospital in-patient enquiry ordinary admissions only.
[2] *Source:* Hospital episode statistics—ordinary and day case admissions in NHS hospitals. Figures are provisional based on incomplete ungrossed data and may be subject to revision following analysis.

Prescriptions

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the items listed on schedule 10 which cannot be prescribed on a national health service prescription and the date of which such item was first placed on that schedule.

Dr. Mawhinney: These items are listed in schedule 10 to the National Health Service (General Medical Services) Regulations 1992. A copy of this list with the dates on which the relevant entries were made has been placed in the Library.

Orthopaedic Services

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the total number of people currently on the waiting list for orthopaedic services in the Ashfield area.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Nottingham health authority for details. Information about waiting times by district health authority and specialty is given in the publication "Hospital Waiting List, In-Patients and Day Cases" (ISBN 1 85839 003 6), a copy of which is available in the Library.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to compensate patients waiting for admission to hospital until the new financial year, for the pain and suffering which will result from deferral of their treatment.

Mr. Sackville: This year some hospitals have exceeded contracted levels of performance. This means patients are being treated earlier than would otherwise have been possible.

Mental Illness

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to protect those released into the community from psychiatric institutions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: From 1 April 1991 all district health authorities were required to initiate, in collaboration with local social services departments, explicit individually tailored care programmes for all in-patients about to be discharged from mental illness hospitals and all new patients accepted by the specialist psychiatric services.

Under this initiative, known as the care programme approach, the needs of each patient should be systematically assessed and the appropriate arrangements made. These include the appointment of a key worker to keep in close touch with the patient and to monitor that the agreed health and social care is given.

The rescources being devoted to the care of mentally ill people in the community have increased significantly in recent years. Gross spending on local authority social services for mentally ill people increased by 86 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1990-91 to £116·5 million. National health service provision in the community has also increased, for example, the number of community psychiatric nurses rose by 227 per cent. between 1981 and 1991, from 1,100 to 3,600.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has recommended that the Mental Health Act 1983 be amended to incorporate a community supervision order. Following discussions with the college and other professional and voluntary organisations, we are urgently considering whether new powers are needed to ensure mentally ill people in the community get the care they need. We will also consider whether the present legal powers in the Mental Health Act 1983 are being used as effectively as they can be, and what action could be taken in advance of any new legislation to ensure that they are.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 January

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This morning I had a meeting with ministerial colleagues and others. Later in the morning I launched the patients charter regional health information service at the BT Telecom tower. Earlier this afternoon I answered first order questions and attended Prime Minister's questions. Later today I will be answering an Opposition motion in the House.

Malaria

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statistics she has about the incidence of malaria in Britain.

Mr. Sackville: Imported malaria cases reported to the public health laboratory service's malaria reference laboratory as occurring in the United Kingdom are shown in the table:

Malaria
Plasmodium species

Year	*Falciparum*	*Vivax*	*Malariae*	*Ovale*	*Mixed*	*Unstated*	*Total*	*Deaths*
1972	134	167	12	13	2	8	336	?
1973	145	309	21	13	19	34	541	5
1974	138	434	29	14	25	21	661	2
1975	174	471	32	17	42	13	749	5
1976	229	903	29	15	32	12	1,220	3
1977	236	1,203	29	20	32	9	1,529	7
1978	349	1,370	19	42	14	115	1,909	10
1979	435	1,469	20	33	8	88	2,053	6
1980	405	1,131	12	31	18	73	1,670	9
1981	370	1,110	13	21	18	44	1,576	2
1982	442	931	20	24	26	28	1,471	12
1983	535	937	22	30	17	170	1,711	6
1984	680	943	20	42	43	206	1,934	6
1985	654	1,344	23	63	33	95	2,212	5
1986	719	1,404	30	64	22	70	2,309	4
1987	696	1,005	13	64	29	9	1,816	7
1988	1,028	530	22	67	24	3	1,674	7
1989	1,072	734	33	101	47	—	1,987	4
1990	1,057	831	17	149	41	1	2,096	4
1991[1]	1,268	863	21	133	47	—	2,332	12
1992[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,630	11

[1] Provisional figures only.

Source: Annual tables from the PHLS Malaria Reference Laboratory.

Revenue and Capital Allocations for RHAs in 1993-94

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the revenue and capital allocations for regional health authorities in 1993-94.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 8 December 1992, columns 635-36.]:* I am pleased to announce how the regional totals for the national health service main capital spending for 1993-94 will be allocated.

The main capital planning total of £1,543 million will be deployed as follows: £880 million for spending by national health service trusts; and £663 million for spending by regional health authorities.

In addition £289 million has been earmarked for central budgets, the majority of which will also be allocated to health authorities and national health service trusts. The central budgets provide for national priorities including regional secure units, day surgery facilities, advanced

diagnostic equipment, information technology, and community health facilities jointly financed with local government.

Taking these amounts together, a total of £1,832 million, the highest figure ever, will be allocated in 1993-94 for national health service capital spending. In addition over £150 million of receipts from the disposal of surplus assets will be available to trusts and health authorities.

The following table shows the main capital allocations for each regional health authority and the regional totals for main capital spending by national health service trusts. Details of the central budget allocations will be announced separately.

Apportionment of main capital planning total for 1993-94 between RHAs and trusts

£ millions

	RHA	*NHS trusts*	*Total*
Northern	63·995	40·751	104·746
Yorkshire	26·869	94·772	121·641
Trent	45·790	108·112	153·902
East Anglia	19·472	47·412	66·884
North West Thames	61·196	40·958	102·154
North East Thames	43·213	71·408	114·621
South East Thames	39·327	79·691	119·018
South West Thames	41·153	50·232	91·385
Wessex	42·880	54·167	97·047
Oxford	43·622	31·408	75·030
South West	13·251	97·775	111·026
West Midlands	125·281	44·775	170·056
Mersey	15·891	64·030	79·921
North West	80·703	54·731	135·434
England	662·643	880·222	1,542·865

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had recently with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of County Councils on the new arrangements for providing personal assistance services to people who would previously have been eligible for funding from the independent living fund; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I last met the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of County Councils on 17 December 1992. The subject of the independent living fund was not raised.

Officials from the Department and the Department of Social Security will be meeting officials of the local authority associations shortly to discuss the new arrangement.

Neurosurgery

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients underwent neurosurgical operations between 1979 and the change in regulations in 1981 governing the disposal of surgical equipment.

Mr. Yeo: Guidance on the disposal of surgical equipment was issued by the Department of Health in November 1981 and has recently been updated. The figures in the table are for the three years 1979, 1980 and 1981. Parts of years cannot be identified separately.

Estimated number of neurosurgical operations in NHS hospitals in England

Year	*Number*
1979	5,310
1980	6,510
1981	6,330

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry 1979, 1980, 1981.
The data refer to all skull and closed brain operations listed in the 3rd revision of the Classification of Surgical Operations (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys) 1975.

EC Funding

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support she expects to receive from EC institutions, including finance, under the proposed article 129 of the treaty of Rome, in respect of public health, including finance; whether private or national health service trust hospitals in the United Kingdom will be eligible; and what benefits over existing arrangements she has assessed as, accruing from paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of article 129, respectively.

Dr. Mawhinney: We expect the benefits to be greater co-operation between member states and between the community and competent international organisations in the sphere of public health.

Budget lines already exist for particular programme areas within public health, but it is too early to predict the extent to which any funding from the EC would flow into the United Kingdom as a result of this new article.

Dentistry

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies her Department has conducted into the role of dentists in the detection and prevention of oral cancer, thyroid-related illness, gum disease and other health problems.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* The Department provides funding for studies relating to oral cancer. The Eastman dental hospital is currently in the second year of a three-year research programme examining the validity of screeing for oral cancers and pre-cancers. The United Kingdom working group on screening for oral cancers and pre-cancers, also based at the hospital, has been reviewing the literature and examining the feasibility of national screening. Its report is expected before Easter.

Dentists are fully trained in the detection and treatment of gum diseases. They are also trained in the recognition of oral manifestations of systemic diseases and other health problems.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 January 1993

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 January, *Official Report*, columns *853-54*, what consultations he had with the United Nations prior to allowing the visas to be issued; and what opinion they gave as to whether these discussions contravened agreed sanctions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I said in my answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 19 January, there is no reason why British firms should not hold such discussions with the Iraqis. But we made clear to GEC that, since Iraq is in breach of the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 setting out the terms of the formal ceasefire at the end of the Gulf war, there is no immediate prospect of sanctions being lifted and therefore no prospect of GPT being in a position to fulfil any contract with the Iraqis. We also told them that we were not therefore ready to put an application to the United Nations Sanctions Committee. There was therefore no need for discussions with the United Nations prior to granting visas.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 January, *Official Report*, columns *853-54*, what investigations he has made as to the military ranks or civil positions held by D. Jallo, M. Abdul Razak, B. Sabae, D. Yasin, A. Saad Gismail, M. Saddin, M. Abdul Sadar and C. Stefanou.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Seven of the eight applicants sponsored by GPT were described as engineers. The eighth was a merchant. All applications were fully investigated by relevant FCO departments and inquiries made of other Government Departments which have an interest.

Biological Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the full text of his and his United States counterpart's letter to President Yeltsin on the Russian biological weapons research programme; and what response he has received.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There has been a series of exchanges over the last two years between the United Kingdom, the United States and Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) about the Russian biological weapons programme. These exchanges took place on a confidential basis. We have no plans to publish them.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Michael: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the sum paid out in legal aid in the six most expensive fraud cases in each of the last five years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Currently, interim payments cannot all be linked on the computer to the individual cases in which they are made. However, the position with regard to the most prominent fraud cases in recent times is as follows:

Guinness trials
Total costs have yet to be determined. Around £1·7 million has been paid to date in respect of the first and second trials.
Barlow Clowes
Total costs were £5·3 million.
Blue Arrow
Not all claims have been determined. £9·7 million has been paid out to date.
Britannia Park
Total cost yet to be determined.
Marconi Defence
Total cost yet to be determined.

The above costs include payments made from central funds in addition to payments from the legal aid fund.

Housing Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many actions for possession for 1992 were initiated by *(a)* building societies, *(b)* banks and *(c)* other lenders in each county court area.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available in this form. The only available breakdown of possession actions taken by county court is between those taken by local authorities and those initiated by private lenders. The latter includes banks, building societies and other private lenders.

Trial Delays

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current delay for trials in the commercial court, other courts of the High Court and the Court of Appeal, civil and criminal divisions, and as regards the latter, distinguishing between cases involving custody and non-custodial cases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: For longer cases the current waiting time in the commercial court is 10 to 11 months though urgent cases may be expedited. Shorter cases can be listed for hearing within three months. Cases are generally fixtures and a date for hearing is supplied to the parties, taking account of the time they need to prepare.

In the Queens Bench Division waiting times vary between one month for warned list cases and 13 months for fixtures likely to last over two months.

In the Family Division the average waiting time for cases likely to last between a half day and one day is six weeks in the High Court list. Cases of five days or more in duration can be heard within 20 weeks.

In the Chancery Division the waiting times vary between eight months for cases under three days in duration and 23 months for long cases in the part I list.

In the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) the average waiting time between set down and disposal is 7·7 months.

At present there are no figures available to show the time between receipt of a case within the Criminal Appeal Office and final disposal in that court. However, from receipt in the list office to final disposal, the approximate waiting times for appellants in custody were, at the end of December 1992, 4·3 months for appeals against conviction and 2·3 months for appeals against sentence. For those not in custody, the waiting times were 6·6 months and 3·9 months respectively.

In the crown office the waiting times are available only from the date of entry into the warned list to the date of hearing. They are, for the divisional court list 8·3 months, for the single judge list 16·5 months and for the planning court list 9·3 months.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rail Services

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made towards implementation of the recommendation contained in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report of December 1990 on rail services in Northern Ireland provided by Northern Ireland Railways Limited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The initial response, announced to the House on 3 July 1991, indicated that there had been a positive reaction to the Commission's recommendations and that none of them had been rejected. The follow-up response, which I have today placed in the Library of the House, confirms that 22 of the 34 recommendations have already been implemented and that the remaining 12 are in the process of implementation. The response was produced in consultation with the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company and Northern Ireland Railways.

There have been several important developments since the initial response. Northern Ireland Railways appointed a new managing director in August 1992. A total of 22 salaried posts have now been abolished. To fulfil the commitment in the Northern Ireland citizens charter, the Government have commissioned a study into the scope for introducing a private element into the management and operation of Northern Ireland Railways. Substantial progress has been made by management and the trade unions as regards industrial relations. Northern Ireland Railways published a more challenging passengers charter in November 1992. Together, these, and the other matters dealt with in the response, should result in a significant improvement of services to the public and the management of the company.

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland will continue in dialogue with the Transport Holding Company and Northern Ireland Railways about the implementation of the recommendations and I shall report on progress to the House in due course.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Racial Attacks

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will establish a review of the procedures for ensuring that the Crown prosecution service handles race attack cases without racial prejudice.

The Solicitor-General: In all its actions the Crown prosecution service is committed to avoiding discrimination on the ground of race. A system is currently being established to monitor the implementation of its policy guidance on racial attack cases.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases involving allegations of criminal offences have been considered in each of the past three years by the Crown prosecution service; and how many of these resulted in prosecutions being brought.

The Solicitor-General: Statistics at present available relate to cases handled in the 31 areas of the service but do not include the numbers of cases of specialist work undertaken at Crown prosecution service headquarters. The table sets out in respect of each of the past three years the number of cases received (column 1), the number of cases which were proceeded with (column 2), and the number of cases not proceeded with (column 3). The figures for 1992 are for the first nine months only.

	Column 1 *Case received*	*Column 2* *Proceeded with*	*Column 3* *Not proceeded with*
1990	1,638,751	1,298,158	301,048
1991	1,575,021	1,241,434	351,090
1992	1,193,294	895,582	285,181

The number of cases received in a particular period does not equal the number of cases finalised in that period (column 2 and 3) because incomplete cases are carried forward from period to period. The term "not proceeded with" includes cases discontinued, cases in which no evidence was offered, cases adjourned sine die and those not concluded because the defendant could not be traced. The figures also include cases submitted for advice only and some non-criminal proceedings (eg forfeiture under section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959).

Mr. Bashir Uddin

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General what examination he has made of the accuracy of the statements concerning witnesses in the case made by the Crown prosecution service to lawyers representing Mr. Bashir Uddin in connection with a case heard at Inner London crown court in mid-January.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has received a full report on the case concerning Mr. Bashir Uddin and a letter explaining statements made by the Crown prosecution service concerning witnesses has been sent to his solicitors. A copy of this letter has been placed in the Library.

Miss Lindi St. Clair

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration is being given to the prosecution of Miss Lindi St. Clair for wasting police time.

The Solicitor-General: I understand that the Sussex police are conducting an investigation into certain matters relating to Miss Lindi St. Clair. The question of prosecution will be considered at the conclusion of that investigation. At this stage I cannot predict whether any prosecution will be initiated.

UDR Four

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General what was the date of the Appeal Court hearing in Northern Ireland at which three of the UDR Four were released; what were the recommendations of the court about prosecutions of persons involved in the case; and what action is being taken by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

The Attorney-General: The Court of Appeal for Northern Ireland delivered its judgment in the appeal of R *v.* Neil Fraser Latimer, James Irwin Hegan, Noel Richmond Bell and Alfred Winston Allen on 29 July 1992.

The court made no recommendations in respect of prosecutions. The court directed that its judgment be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland so that he may consider the bringing of prosecutions against officers who he considers committed criminal offences in connection with the trial of the appellants.

The Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland issued an interim direction on 5 August 1992 to the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary requesting that certain reports and information be obtained. When these matters have been received and considered the director will take decisions as to whether or not to institute proceedings. I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 11 November 1992 at columns 835-36.

TRANSPORT

Passenger Rolling Stock

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for the provision of passenger rolling stock after the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: The private sector must ultimately take the lead in providing rolling stock. Using its financing and management skills is the best way to ensure the right rolling stock is available at the right time for the best possible price.

The Government recognise that there may be some uncertainty in the market until the railway is established in the private sector. In a consultation document "Railway Privatisation: Passenger Rolling Stock" published today, we indicate that we are considering a number of measures which will help to get a rolling stock market up and running. There must be no hiatus in railway investment during the transition to a franchised railway.

M1-M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to decide a timetable for proposals for an M1-M62 link road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The results of the public consultation for this complex scheme are being assessed. An announcement about the scheme will be made after the completion of the assessment.

Community Transport

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what budgets were available, for each passenger transport authority, for community transport provision in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for the Passenger Transport Executives. The PTE's three-year plans indicate that 1991-92 expenditure was:

	£ million
Greater Manchester	2·900
Merseyside	0·676
South Yorkshire	1·300
Tyne and Wear	1·460
West Midlands	1·782
West Yorkshire	0·764

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of direct grant funding for community transport is provided, by region, in England.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for local authorities. Separated details are not available.

Roads, Manchester

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it remains his policy that public consultation on the three separate stages of the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road will be undertaken together.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. Public consultation on stage 2 of the relief road (M56-M62) is underway. It is hoped to follow with consultation on route options for stage 3 (M62 Eccles to Whitefield) in late spring.

Consultation on stage 1 (M6-M56) took place during 1989. Statutory orders for this section have now been published.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend the period of public consultation on the proposed Greater Manchester western and northern relief road (M56-M62 link) so as to allow consultation with residents of Irlam and Cadishead.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will consider all comments made—including those received after the close of consultation—before deciding whether to proceed with a scheme.

M3 Extension

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate at current prices the total amount of separately identifiable expenditure by Her

Majesty's Government over the last 25 years relating to all aspects of the proposed M3 extension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information requested is not readily available for the period prior to the financial year 1981-82. The total amount of expenditure since that date to end December 1992 on all aspects of the proposed M3 extension between Bar End and Compton at current prices is as follows:

	£ million
Design and supervision	10·6
Works	6·2
Land	0·3
Total	17·1

Oil Spills

225. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has regarding the status and use in other European Community and European Economic Area nations of the oil dispersants *(a)* Dispolene 34S, *(b)* Dasic Slickgone LTSW and *(c)* BP Enersperse 1037; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department does not hold information on the status of particular dispersants in other countries. During the Braer incident it was established that Dispolene 34S was approved for use in Norway but, as in the United Kingdom, this dispersant expired from the list of approved products in September 1990 when it was re-submitted for testing by the manufacturer who had changed the proportions of the constituents and designated its dispersant Dispolene 36S—which is currently approved. It has not been necessary to withdraw previously approved stocks, which still meet current standards. The contracting parties to the Bonn agreement —United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Norway, and the EEC—share a common approach for the selection and approval of the particular dispersants which may be used. They have also agreed in principle on a mutual acceptance of individually approved dispersants in the case of an emergency.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the amount of oil spilled off the Kent coast in the last six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: There were no major oil pollution incidents off the Kent coast during the last six months. Motor tanker Perfecto spilled some 200 gallons of gasoil during an incident at Shellhaven on 20 July 1992, and the fishing vessel Our Sarah Jane spilled 600 gallons of diesel at Whitstable on 18 July 1992. Both these incidents were dealt with by the appropriate port authorities who also investigated them with a view to prosecution. The marine pollution control unit monitored these and 21 reports of possible minor pollution by ships in the United Kingdom waters off the Kent coast. The majority concerned the sighting of oil-like sheens in the wakes of suspect ships and almost all were reported by other vessels or aircraft. It is impossible to quantify reliably the small amounts of oil discharged in the wakes of ships. As a result of MPCU action, four vessels were given port state control inspections at their next ports of call and two, bound for remote parts of the world, were put on the European register for inspection should they return to north European waters.

Driving Test Costs

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of a driving test in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The cost for each type of driving test over the last ten years is given in the following table:

From	*'L' test*	*Motorcycle test*		*Vocational tests*	
		Accompanied	*Part I*	*Lorry*	*Bus*
	(£)	*(£)*	*(£)*	*(£)*	*(£)*
1 March 1982	13·00	—	12·60	[1]59·50	[2]36·00
12 December 1983	14·40	—	15·60 + VAT	[3]65·00	36·00
1 July 1986	14·40	—	15·60 + VAT	40·00	
27 April 1987	15·00	—	15·60 + VAT	40·00	
27 June 1988	16·50	—	15·60 + VAT	42·00	
5 June 1989	18·00	[4]24·00	15·60 + VAT	42·00	
18 June 1990	19·50	26·00	15·60 + VAT	45·00	
3 June 1991	21·50	28·50	15·60 + VAT	48·00	
14 August 1992	23·50	34·00	[5]—	55·50	

[1] This fee came into effect on 27 September 1982.
[2] This fee came into effect on 1 September 1982.
[3] This fee came into effect on 12 March 1984.
[4] The accompanied motorcycle test was introduced on 2 October 1989. Prior to that the fee for the part II motorcycle test was the same as for the 'L' test.
[5] The part I motorcycle test was phased out after the introduction of compulsory basic training in December 1990 with a six month overlap period ending on 31 May 1991.

Shipping

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he makes of the risk to the shore and to marine life in the North sea of cargoes carried by ships lost by accident; what steps he is taking to implement regulations to reduce the risks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* The risk to the shore and marine life resulting from the loss of ships' cargoes is taken into account when developing international regulations for the design of ships and their

equipment and national procedures for dealing with pollution incidents. International convention requirements are implemented in the United Kingdom through merchant shipping legislation.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Offences Against Business

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total value of *(a)* business frauds, *(b)* cheque, credit and cash card frauds, *(c)* thefts from companies, *(d)* thefts from employees, *(e)* offences of shoplifting and *(f)* offences of vandalism against business in the most recent year for which information is available and for each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Jack: The only available Home Office statistics on value are for certain types of theft offences, as recorded by the police. Figures for 1981-1990 have been published annually in chapter 2 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"—copies of which are available in the Library. For 1991, the total value of property stolen in offences of theft by an employee was £29,848,000. The corresponding figure for offences of theft from shops was £20,902,000.

The Association for Payment Clearing Services (APACS) estimates credit card, cheque and cash card fraud losses by major retail banks at over £165 million in 1991. Corresponding figures for 1988-90 were published in crime prevention unit paper 26 entitled "The Prevention of Cheque and Credit Card Fraud" (also available in the Library). In addition, we have not received detailed accounts of losses to building societies, to finance houses who manage storecards, from fraudulent purchase of goods by phone, and from unguaranteed cheques in excess of the guarantee limit.

However, the British Retail Consortium has estimated that internal and external crime costs the retail industry in the region of £2·5 billion each year.

Safer Cities Projects

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the budget of the safer cities programme at a constant price basis for each year since its inception, together with a forecast for 1993-94.

Mr. Jack: The expenditure on the safer cities programme for each year since it began in 1988 is as follows:

	Cash £	*1993-94 prices* £
1988-89	211,000	278,000
1989-90	3,295,000	4,074,000
1990-91	6,349,000	7,270,000
1991-92	7,217,000	7,730,000
1992-93	[1]7,358,000	7,560,000
1993-94	[2]5,785,000	5,785,000

[1] estimated.
[2] planned.

In 1993-94 expenditure is reduced while existing projects are winding down. It is expected to rise in later years as new projects come on stream.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evaluation has been made of the current safer cities projects; what external consultants are involved in this process; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Jack: Evaluation is being carried out at three levels: of individual crime prevention schemes, of each project and of the programme as a whole. Project co-ordinators monitor the individual schemes promoted by their projects and assess effectiveness as work progresses. Thematic reviews drawing on this information are planned, the first of which, on the use of closed circuit television in car parks, is to be published shortly and will be placed in the Library. At project level, a study of the progress of projects in promoting local community safety strategies was published in December 1992 ("Safer Cities and Community Safety Strategies", crime prevention unit paper No. 38), a copy of which is in the Library. For the programme as a whole, an evaluation by the Home Office research and statistics department is in progress, focusing primarily on the impact of safer cities on crime rates and the fear of crime.

The report "Safer Cities and Community Safety Strategies" was written by Mr. Nicholas Tilley of Nottingham Polytechnic. Professor K. Pease (Manchester university), Professor Murray Stewart (Bristol university) act as external academic consultants to the programme level evaluation. Dr. R. Wiggins (City university) provides advice on data analysis.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the current safer cities projects, indicating when they commenced and their planned completion dates.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is as follows:

Safer Cities Programme

Project	*Date established*	*Date of planned completion of HO funding*[1]
Birmingham	August 1989	March 1994
Bradford	November 1988	March 1994
Bristol	January 1990	March 1994
Coventry	October 1989	March 1994
Derby	October 1991	September 1995
Hammersmith and Fulham	December 1991	September 1995
Hartlepool	September 1989	March 1994
Hull	October 1989	March 1994
Islington	January 1990	March 1994
Leicester	October 1991	September 1995
Lewisham	July 1989	March 1994
Middlesbrough	October 1991	September 1995
Nottingham	April 1989	March 1994
Rochdale	August 1989	March 1994
Salford	February 1990	March 1994
Sunderland	August 1989	March 1994
Tower Hamlets	December 1989	March 1994
Wandsworth	January 1990	March 1994
Wirral	September 1989	March 1994
Wolverhampton	February 1989	March 1994

[1] This is the date by which, on present planning, Home Office funding is due to cease. Projects may continue beyond this date if other resources can be secured locally to support them.

Metropolitan Police Overtime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated expenditure on overtime for the Metropolitan police for 1992-93.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A total of £71·2 million.

Prison Education

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what have been the costs incurred by prison establishments and prison headquarters in mounting the exercise "competing for quality" in connection with competitive tendering in prison education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The need for competitive tendering for the future provision of education services in prison establishments is consequent upon the changes in the responsibilities of local education authorities under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The exercise is also wholly consistent with the Government's policy on competition.

Information on the staffing and other costs that have been incurred in establishments is not held centrally. In establishments and at prison service headquarters for the most part existing resources have been re-deployed to undertake the exercise. The current estimate of those additional costs which can be identified is £96,000. This comprises consultancy costs, legal costs, staff and travel and subsistence costs, the hire of accommodation, photocopying and postage.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision was made for prison education in 1992-93; what are the forecast costs for 1993-94; which vote will bear the costs of the 1993-94 provision; and what forecast he has made of the change in the number of hours of education provided in 1993-94 over 1992-93.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provision for prison education in England and Wales is as shown:

Budget 1992-93 £ million	*Provisional budget* 1993-94 £ million
33·3	35·5

The 1993-94 costs will be borne on the prisons, England and Wales vote, class VIII, vote 2. The provisional budget for 1993-94 is based on maintaining the existing volume of education provision.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which organisations will be contracted to provide education in prisons between 1 April and 30 September;

(2) which organisations will be contracted to provide education in Her Majesty's prison Maidstone between 1 April and 30 September; for how many prisoners classes will be provided; and what will be the average number of hours education per prisoner per week.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not yet available. Existing providers of education in prison establishments have been asked to let the prison service know by 29 January whether or not they are willing to continue with present arrangements until 31 August 1993.

Life Sentence Prisoners

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce a tribunal system for mandatory life sentence prisoners along the lines of the tribunals for discretionary life sentence prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have no plans at present to introduce a tribunal system for mandatory life sentence prisoners.

Drug Misuse Services

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if partnership arrangements between the probation service and community services will apply to all drug services *(a)* generally or *(b)* where a health service-managed drug misuse service is the only local specialist provision.

Mr. Jack: We envisage that each probation service will be responsible for developing plans with the voluntary and private sector to ensure that there is a wide and effective range of schemes in the area for dealing with offenders in the community, and funding them accordingly. Guidance on the implementation of these partnership arrangements is still be prepared in consultation with the relevant representative bodies. It is not the intention that statutory services should be funded by these arrangements. Voluntary and private sector schemes directed at the needs of drug misusing offenders will however be within their scope.

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he plans to fund probation orders with conditions of residence for drug misusers from 1 April.

Mr. Jack: A probation order may include a requirement to receive treatment for drug or alcohol misuse only if the court is satisfied that arrangements have been made for such treatment to be given. A wide variety of possible treatments may be covered by such a requirement, with funding from different sources. Where treatment is to be provided under community care arrangements, which come into effect on 1 April 1993, the probation service will need to liaise with the appropriate local authority over the provision of resources to meet the offender's social care costs. Alcohol and drug misusers who are receiving treatment prior to 1 April and are eligible for income support will generally have preserved rights after 1 April to their existing level of benefit.

When an additional requirement of a probation order is that an offender should reside at an approved probation hostel, a weekly charge for the accommodation will be payable by the person concerned, for which benefits may be available in the usual way.

Prisoner Escorts

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conditions to guarantee security he requires when he invites tenders from private contractors to contract for work escorting prisoners being transported; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A copy of the operational specification for the court escort service in the east midlands and Humberside area has been placed in the Library of the House. It outlines general principles which cover all aspects of running a secure service. Once appointed, a contractor is obliged to submit his detailed operating procedures for approval by the Home Office. The standards required of contractors are no less than those applicable to the escorting of prisoners by police and prison officers. In addition, the extensive use of custom built cellular vehicles will give an improved level of security.

Yugoslav Entrants

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people from the former Yugoslavia seeking to enter the United Kingdom as dependent relatives have been refused entry since January 1992; how many have lodged appeals against such refusal; what representations he has received concerning policy matters affecting the definition of dependency; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recommendations he has made regarding policy in defining dependency with particular regard to those from the former Yugoslavia seeking to obtain visas to join relatives in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many dependent relatives originating from the former Yugoslavia have been permitted to enter or join other relatives in the United Kingdom since January 1992; how he defines the categories of dependents permitted to enter the United Kingdom, within or outside the immigration rules, to join relatives in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* In the period 1 January to 30 November 1992 a total of 1,160 dependants accompanied principal asylum applicants from the former Yugoslavia who applied at the ports, and about 400 dependants were associated with applicants who were already in the United Kingdom at the time of their applications. Except for cases refused on safe third-country grounds, all these principal applicants and dependants are being allowed to stay while their applications are considered.

There is no entitlement under the immigration rules for a person to come to the United Kingdom, whether from former Yugoslavia or elsewhere, as the dependent relative of a person who is here as a visitor or as any asylum applicant. Dependent relatives are not normally permitted to join an asylum applicant until either he or she has been recognised as a refugee under the terms of the 1951 United Nations convention on the status of refugees or has completed a period of four years' residence in the United Kingdom with exceptional leave to remain.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has, however, decided that close dependants of the 1,000 former detainees will be allowed to join them for the duration of their stay. Generally, close dependants are regarded as the spouse and children under 18. However, in respect of the former detainees we are also prepared to consider applications for visas from fully dependent and unmarried daughters over 18 and under 21; from elderly or sick parents; and from other relatives living in the most exceptional compelling compassionate circumstances.

The available information on other dependants of asylum applicants is that since the introduction of the visa requirement for nationals of certain parts of the former Yugoslavia on 6 November 1992 about 20 people from the former Yugoslavia have been granted entry clearance to join relatives in asylum-related cases.

In addition, under the arrangements I announced to the House on 30 November 1992, 130 close dependants of former detainees have so far been granted clearance to come to the United Kingdom. Sixty-five applications by more distant relatives have been refused.

Applications from other people from the former Yugoslavia for a visa to join a relative in the United Kingdom will be decided in accordance with the immigration rules.

Available information on other people from the former Yugoslavia admitted to the United Kingdom as spouses or dependants is given in the following table. Information on refusals and appeals is not identifiable separately in the statistics.

Persons[1] from the former Yugoslavia admitted[2] to the United Kingdom as spouses and dependants in non-asylum related cases by certain[3] categories January to July[4] 1992

	Numbers
Spouses admitted for probationary year prior to settlement	
Wives	20
Husbands	15
Children	5
Fiancé(e)s	15
Elderly relatives	—
Dependants accompanying work permit holders	70
Dependants accompanying students	25

[1] Figures rounded to nearest 5.
[2] Including also those accepted for settlement on arrival.
[3] Information for other categories is not separately identifiable.
[4] Information since July 1992 is not yet available.

Squatting

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps have been taken to reduce squatting by increasing housing provision;

(2) what consideration has been given to providing alternative accommodation for squatters if squatting is criminalised;

(3) what study he has made of the measures taken by local authorities to secure homes and otherwise deter squatting through damaging their properties.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

We do not accept that there are valid arguments in favour of squatting; it is wrong that legitimate occupants should be deprived of the use of their property by squatters. If squatters meet the criteria of priority need under the homelessness legislation, they will be entitled to be found accommodation by the local authority in the same way as any other homeless applicant. There are no plans to change this. No study has been made of measures taken by local authorities to discourage squatters.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Hygiene

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will visit the Stanley wholesale meat market, Prescot road, Liverpool, in order to discuss the impact of EC food hygiene legislation.

Mr. Soames: No. The Department is currently considering an application from the Stanley wholesale market for a licence under the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 and I shall write to the hon. Member about it.

CAP Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on how CAP prices are affected by a realignment of currencies in the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Curry: Under the previous agrimonetary system, large monetary gaps between green rates and market exchange rates could build up in the period between two realignments within the exchange rate mechanism and these were automatically eliminated by green rate devaluations over a period of up to four years. Under the new agrimonetary arrangements which came into force on 1 January, green rates are kept broadly in line with market rates, so monetary gaps are limited in size. Any gaps that are created by an ERM realignment will be reduced according to the rules of the new system: these are different for currencies within the narrow-band of the ERM and for other currencies but in both cases are designed to prevent the retention of monetary gaps in excess of two percentage points. The resulting green rate devaluations will increase CAP support prices.

Salmon

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many salmon were caught in England, Scotland and Wales during the season 1991 and the season 1992, by *(a)* rod and line, *(b)* commercial nets and *(c)* north-east coast drift net fishing.

Mr. Curry: Details of reported salmon catches in 1991 are given in the table. Comparable data for 1992 are not yet available.

Reported Catches of Salmon in England, Scotland and Wales in 1991 by Method of Capture

	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*
Rod and line	9,452	45,136	4,522
Commercial nets[1]	34,631	20,057	3,044
(of which N.E. coast drift nets)	(22,463)		
Total	44,083	65,193	7,566

[1] Includes reported catches of salmon by all methods other than by rod and line.

Common Agricultural Policy Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the fall in the rate of exchange since the pound sterling left the European monetary system has had on common agricultural policy prices in terms of the pound sterling; and if he will publish a table showing for each CAP commodity the sterling price (i) immediately prior to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EMS and (ii) currently.

Mr. Curry: The devaluations of the green pound since the pound sterling left the exchange rate mechanism have increased CAP support prices by 18 per cent. The information requested on the sterling prices of CAP commodities is given in the table:

	to 16 September 1992	*from 1 January 1993*
Common Wheat (buying-in price per tonne)	122·24	[1]148·54
Feed Wheat/Barley (buying in price per tonne)	116·14	[1]141·34
Beef (intervention price per 100 kg)	272·83	322·09
Beef Special Premium Scheme (per head)	31·82	[2]56·34
Butter (intervention price per 100 kg)	232·88	274·94
Target price for milk (pence per litre)	21·96	25·93
Sheep Basic Price[3] (per 100 kg)	336·42	[4]392·97
White Sugar Intervention Price (per tonne)	431·28	509·15
Basic Sugar Beet Price (per tonne)	31·82	37·56
'A' Quota Minimum Sugar Beet Price (per tonne)	32·43	38·29
'B' Quota Minimum Sugar Beet Price (per tonne)	20·50	24·20

[1] These buying-in prices reflect monthly variations as well as green rate changes.

[2] The increase in the Beef Special Premium reflects an increase in the amount of the premium in ECU as well as the changes in the green rate.

[3] The final rate of annual ewe premium payable for 1992, calculated according to the basic price in effect on 3 January 1993, will be decided on in March. The basic price for 1-3 January 1993 was £397·17 per 100/kg.

[4] Price wef 4 January 1993.

Scottish Fishing Fleet

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will give details of the methodology used to determine how much of the £25 million decommissioning package announced for the United Kingdom fishing fleet is to be allocated to the Scottish fishing fleet; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give details of how the £11·25 million of the decommissioning package allocated to the Scottish fleet is to be divided between sectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will publish the basis of the calculations on which the proportion of the £25 million decommissioning fund to be allocated was decided as between English and Scottish allocations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how the proportion of his decommissioning package allocated to the English fleet is to be divided *(a)* between sectors and *(b)* between ports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Government will shortly be laying a statutory instrument before Parliament setting out the rules for the decommissioning scheme. It is proposed that,

in order to secure the best value for money, vessel owners should be invited to submit tenders, and funds will be allocated accordingly irrespective of port of registration. It follows that there will be no sub-division of the funds on a territorial basis.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the average farm income in each of the last three years in England and Wales.

Mr. Curry: There are a number of measures of farm incomes which are published on a regular basis in "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom". "Net farm income" is the measure for which there is the longest series. This is a measure which represents the returns to the farmer and spouse for their manual and managerial input and a return on tenant type capital. It is not comparable with the cash income from employment. The following table shows estimates of the average level of net farm income for all farm types derived from survey results. It should be borne in mind that there is considerable variation around these averages.

Average Net farm income for all farm types

£'000

	England	*Wales*
1989-90	17·2	12·3
1990-91	16·3	10·5
1991-92	17·3	14·0

Milk Quota Transfers

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set a final date for the notification of milk quota transfers in England and Wales in 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: Following consultations with the industry and in exercise of powers provided by the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations I have decided that transfers of unused milk quota notified after 16 April will have no effect on the calculation of supplementary levy liability for 1992-93, even if they are notified as having occurred during that year.

Similar deadlines have operated for the past four years. These have encouraged producers to notify quota transfers in good time and have thus assisted in the smooth running of the quota system.

HEALTH

National Health Service Staff

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of national health service staff in London are women.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available centrally is given in the table.

National Health Service directly employed staff in Thames Regions as at 30 September 1991

	Total number	*Female number*	*Female per cent.*
Professional staff	186,866	151,582	81·1
	Whole-time equivalents	*Whole-time equivalents*	
Non-professional staff	76,394	49,825	65·2

Notes:
1. Excludes agency staff and locums.
2. Includes National Health Service trusts.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of maternal deaths following abortion since 1968, together with the causes of death.

Mr. Sackville: In the period 1968 to 1987 a total of 98 maternal deaths related to legal abortion were recorded in England and Wales by the confidential inquiry into maternal deaths. Of these, 27 were due to embolism, 12 were due to haemorrhage and related conditions, 14 were associated with the use of anaesthetic, and the remaining 45 were attributed to various other causes. Full details are given in the reports of the confidential inquiry into maternal deaths, copies of which are available in the Library.

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the incidence of pelvic inflammatory disease for 1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987 and the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The available data are of new cases of pelvic infection and epididymitis reported by genito-urinary medicine clinics. In England in 1990-91 there were 5,700 cases. Data for 1987 and earlier years are not available.

Dentistry

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been de-registered by their dentists for NHS treatment in Leeds to date.

Dr. Mawhinney: During the period 3 July 1992 to 15 January 1993, 2,484 adult patients and 59 child patients were deregistered by their dentist in Leeds. In the period 30 June 1992 to 30 November 1992, the total number of adults and children registered with a national health service dentist in Leeds increased by over 12,000 to 451,268. Anyone who needs help in obtaining NHS dental treatment should contact Leeds family health services authority, who have been able to arrange NHS dental treatment for anyone who has approached them.

Remand Prisoners (Escorts)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the cost to the health service in the latest year for which information is available of hiring police or other security personnel to escort remand prisoners from hospital to court;

(2) on how many occasions in the latest year for which information is available remand prisoners were escorted from hospital to court by nurses without any police presence.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not collected centrally.

Drug Addicts

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the population were notified drug addicts in *(a)* Riverside, *(b)* Parkside, *(c)* Bloomsbury, *(d)* Islington, *(e)* City and Hackney, *(f)* Newham, *(g)* Tower Hamlets, *(h)* West Lambeth, *(i)* Lewisham and North Southwark and *(j)* England at the latest available date.

Dr. Mawhinney: The table shows the number of notifications received to the addicts index by the Home Office from doctors during 1991 (the latest year for which figures for district health authorities are available centrally), and the number expressed as a rate per million population.

The addicts index includes only those drug addicts who are notifiable under the terms of the Misuse of Drugs (Notification and Supply to Addicts) Regulations 1973. This covers 14 controlled drugs, mainly opiates and cocaine, which are specified in the regulations.

Number of Notifications to the Home Office; England and selected District Health Authorities[1], January to December 1991; and rate per million population

District Health Authority	*All notifications*	*Mid 1991 population*	*Rate per million population*
Riverside	621	290,500	2,138
Parkside	821	432,600	1,898
Bloomsbury and Islington[2]	862	242,400	3,556
The City and Hackney	358	187,700	1,907
Newham	36	217,000	166
Tower Hamlets	280	165,000	1,697
West Lambeth	542	161,800	3,350
Lewisham and North Southwark	273	327,900	833
England	18,827	48,068,400	392

Source: Addicts Index 1991
Home Office
Department of Health (SD2C)

[1] Note that an addict included under a particular district may not actually live there as the district quoted refers to the address of the notifying doctor.

[2] Bloomsbury and Islington merged in September 1990.

Nursery and Child Care

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the impact of the Children Act 1989 on private sector nursery and child care provision; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 11 January at columns *604-05*. In 1992 we replied to over 300 representations from hon. Members about the impact of the Children Act on private and voluntary providers of day nurseries, playgroups, out of school clubs and holiday schemes and on childminders.

Psychiatric Hospitals

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will list *(a)* which psychiatric hospitals and units have been sold since April 1990, *(b)* the value of the sales and *(c)* the purchasers of each hospital or unit.

Mr. Sackville: The management of the national health service estate and the disposal of surplus assets has been delegated to health authorities and trusts. The information requested is therefore not available centrally.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what obligation is laid on each newly-established NHS trust to establish an inventory of physical assets; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no specific obligation but trusts have to draw up inventories for two practical reasons, one as part of the system of transferring assets from a health authority to a national health service trust and the other for valuation purposes to facilitate the assessment of the trusts' originating capital debt.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the general practices which are fund holding in the Leeds area.

Dr. Mawhinney: The management of the general practitioner fund holding scheme in Leeds is the responsibility of the Yorkshire regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Sir Bryan Askew, for details.

Hypothermia

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths from hypothermia took place in each region in 1992 among *(a)* men aged 65 years and over and *(b)* women aged 60 years and over.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested will not be available before the end of April 1993.

Hospital Deaths

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the procedure for the issuing of a death certificate to bereaved families in cases when the death occurs in hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The medical certificate of cause of death is issued by the doctor who attended the patient whilst in hospital or, if this is not possible, by Her Majesty's coroner. Departmental guidance suggests that hospitals should provide written local instructions, and appropriate training, to help staff advise bereaved families on such issues as collection of death and cremation certificates, registration of death and cases which require referral to the coroner.

Joint Consultative Committees

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance has been issued to joint consultative committees in respect of implementing community care policies;

(2) what roles joint consultative committees will fulfil in the future operation of health and community care management;

(3) what guidance has been issued governing the make up of the joint consultative committees in areas where opt out hospitals, purchasing authorities and health authorities co-exist;

(4) what steps she plans to improve joint planning and joint working arrangements between local authorities and health care providers;

(5) if joint consultative committees' rules and responsibility are uniform throughout England and Wales; and if she will make a statement;

(6) what steps she proposes to avoid duplication of function between health provider and local authority joint consultative committee arrangements and other management mechanisms for health and community care delivery.

Mr. Yeo: The community care reforms introduce new incentives and requirements for joint planning and working between health and local authorities both for purchasers and providers. Detailed guidance has been issued to authorities to enable them to develop their arrangements.

The policy guidance issued in 1990, which followed up the White Paper "Caring for People", made it clear that authorities should find the framework for developing joint planning and joint working which best suited them. Joint consultative committees will continue to advise health authorities and local authorities on the planning and operation of services which are of common concern to both. Their functions include making recommendations for payments by health authorities in connection with community care and other projects promoted by local authorities and other bodies.

The statutory provisions relating to joint consultative committees including their composition are set out in Sections 22 and 28A of the National Health Service Act 1977 and in the Joint Consultative Committees Order 1985 (SI 1985 No. 305) which have effect in England and Wales. Recent guidance concerning joint consultative committees and their functions has been issued in circulars HSG(92)43 and LAC(92)17. Copies of all these documents are available in the Library.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Battersea Power Station

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when officials from English Heritage last inspected Battersea power station.

Mr. Brooke: An inspection took place on 7 October. A further inspection is being arranged and is likely to take place next month.

B Sky B

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he has anything to add to his oral answer of 7 December 1992 regarding the market share of B Sky B, *Official Report*, columns 584-85.

Mr. Brooke: No.

Concessionary TV Licences

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what recent representations have been received by his Department from local authorities and others regarding the concessionary television licence fee;

(2) what representations have been received regarding the disparity of treatment for concessionary television licences for pensioners who moved into accommodation before and after May 1988.

Mr. Brooke: I have received 108 letters from right hon. and hon. Members, 12 from local authorities and 174 from members of the public about the concessionary television licence scheme. Some of these will have raised the effect of the preserved rights provisions of the 1988 regulations but separate figures are not readily available.

Cable Franchise (Stockport)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will take steps to ensure the cable franchise for Stockport is proceeded with rapidly.

Mr. Leigh: I have been asked to reply.

Responsibility for monitoring and, if appropriate, enforcing compliance with the build obligations contained in a cable operator's licence issued under the Telecommunications Act 1984 is a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications.

Works of Art

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the items for which the issuing of export licences was withheld on the recommendation of the Reviewing Commitee on the Export of Works of Art during the half year ended 31 December 1992, specifying in each case the valuation and whether an item was exported or retained, with particulars in the latter event of the acquiring institution; whether he will list any items for which licences have been withheld but the final disposal of which is not yet decided, specifying in each case *(a)* the valuation and *(b)* the relevant time limit; and if a press notice will be issued by his Department covering the information given in his reply, including that relating to the outcome in individual cases.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 19 January 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Description of item	*Valuation £*	*Outcome*
A painting, 'Landscape with Ruth and Boaz', by Joseph Anton Koch	343,000·00	Export licence granted
An illustrated book of carbon prints, 'Foochow and the River Min', by John Thomson (1873)	26,200·00	Purchased by the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television
A drawing, 'A bearded man seated at a table', by Baccio Bandinelli	50,000·00	Export licence granted
An ormolu and ivory mounted bureau cabinet, with marquetry of kingwood, by Pietro Piffetti, c. 1770	899,980·00	Export licence granted
A drawing, 'A peasant family going to market', by Thomas Gainsborough (late 1760s-early 1770s)	357,600·00	Purchased by Gainsborough's House
Three albums of photographs by Bourne, Shepherd and Robertson, c. 1870	32,407·50	Export licence refused
An English 13th Century gold and sapphire mounted clasp	45,000·00	Decision deferred until after 22 February 1993

Details of the items on which decisions were deferred were given in press notices issued at the time the reviewing committee's recommendations were accepted.

Windsor Castle (Fire)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on what criteria Sir Alan Bailey has been appointed to head the inquiry into the fire at Windsor castle; what are his qualifications; and what will be the scale and basis of his remuneration and expenses.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* Sir Alan Bailey has been appointed to chair the inquiry into the adequacy of fire protection measures at all the royal palaces for which the Department of National Heritage has financial responsibility. His professional experience as a senior civil servant fits appropriately with the requirement for this inquiry, as others, to bring together, analyse, assess, and advise on, the variety of issues involved. In particular, Sir Alan, as Permanent Secretary at the Department of Transport, was closely involved in

the response to the recommendations of the Fennell inquiry following the Kings Cross fire. Sir Alan will be paid on a daily fee basis of £398 plus expenses.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Serjeant at Arms Residence

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will make a statement on the policy adopted towards the removal of panelling from the former residence of the Serjeant at Arms in Speakers Court as part of the conversion process to offices; what was the decision-taking authority for such removals; and how such panelling has been disposed of.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Director of Works; and I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member.

Doorkeepers

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make a statement on the implementation of the review of doorkeepers' responsibilities; and if the Commission will carry out a review of hours worked by doorkeepers.

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons Commission approved the recommendations of the Board of Management on the report of the staff inspector on the Doorkeeper grades on 9 December 1991. The recommendations did not cover doorkeepers' responsibilities as such, although they did propose changes concerning their manning levels. Subsequently detailed discussions were held between management and trade union representatives and agreement was reached on the implementation of the staff inspector's review.

The agreement included a reduction in manning levels, to be achieved by natural wastage over a period of time. I understand this has still some way to go. It also made provision for close monitoring of the working hours of doorkeepers, particularly if and when the House sat very late on frequent occasions. The Commission has asked the Serjeant to keep working patterns of doorkeepers under review, and has received no representations from him that the manning reductions are not working satisfactorily. Until the full implementation of the recommended reductions has been achieved, it does not seem appropriate to carry out a further review.

PRIME MINISTER

India

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy during his visit to India to raise the matter of the conditions under which India would join the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

During his visit my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, has discussed with Prime Minister Rao the attitude of the Indian Government towards the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and has emphasised the importance we attach to universal membership of the treaty.

Machine Tools (Iraq)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *555*, what information he has on the sale of machine tools from Germany to Iraq in 1987, 1988 and 1989, based on the standard international trade classification.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 26 January.

Genetically Modified Material

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Prime Minister which Department has the responsibility for the licensing and control of premises using genetically modified material for research, development and production purposes for industrial, medical or educational uses.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The Secretary of State for Employment has responsibility for the Genetic Manipulation Regulations 1989, which require all those intending to use premises for the first time for genetic modification work to notify the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Notification requirements also apply to the subsequent activities involving genetic modification.

A range of additional requirements, which are the responsibility of a number of Departments, apply to specific products which may be genetically modified. The products include medicines, plant pathogens, food additives, veterinary medicines and agricultural pesticides.

Correspondence

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects to provide a substantive reply to the letter sent to him by Mr. Barrington of Clist road, Bettws, Newport, on 30 November 1992.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

A reply was sent by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's office on 10 December 1992. A reply to the hon. Member's constituent's letter of 13 January 1993 will be sent in due course.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will seek time at the United Nations for reconsideration of sanctions against Iraq.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Security Council reviews sanctions against Iraq every 60 days in compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 687.

The most recent review meeting took place on 25 January at which the Security Council concluded that conditions did not exist for the modification or lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

International Rescue Corps

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial and other support he gives to the international rescue operation dealing with the immediate aftermath of natural catastrophes; and if he will meet their representatives to discuss a programme to assist them.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The International Rescue Corps is an independent organisation which has not sought financial assistance since September 1989 when ODA funds were provided to move an IRC team to Montserrat after Hurricane Hugo. ODA regularly offers assistance through our embassies in clarifying IRC's status and bona fides when it is aware IRC services are being offered to an overseas country. ODA and IRC officials are in frequent contact.

Baltic States

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new proposals he has to extend the use of the know-how funds to the Baltic states.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are considering a range of new proposals within our priority sectors, which are food processing and distribution, financial services, small business creation and energy.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Chartermark Awards

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will commission the National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies to examine the Government's running of the Chartermark award scheme.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no plans at present to involve the National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies in the accreditation of the Chartermark scheme.

Following the 1992 scheme, MORI was commissioned to carry out an independent review of the Chartermark scheme to find out reactions to the scheme, and to highlight any areas where improvements could be made for future years. MORI concluded its research at the end of November and its findings have been used in devising the 1993 Chartermark scheme; details of which will be published next month.

Citizens Charters

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list and summarise briefly each of the initial commitments in the citizens charters which are environmental standards or targets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter commitment to high quality services also extends to a clean and safe environment—for example:

Explanatory guides on "Green Rights and Responsibilities" have been published in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These explain citizens' rights and responsibilities on environmental issues; and offer guidance on how to complain if standards are not being met.

Under the council tenants charter all local authorities are expected to publish a statement advising tenants how their individual councils deal with environmental nuisances, such as graffiti and noisy parties.

In addition the Government intend to publish a local environment charter in the spring which will detail citizens, rights to high environmental standards from their local authority.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Correspondence

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to reply to the letter of 23 October 1992 from the hon. Member for Amber Valley about redundancy arrangements for miners.

Mr. Eggar: I replied to my hon. Friend on 25 January.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what examination he has given to whether the United Kingdom national authority under the chemical weapons convention will require additional powers in order to examine work and scientific research in the chemical industry.

Mr. Heseltine: The United Kingdom national authority will not have the role of verifying compliance with the chemical weapons convention, and it will therefore not require powers to examine work and scientific research in the chemical industry. Verification will be the responsibility of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), an international body to be set up under the United Nations' auspices. Primary legislation will be required to allow the OPCW to verify compliance in the United Kingdom.

Coal Industry

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that British Coal provides recent analysis of reserves at Vane Tempest and Easington collieries to companies charged by his Department to investigate current reserves under the terms of the energy review.

Mr. Eggar: As part of the coal review, Boyds have undertaken assessments of the viability of each of the 21 pits included in the coal review, including Easington. Their report was published on 22 January.

British Coal provided Boyds with recent information on coal reserves at each of the pits concerned, for use in this work. I understand that British Coal is providing similar information to Boyds for use in the assessment we have commissioned from them of the 10 pits currently the subject of consultation, which includes Vane Tempest.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent meeting he has had with the chairman or other officials of British Nuclear Fuels plc to discuss the present and future financing of Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the chairman and other board members of British Nuclear Fuels plc from time to time and discuss a range of matters on these occasions. The question of financing the company's business, both at Sellafield and elsewhere, is considered in the context of BNFL's corporate plan.

Miners' Redundancy Payments

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what effect the extension of the consultation period will have upon the guarantees applied to redundancy payments for miners at the 10 pits currently undergoing the 90-day statutory consultation period.

Mr. Eggar: None. The current redundancy terms will remain available throughout the consultation period.

Endangered Species

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to prohibit the import into the United Kingdom of all species defined as endangered or threatened under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Mr. Needham: No. The principal instrument for the regulation of international trade in wildlife species is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). However, in considering proposals to bring further species within the scope of CITES controls, the Government would take account of any designations made by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature together with any other relevant scientific information.

Membrane Technology

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what reasons underlay his refusal of a grant of £150,000 to the Coal Research Establishment for the development of membrane technology for the clean burning of coal.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has considered a proposal from the Coal Research Establishment of the British Coal Corporation for development of membrane technology for the separation of hydrogen from carbon dioxide, as a method of capturing carbon dioxide formed during the combustion of coal or other fuels. It was concluded that in advance of the results of a major study which includes an assessment of a range of technical options for separation of carbon dioxide, it would be inappropriate for my Department to fund development work on one particular approach. The £1·8 million major study (involving 14 countries and the Commission of the European Community) is being carried out under the auspices of the International Energy Agency, with British Coal as the operating agent. My Department and British Coal took the lead in setting up this study, and National Power and PowerGen are also participating.

Uruguay Round

Mr. Fry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to ensure a fairer international trade environment for the British and other European Community footwear manufacturing industries before the conclusion of the Uruguay round of GATT negotiations.

Mr. Needham: We and our Community partners fully support the objectives of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations in GATT, which include the specific aim of the reduction or elimination by all participants of high tariffs and non-tariff measures.

The European Commission negotiates for the Community in GATT. It has details of all the concerns expressed to us by the United Kingdom footwear industry, and these have been carefully taken into account in the formulation of the Community's position in the negotiations.

Iraq (Machine Tools)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 11 January to the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) at column *555*, if he will supply the corresponding information about the export of machine tools to Iraq in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 18 January 1993]:* For ease of reference the information requested for the major countries supplying machine tools to Iraq from 1985 to 1990 is set out as follows:

G6 and Swiss exports of machine tools to Iraq 1985-1990

US$ 000s

	USA	*Japan*	*France*	*Germany*	*Italy*	*Switzerland*	*United Kingdom*
1990							
728·1	0	0	0	2,124	1,270	578	570
731	537	645	1,279	22,209	2,783	7,666	8,278
733	5,891	911	499	6,992	1,070	2,762	246
735	2,377	39	1,331	6,286	10,824	1,743	2,955
TOTAL	8,805	1,595	3,109	37,611	15,947	12,749	12,049
1989							
728·1	43	N/A	61	1,530	1,601	69	991
731	2,272	2,816	609	57,486	1,545	20,505	18,990
733	1,857	2,268	1,385	18,948	6,890	3,375	1,208
735	7,080	451	2,637	20,007	4,391	13,203	3,138
TOTAL	11,252	5,535	4,692	97,971	14,427	37,152	24,327

	USA	Japan	France	Germany	Italy	Switzerland	United Kingdom
1988							
728·1	168	504	111	832	1,287	550	529
731	N/A	77	239	59,372	10,920	21,772	53,951
733	N/A	1,627	5,922	34,316	7,306	594	2,160
735	N/A	263	4,711	21,166	2,754	20,497	6,436
TOTAL	168	2,471	10,983	115,686	22,267	43,413	63,076
1987							
728·1	116	39	63	135	208	55	359
736[1]	33	1,991	1,161	16,740	5,244	13,871	5,130
TOTAL	149	2,030	1,224	16,875	5,432	13,926	5,489
1986							
728·1	294	15	117	674	1,040	10	334
736[1]	267	3,054	812	7,886	1,358	3,176	2,078
TOTAL	561	3,069	929	8,560	2,398	3,186	2,412
1985							
728·1	510	56	483	464	1,323	18	137
736[1]	50	2,903	3,915	10,578	3,090	3,902	5,249
TOTAL	560	2,959	4,398	11,042	4,413	3,920	5,386

Code *Description*
728·1 Machine tools specialised for particular industries.
731 Machine tools operated by laser or other light beam process.
733 Forgoing or die-stamping machines (inc. presses) and hammers.
735 Tool holders and self-opening dieheads.
736 Metal working machine tools.
[1] SITC Rev 2—Replaced by codes 731, 733 and 735 from 1988 onwards.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement outlining those steps which have been taken by his Department since 9 April 1992 specifically to assist the United Kingdom manufacturing industry; and what future action he intends to take to assist manufacturing industry.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, my ministerial colleagues and I have ensured that manufacturing industry's concerns are fully taken into account across the full range of the Government's decisions, and we shall continue to do so.

Particular initiatives since 9 April have included:

the re-organisation of the DTI so as to relate more closely to individual sectors of industry and facilitate an informed dialogue between Government and industry, and the creation of a unit on industrial competitiveness;

the launch of the one-stop shops competition, where bids are due by noon on 29 January;

the strengthening of DTI's support for exporters including recruiting 100 export promoters from the private sector;

the launch of the Business in Europe campaign;

steering the single market to completion;

a full and active part in working for an early and successful completion of the Uruguay round of trade talks;

a further £700 million of ECGD cover;

co-ordination across Whitehall of the enhanced deregulation initiative to identify and remove unnecessary burdens on business; and

numerous specific individual decisions and actions have also been taken in the light of the Government's interest in manufacturing industry.

The Government fully appreciate the part played by manufacturing industry in securing the United Kingdom's long-term prosperity.

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to improve the off-site emergency plan regulations for areas adjacent to nuclear installations.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, together with the Secretary of State for Scotland, has responsibility for the proposed Off-Site Emergency Plan (Licensed Nuclear Installations) Regulations. Following the Health and Safety Commission's consultations, consideration is being given to possible changes. I await HSC's advice on the matter.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what communications have been sent to local authorities from his Department concerning changes to the detailed emergency planning zones in areas adjacent to nuclear installations.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* There have been no recent changes in detailed emergency planning zones or resulting communications with local authorities. These zones are however kept under continuous review by HSE's HMNII as part of the licensing process for nuclear installations. I understand that HSE will set out the existing arrangements in the guidance to accompany the proposed Off-Site Emergency Plan (Licenced Nuclear Installations) Regulations.

Hinckley Point A

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce new safety regulations following the decision to re-license Hinckley Point A Magnox reactor.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* I am informed by the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear

Installations Inspectorate (NII) that there is no specific requirement to re-licence or introduce new safety regulations at Hinckley Point A. However, following assessment of Nuclear Electric's (NE) long term safety review of Hinckley Point A the NII agreed (in December 1991) that the station could continue in operation up to 30 years (ie 1995) subject to completion of the programme of work specified in its assessment and compliance with NII safety requirements.

British Coal

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what budget provisions exist in the financial year 1993-94 to extend British Coal's present enhanced redundancy scheme.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* It was announced at the time of the autumn statement that a provisional external finance limit of £1,900 million had been set for British Coal for 1993-94. The limit will be re-assessed in the light of the outcome of the coal review but the provisional increase of £1,400 million above previous plans for 1993-94 reflects provision being made on a prudent basis for higher restructuring and/or operating costs than previously assumed, including payments under the terms of British Coal's present redundancy scheme.

Criminal Liability (Companies)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce legislation to extend the circumstances in which a company may be held criminally liable for the acts of its officers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* I have no plans to introduce such legislation.

Industrial Innovation Support

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the funding of the club research and development programme; and what proportion of funding for industrial innovation support schemes remains uncommitted *(a)* for the remainder of the present financial year and *(b)* for the year 1993-94.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 14 January 1993]:* Club research and development is one of a number of forms of collaboration accepted by the Department of Trade and Industry when providing financial assistance towards innovative research and development carried out by companies. It caters for collaborative efforts where one organisation undertakes the work on behalf of a number of others who contribute to the costs. It does not constitute a scheme on which separate expenditure figures are collected.

Research and Development

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a list of each research and development scheme grant-aided through the Club research and development scheme, the LINK scheme, the SMART—small firms merit award for research and technology—scheme and the SPUR—support for products under research—scheme.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 15 January 1993]:* The Department's schemes for supporting industrial R and D are: LINK, EUREKA, advanced technology programmes (ATP), general industrial collaborative programmes (including Club research and development), technology transfer, SMART and SPUR.

Further support for industrial R and D is available from the SPACE budget, energy budgets, and civil aircraft and aeroengine research and demonstration budget (CARAD).

WALES

Mental Illness

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what resources are allocated for the support and treatment of those who suffer from schizophrenia.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what resources are available to provide support for Alzheimer victims and their families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is not possible to separately identify resources allocated to schizophrenia or to the support of people with Alzheimer's Disease and their families. An estimated £211 million is being spent on mental illness services in Wales and an additional £6·3 million is available this year through the mental illness strategy. The Welsh Office is also making available some £110,000 to enable the National Schizophrenia Fellowship to operate in Wales and some £26,000 similarly for the Alzheimer's Disease Society.

Secondary School Places, Mid-Glamorgan

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate is available to his Department of the number of secondary school places required in Mid-Glamorgan in each school year between now and 2000; and what is the existing number of places.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I currently have no forward estimates of the number of secondary school places required by local authorities. However, the Education Bill includes proposals which would require local authorities and the Schools Funding Council to review school provision annually and to report the results to my right hon. Friend.

My current estimate of the number of places in maintained secondary schools in Mid Glamorgan is 43,308.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many known Alzheimer sufferers live in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Alzheimer's disease is often indistinguishable during life from other forms of dementia. The estimated number of dementia sufferers in Wales is 29,000.

Citizen's Advice Bureaux Budgets

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will increase his allocation of cash to local authorities in Wales for funding of citizen's advice bureaux budgets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The local authority revenue settlement covers all local authority expenditure. It is for individual

authorities to decide how to apportion those resources between and within services in accordance with their statutory obligations and their own priorities. I will shortly be presenting my final proposals for the 1993-94 settlement for the approval of the House.

Schools (Surplus Places)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest estimate of the number of surplus places in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Mid Glamorgan; and on what basis such estimates are made.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My estimate of surplus school places (as at 1 January 1991) for Mid Glamorgan is shown as follows:

Primary
13,416
Secondary
7,409

The data is based on information provided by the local authority, and is currently being updated.

HIV

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children were born HIV positive in Wales in each year since 1980.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since reporting of HIV/AIDS began in 1984, 10 children have been reported from Wales as born to an HIV infected mother, three in 1989, two in 1990, three in 1991 and two in 1992. In two of the 10, one of whom has developed AIDS, HIV infection has been established, and another two have been shown to be uninfected. The infection status for the remaining six is unknown as it is not yet possible to determine whether these children are infected or whether their seropositivity is due to passive transfer of maternal antibody.

Schools (Excluded Pupils)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities have schools with conditional re-entry agreements as a means of re-admitting excluded pupils to schools; and what assessment he has made of their effectiveness.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Elton Report

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities have formal systems of communication within their schools and between schools and parents, governors, their communities and outside agencies, as recommended in the Elton report on discipline in schools; what percentage of schools have such systems of communication; and to what extent they meet the standards expected by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the need for further legislation to clarify the legal basis of teachers' authority referred to in the Elton report on discipline in schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. The position of teachers is sufficiently safeguarded by existing legislation.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made, following the Elton report on discipline in schools, of the equitable distribution of teaching and other resources across the ability range in schools and of how local education authorities are taking this recommendation into account when funding schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No assessment has been made of these matters.

School Governors

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities provide regular training courses for school governors which meet the standards expected by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: All local education authorities provide training courses for school governors. The content of these courses is primarily a matter for the authority concerned. The Department has not set down standards in connection with such training.

Teaching Hours

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the length of the school teaching day.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The length of the school day is a matter for school governing bodies. Current advice on this and related issues are contained in Welsh Office Circular 43/90 "Management of the School Day" a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Educational Psychologists

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities have developed working relationships between schools and educational psychologists to provide advice on the management of behaviour in groups and in schools as a whole which meet with the standards expected by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Local Authority Borrowing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each of the boroughs and districts the borrowing limit for householders for 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94, giving the increase or decrease as a percentage.

Mr. David Hunt: Details of Welsh local authorities' annual borrowing are not held centrally. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and regulations specify the sources from which each local authority may borrow and set parameters for temporary and longer term borrowing. The legislation requires the authority to determine annually the cash figure within which its borrowing is to be kept and the extent to which that may come from short term loans and from variable interest borrowing.

School Management

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities have schools which take formal account of ascertaining the views of pupils on matters relating to school management; and whether these arrangements meet the standards expected by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Schools (Police Liaison Projects)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to monitor the way in which local education authorities have assessed the number of schools in their areas which would particularly benefit from school-police liaison projects; and what percentage of such schools in each local education authority have these projects.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 requires governing bodies to report annually to parents on steps taken to strengthen links with the community, including the police. Generally, I would expect them to foster good relationships with their local police force.

Education Targets

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to establish national education and training targets for Wales to cover *(a)* foundation and *(b)* lifetime learning.

Mr. David Hunt: The national education and training targets, proposed by the CBI and others, have been endorsed by the Government. I shall be sending a letter today to education, training and employers' organisations throughout Wales emphasising the importance of the targets to the Welsh economy. My letter declares the need for Wales to sustain an ambitious rate of progress towards the Great Britain targets, and explains that I shall be encouraging progress and reviewing the position annually. A copy of my letter is being placed in the Library of the House.

Engineering and Technology Courses

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the courses on engineering and technology available within each university college in Wales indicating the number of applicants for each course in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department does not collect information on the applicants to courses for the University of Wales.

However, this information can be found in the guide "University Entrance" produced by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom from information supplied by the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA), a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Partnership Sourcing Initiatives

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the partnership sourcing initiatives currently established involving companies from Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not readily available but the Welsh Development Agency administer a major relevant intiative known as Source Wales.

Counselling Skills

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many LEAs have provided courses on basic counselling skills in the last two years; what information he has on the percentage of staff in each LEA which have been on such courses; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of such courses.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In the academic year 1991-92 nineteen counselling-related courses were run by colleges in seven local authorities in Wales. This is the latest year for which information is available.

No information is available centrally about the percentage of LEA staff which have been on such courses or about their effectiveness.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the representations he has received from individuals and organisations in Wales in support of the Government's rail privatisation proposals.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There has been a fair degree of interest in the franchising of services in Wales but no details can be provided, for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those schools in Wales which have *(a)* balloted parents in pursuit of grant-maintained status, *(b)* received approval to pursue grant-maintained status from such a ballot and *(c)* been granted grant-maintained status.

Mr. David Hunt: Fifteen schools have held a ballot of parents. They are:

i. Primary Schools
Cefnpennar Infants, Mid Glamorgan
Llanerfyl, Powys
Caergeiliog, Gwynedd
Derwen, Clwyd
Penybryn, Clwyd

ii. Secondary Schools
Queens, Gwent
Cwmcarn, Gwent
Bishop Vaughan, West Glamorgan
Gowerton, West Glamorgan
Olchfa, West Glamorgan
Brynmawr, Gwent
Emrys ap Iwan, Clwyd (twice)
Maelor, Clwyd
Stanwell, South Glamorgan
John Beddoes, Powys

I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State's reply of 19 January 1993 to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), *Official Report*, columns. *193-94*, for details of those schools where the ballot was in favour of seeking grant-maintained status and of those schools whose proposals have been approved by my right hon. Friend.

Municipal Waste Water Directive

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish a list of the sensitive areas defined under the European municipal waste water directive.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the terms of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive member states must identify sensitive areas by 31 December 1993.

EDUCATION

Higher Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement outlining the mechanism by which tuition fees for students in higher education institutions are transferred from his Department via local authorities to the institutions, setting out the costs involved, and time scale of payments; and if he will estimate the moneys outstanding to the institutions at the latest available date.

Mr. Boswell: The Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations specify the tuition fees to be paid by local education authorities on behalf of award-holding students. For most courses, the regulations require the fees to be paid promptly in termly instalments by specified dates or within one month of the receipt of a valid request for payment, whichever is the later. For academic year 1992-93, the specified dates are 10 December 1992, 10 February 1993 and 30 April 1993, and the total amount of fees payable is estimated to be nearly £1,590 million. Information is not routinely collected by the Department on the amounts of any fees outstanding at a particular date.

The Department reimburses the whole of authorities' mandatory awards payments, under section 209 of the Education Reform Act 1988. Specific grant is paid to authorities in termly instalments for the fee elements, shortly before each specified date. The Department's administrative costs are met from within its overrall running cost provision. Authorities bear their own administrative costs. No current estimate is available of the administrative costs attributable to the payment of fees.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to his answer of 7 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *477*, if he will make a statement on the reasons why he has not been able to publish an updated version of the table in annex 2 of "Higher Education: A New Framework" (Cm1541), setting out projections of home student numbers in Great Britain.

Mr. Boswell: The Government's policy, as set out at the time of the autumn statement, is to maintain the current record level of participation by young people in higher education over the next three years. The figures given by my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) in his reply of 7 December 1992 at column *477* are consistent with that. Progress to a participation rate of one in three by 2000 will be at a rate determined in future public expenditure rounds.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answers of 20 January, *Official Report*, columns *280-82*, if he will list institutions not referred to in his answers which are funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council or Universities Funding Council together with the authorities which are authorised to award *(a)* degrees for higher courses and *(b)* degrees for research courses which commenced in September 1992 at those institutions.

Mr. Boswell: The following institutions, all of which are funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, were not referred to in my reply of 20 January—*Official Report*, columns *280-81*.

Bishop Grosseteste College
Bretton Hall
Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education
Camborne School of Mines
Central School of Speech and Drama
Chester College of Higher Education
Christ Church College of Higher Education
College of Ripon and York St. John
College of St. Mark and St. John
Dartington College of Arts
Edge Hill College of Higher Education
Falmouth School of Art and Design
Harper Adams Agricultural College
Homerton College
Kent Institute of Art and Design
King Alfred's College
La Sainte Union College of Higher Education
Liverpool Institute of Higher Education
Loughborough College of Art and Design
Nene College, Northampton
Newman College
North Riding College
Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication
Roehampton Institute of Higher Education
Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama
Royal Northern College of Music
Royal Academy of Music
Salford College of Technology
Southampton Institute of Higher Education
St. Martin's College
St. Mary's College
The London Institute
Trinity and All Saints' College, Horsforth
Trinity College of Music
West London Institute of Higher Education
West Sussex Institute of Higher Education
Westhill College
Westminster College
Winchester School of Art
Worcester College of Higher Education

The Secretary of State publishes a list of recognised degree awarding bodies in The Education (Recognised Bodies) Order. Bodies listed in that order are authorised to award degrees in relation to any of the above institutions. The Education (Recognised Bodies) Order is currently being revised and we expect it to be re-issued by the end of February.

Dronfield School

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will be acknowledging and replying to the letter of 3 January from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East headed Dronfield school.

Mr. Forth: A fully reply has now been sent. The Department has not called for a report on the ballot at Dronfield. Any correspondence which the Department considers requires the comments of the governors will be sent to the chairman of governors for comment.

Primary Education, Brent

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will carry out an investigation into primary school education in the London borough of Brent.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no plans to carry out such an investigation.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from Brent primary schools head teachers as to the adequacy of the budget from Brent council for the education service in Brent in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received a small number of such representations. Brent council is solely responsible for determining its education budget, and within that total, the proportion of resources allocated to primary schools.

University Education

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give details of the charges made for the last five years to those applying through Universities Central Council on Admissions for university education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The application fees (including VAT) charged by UCCA to those applying for admission to universities for the last five academic years are as follows:

Application Fee	*Year of Admission*
£6	1989-90
£6	1990-91
£6	1991-92
£7	1992-93
£7	1993-94

UCCA is to merge with PCAS later this year to establish a joint admission system to be called the universities and colleges admissions service (UCAS). The application fee for admission in 1994-95 has yet to be determined.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each local education authority in England in rank order *(a)* the number of nursery school places per 1,000 population and *(b)* the spending on nursery school places per 1,000 population.

Mr. Forth: Information on the expenditure on nursery places or on the numbers of nursery places available is not collected centrally. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave on 21 January 1993 to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) at column *353*, on the latest available information on the numbers of pupils in nursery classes and schools in each local education authority, expressed as rates per 100 population aged three and four.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on Government policy towards the proposed Council regulation establishing a European agency for safety and health at work and the location of such an agency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The United Kingdom believes that the European Community has an important role in disseminating best practice on health and safety in areas such as risk assessment, new health and safety techniques, research and the impact of Community legislation. A wide range of views was expressed at the Labour and Social Affairs Council on 3 December 1992, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State chaired, as to whether it was desirable to establish a new agency to take this work forward or whether alternatively it could be pursued through existing institutions or bodies, through Community programmes, through intergovernmental co-operation or otherwise. There was no discussion of the location of a possible agency. The Government's view is that the case for such an agency has yet to be clearly demonstrated.

Youth Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many eligible young people in Leeds have currently been unable to obtain a place on a youth training scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the total number of young people eligible for youth training is not available. It is not, therefore, possible to say how many of this group are unable to obtain a place.

Low Pay

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the levels of pay of the lowest decile of *(a)* male and *(b)* female workers in (i) Wales and (ii) England at the latest available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is published in part E of the 1992 New Earnings Survey, tables 116.2 and 116.3. A copy is available in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Hospital Waiting Times

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provisions are made within the citizens charter programme to ensure that the waiting times of outpatients is minimised.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In accordance with the provisions of the patients charter all health boards introduced, with effect from 1 April 1992, local targets for waiting times for first appointments at outpatient clinics. Health boards are at present reviewing these targets with the objective of converting them into guarantees to take effect from 1 April 1993. The patients charter also included the commitment that patients should be seen within 30 minutes of the appointment time they have been given or should expect to receive an explanation for the delay and an idea of how much longer the wait is likely to be.

Folk Music

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on conserving, developing and promoting the cultural heritage of Scotland through folk music.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

Support for Scottish folk music is the responsibility of the Scottish Arts Council. Since 1984 the council has provided annual revenue support for the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland. Financial assistance has also been given to a growing number of traditional music and folk festivals. This year, the sum allocated was £53,385.

In addition, in 1992 the council established a traditional music development fund which, as well as supporting a number of education projects, supports the Greentrax Record Company which is re-releasing valuable traditional music source material. The fund totals £50,000.

This year the council also provided financial support for Gaelic arts amounting to £73,880.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* physically disabled and *(b)* sensorily disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage they are of the total work force.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 December 1992]:* There are currently 94 disabled staff employed by my Department, which represents 1·4 per cent. of the total work force. Of these, 78 are physically disabled and 16 sensorily disabled.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce measures to compel mortgage lenders to renegotiate fixed interest rates arrangements with mortgagors.

Mr. Nelson: No. The terms on which mortgage lenders make loans are matters for their commercial judgment.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what special tax provisions apply to Ministers of the Crown in respect of *(a)* availability of a car for private use, *(b)* provision of a chauffeur in connection with a car made available for private use and *(c)* provision of any amount of petrol for private use of the car described in *(a)* above and in what aspects these provisions differ from that set out in chapters 11 and 15 of booklet 480, detailing the relevant statutory or extrastatutory concessions for Ministers of the Crown.

Mr. Lamont: There are no special tax provisions for cars, chauffeurs or fuel provided for Ministers of the Crown. They are subject to the same tax rules as employees generally.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from business organisations representing health service and local authority private contractors to underwrite losses on contracts secured under compulsory competitive tendering legislation where the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were ruled to apply after the commencement of the contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have received no representations on the matter. Contracting out has taken place for many years with no question of any losses being underwritten by the Exchequer.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reasons underlay his introduction of a new national accounts adjustment for NHS trusts' debt remuneration in table 2B.1 of his 1992 "Autumn Statement" (Cm 2096) and the treatment of hospital trusts as public corporations outside general Government; and if he will publish an analysis of this national accounts adjustment by the programmes for Health, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, together with the underlying calculations of interest payments on outstanding debt and of dividends on public dividend capital.

Mr. Portillo: The reasons are set out in paragraphs 2B.19 to 2B.23 of the 1992 "Autumn Statement" (Cm 2096). The forecasts of provision for debt interest and dividends are the responsibility of the individual health departments.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received calling for a reduction in vehicle excise duty for commercial vehicles.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a number of representations on this subject which he will consider carefully during the run up to the Budget.

Investment

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount for each year since 1979 invested in *(a)* property and *(b)* manufacturing industry; and what was the cumulative total over the period for each category, at constant prices.

Mr. Portillo: Estimates of manufacturing investment may be obtained from the Central Statistical Office database accessible through the House of Commons Library. Figures showing investment by the property sector are not available separately; these are combined on the CSO database with other industries in the financial sector.

Value Added Tax

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which countries in the EC impose a standard rate of VAT on books, newspapers and magazines.

Sir John Cope: Denmark is the only EC country to apply a standard rate of VAT to books and magazines. No EC country applies a standard rate of VAT to newspapers.

Mr. Olner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses have been fined for late payment of VAT in each of the last four years; and how much revenue has been raised by the Treasury by these means.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* Information is held about the number of VAT default surcharge assessments issued but not of the number of businesses which have been surcharged which will be smaller, as a business may be surcharged more than once in any year. The available information is as follows:

Number of surcharge assessments issued

	Number
April 1988-March 1989	426,000
April 1989-March 1990	415,000
April 1990-March 1991	451,000
April 1991-March 1992	490,000

The amount of default surcharge paid in the period from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1992 was £337 million.

Textile Imports

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *260*, when he expects to make a determination of country of origin of the textile products imported by Dewhursts of Driffield which were held at port in December 1992.

Sir John Cope: Customs tell me that inquiries are continuing. I will therefore let the hon. Member have a full reply when matters are finalised.

Departmental Returns

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the 1993 departmental reports to be published.

Mr. Portillo: Proposed publication dates for 1993 departmental reports are as follows:

	Date
Statistical Supplement to the Autumn Statement	Friday 29 January
Department of Health and Office of Population Censuses and Surveys	Tuesday 2 February
Cabinet Office	Wednesday 3 February
Department for Education	Tuesday 9 February
Chancellor of the Exchequer's departments and net payments to EC institutions	Tuesday 9 February
Ministry of Defence	Wednesday 10 February
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (including ODA)	Wednesday 10 February
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Intervention Board	Wednesday 10 February
Home Office (including Charity Commission)	Wednesday 10 February
Department of the Environment	Wednesday 10 February
Department of Trade and Industry	Wednesday 10 February
Department of Employment	Thursday 11 February
Department of Social Security	Thursday 11 February
Department of Transport	Thursday 11 February
Lord Chancellor's and Law Officers' departments	Friday 12 February
National Heritage	Friday 12 February
Scotland	Friday 12 February
Northern Ireland	Friday 12 February
Wales	Monday 15 February

Copies will be made available in the Vote Office.

House Prices

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 10 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *777*, if he will publish figures for the percentage change in regional house prices to earnings ratios in each region between the third quarter of 1992 and the third quarter of 1991.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* Information on average earnings is collected each April for both Great Britain and Northern Ireland through the new earnings survey. Until April 1992, quarterly data were not available. Since then, quarterly estimates for Great Britain have been produced by projecting the results of the April survey by the monthly average earnings index (AEI). There are no quarterly estimates for Northern Ireland because the AEI covers Great Britain only. The following table therefore only shows regional figures for the third quarter of 1992. For Great Britain as a whole, the average earnings to house price ratio was 3·89, some 9 per cent. lower than in the third quarter of 1991.

Average house price to earnings ratio third quarter 1992

Region	
Great Britain	3·89
North	3·24
Yorkshire and Humberside	3·72
East Midlands	3·86
East Anglia	3·92
South East	
Greater London	3·79
Rest of South East	4·49
South West	4·28
West Midlands	3·93
North West	3·84
England	3·95
Wales	3·44
Scotland	3·43

Industrial Investment

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amounts of money have been invested in British manufacturing industry in cash and real terms in each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* Estimates of manufacturing investment at current and

constant prices may be obtained from the Central Statistical Office database accessible through the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the source of investment funds for British manufacturing industry in percentage terms from *(a)* banks, *(b)* the stock exchange, *(c)* self-generated and *(d)* other in each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* A statement of sources and uses of capital funds for all United Kingdom industrial and commercial companies is published in "Financial Statistics" table 8.2. Manufacturing companies are included in industrial and commercial companies but statements of sources and uses of capital funds for manufacturing companies, or for manufacturing industry, are not available.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total level of industrial investment as a percentage of national output in each of the last 20 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* Estimates of industrial investment and of gross domestic product may be obtained from the Central Statistical Office database accessible through the House of Commons Library. Consistent information is available only from 1978.

Inflation

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has concerning the average level of inflation experienced by each member country of the European Community, by the United States of America, and by Japan, over the last five-year period for which figures are available; and if he will rank those countries by order of magnitude of the level of inflation.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* Consumer price inflation data are published in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's "Main Economic Indicators" and the Central Statistical Office's "Economic Trends".

Stock Exchange

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amount and percentage of the funds invested on the stock exchange goes into new issues or rights issues; and how this has changed in each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* Details of money raised on the stock exchange are published by the stock exchange in the *Stock Exchange Quarterly*.

DEFENCE

European Defence

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what forecast he has made of the number of jobs in the defence industry that will be gained or lost as a result of the new proposals for European defence.

Mr. Aitken: I am unaware of any new proposals for European defence which are likely in themselves to affect employment in the defence industry.

Correspondence

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Ms. Gill Linscott of Wood View, Hope-under-Dinmore, Hertfordshire HR6 0PP, can expect a reply to her oral and written complaint to his Department on 14 October 1992, concerning low flying RAF aircraft under Ministry reference SEC(AS) 92/10/280.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Officials from my Department will write to Ms. Linscott once the investigation into her complaint being conducted by the RAF police has been completed.

Bosnia

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the additional 89 personnel to be deployed with British Forces in Bosnia as set out in his oral statement of 14 January, *Official Report*, column 1057, will be under United Nations command; and which vote will meet the costs of their deployment will be met by the Foreign Office vote.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. The additional specialist personnel deployed to Bosnia are an integral part of the British force and as such subject to the same command arrangments as currently apply to the battalion group as part of the United Nations protection force. The same will apply to the forces now available with the carrier group led by HMS Ark Royal if these have to be deployed ashore. It has not yet been decided which Government Department will meet the cost of this deployment.

Tracked Vehicles

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many tracked vehicles, and of what type, are to be deployed as part of the artillery contingent to be sent to the Adriatic on Argus; and what armoured protection such vehicles possess.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Seven armoured personnel carriers and 29 vehicles designed for cross country use in winter conditions are deploying to the Adriatic. While it is not our practice to comment on the detail, they have the armoured protection assessed as necessary to enable them to undertake their tasks.

RAF Kemble

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the future plans for RAF Kemble, Gloucestershire; what consideration is being given to maintaining its present use; and what plans there are to sell all or part of the base.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Current plans envisage the Army continuing to use RAF Kemble for the temporary storage of vehicles until 31 March 1994. Further defence used of RAF Kemble after this date is currently under review. No decisions are expected until later this year. In the light of the Army's current use and the longer term uncertainty no plans exist to sell all or part of the base although we continue to liaise with the local authorities to determine their views against the eventuality that the site may be declared surplus to defence requirements in due course.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further plans Her Majesty's Government have to provide technical and operational assurance to Russia to assist in the safe dismantlement of nuclear weapons following the START II agreement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no plans to provide assistance to Russia beyond that announced by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on 11 November at column *823*. We will however continue to discuss issues relating to dismantling surplus nuclear warheads with the Russian authorities as necessary.

Experimental Establishments

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the turnover at the Ministry of Defence proof and experimental establishment at Pendine is work carried out for the Ministry of Defence; and what percentage is for work carried out for private companies.

Mr. Aitken: The proof and experimental establishments (P and EEs) are maintained primarily for the conduct of proof and trials work for the Ministry of Defence; work for private companies at Pendine, and at the other P and EEs, accounts for less than 10 per cent. of their turnover.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what would be the estimated cost of relocation of the work now being carried out at the Ministry of Defence proof and experimental establishment at Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: The estimates of relocation costs for the work now being carried out at each of the proof and experimental establishments are not yet complete. They will be an important factor in our review of test and evaluation activities.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which proof and experimental establishments (land systems) are being considered for closures.

Mr. Aitken: The Director General of Test and Evaluation (DGT&E) is conducting a wide-ranging review of the Department's test and evaluation activities and facilities. This will look at each of his 40 test and evaluation establishments, including all the proof and experimental establishments. DGT and E is due to report his findings in May. Decisions on his recommendations will be taken by Ministers after full consultation with the trade unions, hon. Members and others.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the turnover for 1991-92 and forecast turnover for 1992-93 for each of the five Ministry of Defence proof and experimental establishments (land systems); and what comparisons he has made of their cost effectiveness.

Mr. Aitken: It is not possible to produce figures on an exactly comparable basis for the two years in question because of changes in the Department's accounting practice and some rationalisation of facilities.

Subject to these provisos, the running cost details are as follows:

£ million

	1991-92	[1]*1992-93*
Cold Meece	1·8	2·4
Eskmeals	8·0	8·0
Environmental Test Centre Foulness	3·6	4·5
Pendine	7·6	7·0
Shoeburyness	11·7	17·2

[1] Projected.

The figures for Shoeburyness include P and EE Lavington which is a satellite of the former.

Cold Meece is scheduled to close on 31 March 1993.

Each establishment has different specialist capabilities and whilst the Department seeks to ensure that all are cost effective, comparisons on a purely financial basis would be misleading.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the construction cost in today's prices of building a facility to the same specifications as the 1500-metre test track at the Ministry of Defence proof and experimental establishment at Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: We are assessing our exact requirements for test-track facilities, and the cost of re-providing them should that prove necessary, as part of the review of test and evaluation facilities. Accurate cost figures are not yet available.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give individual cash estimates as to the amount of work carried out for customers in the private sector at the Ministry of Defence proof and experimental establishment in Pendine in the last financial year.

Mr. Aitken: Estimates of the cost of work undertaken for private customers are confidential to the Department and the companies concerned.

Job Losses

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of jobs lost at Ministry of Defence establishments for each year since 1989-90 to the present and projected to 1996-97 for *(a)* Dyfed, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Great Britain.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Net changes in the number of posts since 1989-90 in Dyfed, Wales and the United Kingdom

	Dyfed	*Wales (including Dyfed)*	*United Kingdom (including Wales)*
1989-90	−81	+11	+56
1990-91	−102	−54	−1,173
1991-92	−103	−9	−745
[1]1992-93	−50	−27	−3,300
[1]1993-94	+35	+17	−4,000
[1]1994-95	−176	−109	−2,900
[1]1995-96	−205	−135	−4,750
[1]1996-97	0	+73	−800

[1] These figures are based upon announcements made to date; they are therefore susceptible to change. It should also be noted that as establishments and units are Market Tested further changes may occur.

Nuclear Fuel Cores

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the conclusions of the studies carried out into the relative safety of keeping used fuel cores on board decommissioned submarines or storing on land.

Mr. Aitken: The safety of used fuel cores, both on board decommissioned submarines and stored on land, has been confirmed by rigorous independent safety assessments.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when it is expected that the used fuel core from HMS Revenge will be removed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 14 December at column *81*.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are for the long-term disposal of used fuel cores from nuclear-powered submarines which are currently stored at Sellafield.

Mr. Aitken: It is planned to continue with the safe storage of nuclear submarine used fuel cores currently held at BNFL Sellafield. No decisions have been taken on their long-term disposal.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the usual time scale for submarines taken to Rosyth for decommissioning before being defuelled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: There is no usual timescale; we have only previously taken one submarine to Rosyth for decommissioning.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the minimum and maximum time period which submarines taken to Rosyth for decommissioning have had to wait before being defuelled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Only one submarine has been taken to Rosyth for decommissioning and defuelling has not yet commenced.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected time scale for any submarines taken to Rosyth in the future for decommissioning before being defuelled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We plan for a six-month timescale, but this will depend on the availability of docks for defuelling.

HMS Valiant

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when HMS Valiant is expected to return into service on completion of repairs at Rosyth dockyard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: This is expected in May 1993.

HMS Renown

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the recent refit of HMS Renown at the time the contract was placed; what the final cost was on completion; and what are the reasons for the difference.

Mr. Aitken: The total estimated cost of the project at the time the contract was placed was just over £152 million at 1992-93 prices. Final cost certificates have not yet been presented but the current estimate of cost is in the region of £200 million.

The difference between these figures is due mainly to a change in the method of assessing costs following commercialisation—this refit straddled vesting day—programme delays and additional equipment improvements.

Weapons Proliferation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current assessment of the likely course of Iraq's nuclear weapons programme had they not been interrupted, in the light of information received from the United Nations inspection teams.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Nations inspection teams have found incontrovertible evidence that Iraq was developing a crude nuclear warhead design. The earliest that Iraq could have completed its first nuclear weapon, had its programme not been interrupted, would have been by 1993.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the countries which in his judgment currently possess *(a)* nuclear and *(b)* ballistic missiles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Currently, strategic nuclear weapons are deployed in the United Kingdom, United States, France, China, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Countries possessing ballistic missiles, excluding NATO members, include Afghanistan, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Libya, North Korea, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, South Korea, Syria, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam and Yemen.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current assessment of the countries who *(a)* possess chemical weapons, *(b)* possess biological weapons and *(c)* are engaged in research in developing chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is assessed that approximately 20 countries either possess or may be developing an offensive chemical warfare capability. It is assessed that about 10 countries either possess or seek to acquire an offensive biological weapons capability.

SOCIAL SECURITY

London Weighting

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what London weightings are applied to social security benefits.

Mr. Burt: The social security system provides a comprehensive set of national benefits. Regional variations are therefore not generally appropriate, except where benefits reflect actual expenditure, such as those offering help with housing costs. A Greater London extension is available in income support for people in nursing and residential care homes.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within his Department's buildings in the last five years.

Miss Widdecombe: Our records do not show that any such incident has occurred.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much funding has been allocated or spent to specifically deal with measures to reduce his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

Miss Widdecombe: Expenditure is mainly incurred as part of the capital works and building maintenance programmes. It is not possible to identify the extent to which environmental measures formed part of these programmes.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what the latest available figures are for his Department's total purchase of CFCs and HCFCs;

(2) how many CFC and HCFC installations are contained within his Department's buildings.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is currently not available. We are considering how this information can be collected to enable us to meet the commitment, in our green housekeeping strategy, to eliminate the use of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many portable halon fire extinguishers are contained within departmental buildings; and what measures are being taken to ensure their recycling and replacement.

Miss Widdecombe: Information about the number held is not available. Replacement of extinguishers is being undertaken by contractors who are working to professional codes of practice.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many CFC domestic fridges are contained within his Department's building.

Miss Widdecombe: Information about domestic fridges is not available centrally.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance has been sought and received on alternatives or substitutes to the ozone-destroying chemicals in use by his Department.

Miss Widdecombe: Advice and guidance on the environmental aspects of ozone-depleting substances in buildings is provided by the Department of the Environment. Advice relating to particular buildings is provided by the managing contractors or agents responsible for the maintenance of the building or the suitably qualified consultants.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what proportion of his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances become controlled waste in terms of section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(2) what action has been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances consumed by his Department are identified as controlled wastes when they are no longer in use;

(3) what measures have been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances in use by his Department identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 do not reach the atmosphere.

Miss Widdecombe: Information about the quantity of ozone-depleting substances in use in the Department is not available. Such substances, when no longer in use, are removed by contractors who are required to comply with the relevant legislation and associated codes of practice.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how the departmental Green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures; which possible measures have been considered and rejected; and on what grounds;

(2) what targets have been set for the recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals within departmental buildings.

Miss Widdecombe: A green housekeeping strategy, setting out the Department's policy for the use of its resources and designed to ensure that full account is taken of the needs of the environment, was adopted in 1992. All members of staff have been made aware of the strategy and an action plan for its implementation will be in place by the end of March. This will include, wherever possible, targets for the various measures. The policy will be reviewed periodically, and no possible measure has been rejected.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in his Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems.

Miss Widdecombe: There is refrigerant leakage detection installed on some equipment but information on the number is not readily available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the quantity of ozone-depleting substances recycled within his Department and returned to the manufacturer;

(2) if he will provide details from the maintenance and servicing record of the quantity and type of ozone-destroying chemicals used annually in his Department's refrigeration and air conditioning equipment for servicing and in leakages; and what proportion is removed for recycling.

Miss. Widdecombe: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Our policy is to eliminate the use of these substances.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what date his Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform to EC regulations on limits on these chemicals.

Miss Widdecombe: Target dates for the recovery, recycling and phasing out of ozone depleting substances will be included in the Department's action plan, which will be in place by the end of March, for the implementation of our green housekeeping strategy. The

aim will be to have taken all the appropriate measures to meet the phase out dates agreed at the European Council of Ministers on 15 December.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by his Department are considered essential.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is not currently available, but we will be identifying uses of ozone-depleting substances in implementing our green housekeeping strategy.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to purchase only ozone-friendly fridges that do not contain CFCs or HCFCs for his Department.

Miss Widdecombe: It is our existing policy to ensure that our purchasing activities take environmental considerations fully into account.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what quantity of HCFC 22 is purchased by his Department per annum.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available but it is our policy to purchase environmentally-friendly products where appropriate.

Means-tested Benefits

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of people made eligible for means-tested benefits because of the Government's imposition of a 1·5 per cent. pay limit for public sector workers; and what will be the total cost of payments of these extra benefits.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) on 30 November 1992 at column *68*.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the period of cold weather between 10 and 14 January; what was the average temperature during the period; what was the lowest temperature during the period; in which areas the payment of cold weather allowances was triggered; and what was the cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Scott: The information is available in the Library.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current level of cold weather payments; how it is calculated; how often it is uprated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Payments of £6 are made automatically to eligible people for every period of seven days where the average temperature is 0°C or below. The amount is designed to provide a significant contribution to extra heating costs and is kept under review. The main source of help with heating costs is provided through income support, and is uprated annually.

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra money is to be given from April 1993 to those who currently receive the terminal-illness level of income support and are cared for by registered private nursing homes.

Mr. Burt: The income support personal expenses allowance will be uprated by the Rossi index (retail prices index less certain housing costs.) In addition £1 million has been transferred from the Social Security budget to the Department of Health for 1993-94 to ensure that additional funds are directed specifically to terminally ill people in hospices. This is in addition to the £1 million transferred for each of the years 1992-93 to 1994-95.

From April 1993, under the community care scheme, all new residents of nursing homes who need public support will have their needs assessed by the local authority who will contract with individual homes for their fees.

Invalid Care Allowances

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people would benefit each year and what is his estimate of the cost, of amending the present contribution conditions so as to allow contributions paid in any previous tax year, instead of the previous two, to count towards invalid care allowance recipients' entitlement to unemployment benefit.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Claimants, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much unemployment benefit has been paid to claimants in the Liverpool travel-to-work area in the last 12 months and for each of the previous years for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has had in regard to the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's recommendation to him in August 1992 to prescribe emphysema and chronic bronchitis in relation to underground coalminers; what replies he is sending; what action he has so far taken in regard to the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have received a number of inquiries from Members of Parliament and members of the public about the council's recommendation and its implementation. Our response and the action we are taking are summarised in my reply to the right hon. Member on 14 December 1992 at column *76*.

Actors

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether work within the acting profession may be classified as full time for the purposes of his Department's rules and regulations concerning income support and unemployment benefit claims.

Mr. Burt: People working less than 16 hours a week may qualify for income support provided they are available for work for not less than 24 hours a week. The rules apply in the same way to people who are employed or self-employed, whatever type of work they are engaged in.

Unemployment benefit may be payable for each day of unemployment in which a person earns £2 or less. But it is not payable for any week in which a person earns not less than £54 (the weekly earnings limit for national insurance contributions).

ENVIRONMENT

Construction Industry

14. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with representatives of the construction industry as to possible changes in the present system of holding retention moneys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have had no discussions about the general system of retention money. I am aware of concerns about this matter and welcome moves within the industry to examine alternatives. This is one of the matters that we expect to be considered in the proposed joint Government-industry review of contracting and procurement arrangements in the construction industry.

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of increased activity in the housing and construction industry following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement.

Sir George Young: Depending on the way local authorities spend the funds available, and the extent of the private sector funding attracted, we estimate that the additional spending generated by the autumn statement could generate between 40,000 and 90,000 employees years of employment in the construction industry in 1993-94.

We also estimate that the 1 per cent. cut in interest rates announced in the statement could result in an increase of 1 per cent. in construction output on all private works. In the short-term, with interest rates at their lowest since 1978, this will mainly benefit the housing sector.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining those steps which have been taken by his Department since 9 April 1992 specifically to assist the United Kingdom construction industry; and what future action he intends to take to assist the construction industry.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* During this year's public expenditure round my Department was active in making the case for maintaining capital spending and infrastructure spending. Measures which will assist the industry include:

- £750 million to support the Housing Corporation
- £1·75 billion of spending from local authority capital receipts
- retention of provision for the Jubilee line extension
- relaxation of the rules for private and joint financing of infrastructure and other projects
- a capital partnership scheme to assist local authorities in levering private sector contributions to projects
- special tax and capital allowances

We have supported export efforts by the industry. Ministers led trade delegations to Indonesia and Vietnam. We have worked with industry and the DTI to support building material task forces for specific countries.

We have maintained an active research programme and increased industry collaboration during the year. We have established working groups with the industry to improve knowledge and understanding of new legislative developments—here and in the European Community. We have established an advisory committee to improve the coverage of construction statistics and the use made of them.

We have continued to advance the interest of building material producers in the development of the Construction Products Directive and other associated European standards.

We have introduced new building regulations which reduce the regulatory burden on the industry while giving greater flexibility for designers.

I have also established a fortnightly series of meetings at which representatives of the industry can put to me any matters of concern to them.

Superquarries

15. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy in respect of superquarries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I believe that coastal superquarries could provide an increasing contribution to aggregates supplies in England. Their potential has been taken into account in the current review of "Mineral Planning Guidance Note 6" which is now the subject of public consultation.

Local Authority Fraud

16. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the cost to public funds of local authority fraud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Auditors of local authorities report to the Audit Commission all cases of fraud of £500 or over. On this basis, the amount reported for 1991-92 was £930,000; and for the first nine months of 1992-93 is estimated at £2·5 million.

Armed Forces (Housing)

17. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the impact on the demand for local authority housing of the acceleration of retirement from the armed forces under the "Options for Change" programme.

Sir George Young: Inquiries by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence about the intentions of people leaving the armed forces under the "Options for Change" programme indicate that they will be dispersing around the country. This means that the

number of housing applications to any individual authority is unlikely to be significant. Officials will continue to monitor the position in succeeding phases of the programme.

Aggregate Mining

18. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of the recently issued new guidelines on aggregate mining in England.

Mr. Baldry: No representations have yet been received. The consultation period runs until the end of March.

Sewerage

19. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made on fulfilling undertakings made at the North sea conference regarding treatment of sewerage prior to discharge into the sea.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom will be fulfilling the North sea conference commitments through complying with the 1991 EC Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. This requires the provision of sewage treatment at dates between 1998 and 2005. The Department, the National Rivers Authority and the water industry have for 18 months been working together very closely on the action needed to implement the directive.

House Building

20. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses and how many housing association houses were built in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: The Department's latest estimates show that housing associations completed 23,400 dwellings in Great Britain during the 12 months ending November 1992, and local authorities and new towns completed 4,400 dwellings. Housing association completions are due to rise to over 66,000 in the financial year 1992-93.

The comparable figures for 1979 are 17,800 completions by housing associations and 85,000 by local authorities and new towns.

Local Government Finance

21. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make adjustments to standard spending assessments for the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have now completed the formal period of consultation in respect of the proposals for the 1993-94 settlement which were announced by my right hon. Friend on 26 November 1992. The Government's final decisions based on a careful consideration of all of the representations received will be laid before the House shortly.

27. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the local authority associations about the standard spending assessments for each local authority since 26 November 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Secretary of State has received detailed representations from each of the local authority associations. Full consideration has been given to all of the issues raised by them together with those raised by individual local authorities. The "Local Government Finance Report for 1993-94" incorporating final decisions on standard spending assessments will be laid before the House very shortly.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are used in assessing the area costs allowance of standard spending assessments for local authorities; and if he will make a statement on their application to Gloucestershire.

Mr. Robin Squire: The area cost adjustment is based on an analysis of relative earnings in different parts of the country using the new earnings survey. The analysis focuses on those occupational groups which are most relevant to the labour markets in which local authorities operate. The information is adjusted to remove any distortions which might arise from variations in the mix of occupational groups in different areas. The area cost adjustment also allows for the assumed proportion of expenditure on each service likely to be related to labour costs.

Because the new earnings survey is based on a relatively small sample, the underlying analysis can provide sufficiently robust results only at regional level. This analysis has shown that only London and the south-east face labour costs which are consistently and significantly above the national average. Hence Gloucestershire, along with all other authorities outside the south-east, does not benefit from the area cost adjustment.

Gulf War (Ecological Recovery)

22. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has now made of the length of time taken for the Gulf environment to make a full ecological recovery from military action in the Gulf war.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has made no specific assessment. The June 1992 report of the United Nations Secretary General—a copy of which has been placed in the Library—summarised the results of action to assess and ameliorate the Gulf ecology. It notes some quick and effective recovery in air quality and vegetation. On the details of the impact on the marine environment we await the report of a three-month research vessel cruise carried out in 1992.

Air Quality

23. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he is considering to tackle the problems of air quality affecting British cities.

Mr. Maclean: We set out our proposals in chapter 11 of the White Paper "This Common Inheritance: The Second Year Report" (Cm. 2068), published last October. They include tighter standards on emissions from vehicles and industry, increased effort on air quality monitoring in our cities, and development of new standards and guidelines for a range of pollutants.

Oil Transport

24. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to ensure that environmental considerations are in future taken into account in establishing rules for maritime transport of oil.

29. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to ensure that environmental considerations are in future taken into account in establishing rules for the maritime transport of oil.

Mr. Howard: The International Maritime Organisation has been taking environmental considerations into account in establishing rules for maritime transport since at least the time of the *Torrey Canyon* disaster in 1967. In the United Kingdom, we shall be considering what further changes are desirable in the light of the report of the inquiry by Lord Donaldson of Lymington into the further measures needed to protect the United Kingdom coastline from pollution from merchant shipping. At the European level, following Monday's extraordinary joint Environment/Transport Council, both Ministers of the Environment and the Ministers of Transport will be considering how to improve the regulation of shipping in the light of proposals from the EC Commission.

Rented Accommodation

25. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received over the shortage of affordable rented accommodation.

Sir George Young: We receive many representations about provision of affordable rented housing, we are pursuing a number of policies, both through provision of new units and through measures to maximise use of existing property, to ensure that a decent home is in reach of every family.

Council Tax

26. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of local government expenditure in 1993-94 it is estimated will be financed by the council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: The precise proportion of local government expenditure which will be financed by the council tax in 1993-94 will not be known until all local authorities have set their budgets.

Lead-free Petrol

28. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the current percentage of lead-free petrol sales; and how this figure compares with the three previous years.

Mr. Maclean: At the end of November last year, sales of unleaded petrol accounted for 49·2 per cent. of the United Kingdom market, compared with an average of 19 per cent. in 1989, 34 per cent. in 1990 and 41 per cent. in 1991.

House Building

30. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for house building in the public sector.

Mr. Baldry: It is provisionally estimated that housing associations completed 6,700 new dwellings in England during the three months from September to November 1992. Over the same period some 500 new dwellings were completed by English local authorities. The number of completions by housing associations is due to rise to 66,000 in the financial year 1992-93.

River Pollution

31. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that any proposals to close collieries do not lead to river pollution.

Mr. Maclean: It is for the British Coal and the National Rivers Authority, in the first place, to assess any environmental effects of pit closures and what measures might need to be taken to avoid pollution. My officials and the staff of the NRA have been in frequent contact about pollution from closed mines, and arrangements have been made between British Coal and the NRA for effective liaison over any proposed closures.

Recycling, Chelmsford

32. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the development of recycling in the Chelmsford local authority area.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are responsible for national policy on recycling but it is the duty of each waste collection authority to produce a recycling plan for its area. Chelmsford district council has submitted such a plan to my Department. The Department told the council on 11 November 1992 that it could publish its plan, which should now be made available for public inspection. I suggest that my hon. Friend contacts the council and asks to see its plan, if he has not already done so.

Local Government Employees

33. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of employees in local government in England and Wales.

Mr. Robin Squire: There were 2,406,383 employees in local government in England at June 1992. This is the equivalent of 1,848,607 full-time staff.

Staffing levels of local authorities in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Local Government Finance, Barnet

34. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the standard spending assessment and capping limits of Barnet council for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: I met a delegation consisting of councillors and officials from Barnet council on Monday 21 December. I have given careful consideration to the various points which Barnet has raised, both at that meeting and in correspondence, as I have to all representations received during the consultation period, before reaching final decisions on the revenue support grant settlement and relevant notional amounts, which I intend to announce very shortly.

Environmental Protection

35. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in environmental protection over the last year.

Mr. Maclean: The second year report on the 1990 Environment White Paper, published in October 1992, describes progress made over the last year on over 400 environmental commitments.

Local Authority Corruption

36. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his plans to eliminate local authority corruption.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today, *Official Report*, col. 1022, to my hon. Friends the Members for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) and for Elmet (Mr. Batiste).

House Condition Survey

37. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the English house condition survey.

Sir George Young: The results of the English house condition survey will be published this year.

Colleges, Nottingham

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the reduction in financial support for Nottinghamshire county council as a result of colleges funding themselves; and what has been the effect on Nottingham of the area cost adjustment.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Education element of the standard spending assessment (SSA) for Nottinghamshire county council for 1993-94 reflects the responsibilities which remain with the authority following the transfer of further education. I estimate that in 1992-93 the education SSA element in Nottinghamshire would have been £47·8 million less if the transfer had taken place in that financial year.

Nottinghamshire do as not benefit from the area cost adjustment. Analysis has shown that only London and the south-east face labour costs which are significantly above the national average.

Timber Species

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to support the listing of threatened tropical timber species under the proposed revision of the European Community regulation relating to the implementation of the convention on international trade in endangered species, flora and forna; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Those species of tropical timber which are listed on CITES are already controlled under EC regulations implementing the convention in the Community. We shall seek to ensure that these species are given at least the same level of protection in the new regulation. We shall also support the inclusion of further tropical timber species whenever this is justified by the application of sound scientific criteria relating to their conservation status.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to secure that all timber species are included within annex D of the new EC regulation on the trade in wild plants and animals.

Mr. Maclean: We support the European Commission's proposal to list timber species already protected under CITES in annexes A, B and C of the new regulation. We are also prepared to support the listing of further species in these annexes or in annex D if they meet relevant scientific criteria.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account his decision on the authorisation for the licensing of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield will take of the letter sent to him in October 1992 by the chairman of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, on the ways in which radioactive waste arising from reprocessing foreign spent fuel at Sellafield will be handled.

Mr. Maclean: In accordance with the provisions of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, there has been extensive consultation on the draft authorisations for the Sellafield site. All representations will be taken into account by the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in exercising their powers under the Act.

Hydrochlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the main recommendations which will be submitted by his Department to the Council of Ministers in June 1993 concerning the phasing-out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons by chemical companies.

Mr. Maclean: In discussions on hydrochlorofluorocarbons control within the European Community, the Government will continue to press for stricter controls than those in Copenhagen. These will include a 2015 phase out, and a consumption cap of 2·5 per cent.

Ferro-Alloys, Glossop

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the results, on a week-by-week basis, of the monitoring that has been carried out by his Department of the emissions from the Ferro-Alloys chimney in Glossop, Derbyshire, since August 1992.

Mr. Maclean: Ferro-Alloys Ltd., Glossop is required to monitor continuously the emission from its stack for the rate of release of sulphur dioxide. The maximum permitted emission is 113 kg per hour. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) is provided with the monitoring results on a monthly basis. The results so far are as follows:

September average for the month	97 kg/hr
October average for the month	105 kg/hr
November average for the month	105 kg/hr
December average for the month	98 kg/hr

Check monitoring carried out by HMIP suggests that the monitor over-estimates the actual emission by 10 per cent. This is considered to give a generous safety factor.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to place a ban on the manufacture and import of foams made with chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's policy on CFCs, which follows the approach in the Montreal Protocol and the relevant EC legislation, is to eliminate them by controlling their production and supply rather than their use. We therefore have no plans to ban products containing CFCs.

Project Assessment

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend the range of projects for which an environmental assessment will be required.

Sir George Young: We hope to lay regulations before Easter to implement the proposals announced on 16 December 1992 in my answer to the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend).

Local Government, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time in local government in Liverpool in each year since 1987.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is as follows:

Numbers employed in local government in Liverpool
At June of each year

	(a) Full-time	*(b) Part-time*
1987	20,912	10,356
1988	20,680	10,394
1989	19,360	10,394
1990	19,085	9,705
1991	18,887	9,797
1992	17,532	9,659

Source: Joint Staffing Watch for England

Environmental Statements

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish the proposed new good practice guide on the improvement of the quality of environmental statements.

Sir George Young: We expect to issue guidance later this year on the preparation of environmental statements for projects subject to planning control.

Wild Plants and Animals

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to seek to amend clauses on proof monitoring and the list of species included within the European Community regulations on the trade in wild plants and animals.

Mr. Maclean: Negotiations on the proposed new EC regulation on the wildlife trade are continuing. The lists of species to be included on the annexes have yet to be considered in detail. We hold that the principal controls should be extended to non-CITES species where there are sound scientific reasons, and support a simple system of wider monitoring. The system adopted, including the requirements for proof, must be enforceable and kept as simple as possible.

Planning Policy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the Government's response to the recommendations on planning policy contained in the CBI report "Shaping the Nation".

Mr. Baldry: The Government's response to this report was set out in the speech my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave at the CBI's national conference on 9 November 1992. In that speech, he welcomed the CBI's report and endorsed most of its recommendations. In particular, he welcomed the recommendations on the need for business and local planning authorities to work more closely together, on the importance of a strategic approach based on regional planning guidance and flexible development plans, and on the need for local authorities to set out clear statements of the service they propose to offer to their customers. He indicated that the Government could not agree to the proposal for an annual policy paper with a five-year forward core funding commitment on infrastructure expenditure. A copy of the speech is available in the Library of the House.

Homelessness

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families are in temporary accommodation in Nottingham as a result of mortgage repossessions; and what proportion this constitutes of the overall figure for homelessness in Nottingham.

Mr. Baldry: During the year ending September 1992, 5 per cent. of homeless families accepted in priority need at Nottingham had been the subject of mortgage repossession. The number of such families currently in temporary accommodation is not available.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reduce homelessness among single people without children who are below the age of retirement and other groups of people not accepted as statutorily homeless by local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: Under the Government's rough sleepers initiative in central London we have made £96 million available over three years to provide 950 new places in hostels for people sleeping rough, and 2,900 places in more permanent accommodation for people in hostels to move on to.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his autumn statement that further resources of £86 million would be made available over the next three years to build on the success of the rough sleepers initiative in assisting people who sleep rough in central London. On 18 January my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning issued a discussion paper on the future of the initiative to groups in the voluntary sector and other

interested parties. An announcement about the future of the initiative will be made in the light of responses to that paper.

Nationally, the Department makes grants under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to support the national homelessness advice service and some 150 projects run by voluntary organisations throughout England that provide direct, practical help to homeless people. Resources in 1993-94 will be increased to £6·5 million, from £6·1 million this year.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average cost for keeping families in *(a)* permanent council accommodation and *(b)* temporary accommodation in Nottingham in each of the last three years.

Mr. Baldry: I regret that this information is not available to the Department.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on which local authorities in Great Britain have voluntary appeals procedures for people to appeal against a council's decision to turn them away as not meeting statutory homeless criteria; and if he will issue model criteria for assessing those appeals.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not hold the information requested. Our code of guidance to local authorities about operating the homelessness legislation recommends that authorities should have appeals procedures in place; that any review of a decision should be carried out by a senior officer who should ensure that the case has been properly processed; and that authorities should consider establishing appeals panels at member level with a chairman who is independent of the decision process. Decisions by local authorities about homelessness applications are open to challenge in the courts.

Urban Regeneration

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if the financial memorandum which he proposes to issue to the urban regeneration agency requires the agency to consult *(a)* training and enterprise councils, *(b)* urban development corporations or *(c)* chambers of commerce in areas affected by its proposals before the preparation of its corporate plan;

(2) if the financial memorandum which he proposes to issue to the urban regeneration agency requires the agency to consult local authorities affected by its proposals before the preparation of its corporate plan.

Mr. Robin Squire: We will be issuing clear guidance to the agency about consultation with local authorities, the private sector and other bodies involved in regeneration. It will be for the agency to decide how to put that into effect.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will provide a breakdown of urban regeneration expenditure by region in the most recent year for which data is available.

(2) if he will publish a breakdown of urban regeneration expenditure, by category of expenditure, for each year since 1980 in constant prices.

Mr. Robin Squire: Since 1980, my Department's urban group of programmes has spent as follows:

	Outturn prices £ million	*At 1992-93 constant prices* £ million
1981-82	162	303
1982-83	283	494
1983-84	325	542
1984-85	450	715
1985-86	436	656
1986-87	442	644
1987-88	[1]514	711
1988-89	598	771
1989-90	[2]816	987
1990-91	969	1,083
1991-92	987	1,031
[3]1992-93	1,016	1,016

[1] Includes task forces and Docklands light railway operating costs from 1987-88 onwards.
[2] Includes city action teams from 1989-90 onwards.
[3] Estimated.

Individual programme expenditure for 1992-93 is expected to be as follows:

	Estimated outturn £ million
City challenge[1]	63·5
Urban programme	243·1
City grants	59·6
Derelict land (net of receipts)[2]	94·6
Urban development corporations and Docklands light railway (net of receipts)	514·5
Manchester Olympic bid	13·1
Task forces	23·0
City action teams	4·4
	1,015·8

[1] Programme also supported by £19 million a year from the Housing Corporation.
[2] Includes provision for derelict land research.

Programme information for previous years is available in relevant Public Expenditure White Papers and the Department's annual reports; the 1993 annual report will be published shortly.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish an estimated breakdown of the total urban home expenditure for 1993-94 between *(a)* city challenge, *(b)* urban programme, *(c)* urban development corporations and *(d)* other.

Mr. Robin Squire: In 1993-94, my Department will be providing specific urban resources as follows:

	1993-94 £ million
(a) City challenge[1]	213·5
(b) Urban programme	175·6
(c) Urban development corporations and Docklands light railway	337·4
(d) Other[2]	225·9

[1] Programme also supported by £19 million a year from the Housing Corporation.
[2] Includes city grants, derelict land grant, Manchester olympic bid, task forces and city action teams.

Further information will be published shortly in the Department's 1993 annual report.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the resources for the constituent programmes of the urban regeneration agency next year will be subsumed within the total urban block expenditure of his Department.

Mr. Robin Squire: Following the autumn statement, my right hon. and learned Friend announced that £177 million would be made available from within the urban block for city grant and derelict land grant programmes in 1993-94, including DLG receipts and administrative set up costs for the urban regeneration agency. These programmes, together with DTI's English Estates, will transfer to the new agency when it comes into being.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a breakdown of the proposed urban block expenditure in the current year and next year by region.

Mr. Robin Squire: Expected breakdown of proposed urban block expenditure, for the current year, is as follows:

Region	*£ million*
North West	166·1
Northern	148·5
Eastern	4·0
South East	1·2
South West	30·4
London	[1]318·2
East Midlands	33·8
Merseyside	62·7
Yorkshire/Humberside	94·9
West Midlands	142·1
Not yet attributable	28·3
Total	[2]1,030·2

[1] Includes Dockland Light Railway operating costs.
[2] Total for city challenge pacemakers excludes £19 million from the Housing Corporation.
[2] Total includes £14·4 million derelict land grant receipts.

A regional breakdown of 1993-94 urban block expenditure is not yet available.

Nottinghamshire (Funding)

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what method of calculation has been used to establish the reduction in funding for Nottinghamshire county council arising from further education colleges funding themselves in future.

Mr. Robin Squire: The standing spending assessment (SSA) element for education in 1993-94 reflects the responsibilities of local authorities for all aspects of education, including those of further education which will remain the responsibility of authorities. There has been no reduction in the 1993-94 SSA. for 1992-93, £2·3 billion was implicitly allowed for further education within SSAs of which it is estimated that £47·7 million was attributable to Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how long it is planned to take for affected areas in Nottinghamshire to receive proposed extra money to deal with their special needs in the event of pit closures going ahead.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department is making available £5 million under the coalfield areas fund and considering enterprise zone designations for areas which may be affected by possible closures. We have already received bids in respect of the coalfield areas fund from local authorities in Nottingham and elsewhere, in order that resources can be made available as soon as decisions are taken following the coal review.

These initiatives are part of the substantial packages of measures announced by the President of the Board of Trade on 13 and 19 October 1992. Decisions on the implementation of these measures will be taken in the light of the outcome of the coal review.

Housing Associations

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to prevent housing associations from buying new commercially built property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have no plans to prevent housing associations from buying new commercially built property, providing such property offers good value for money in addressing local housing needs.

As part of the £750 million package to boost the housing market in the United Kingdom, which was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn statement, £580 million was made available to the Housing Corporation to enable housing associations to purchase new, empty and repossessed properties in England.

The proportion of new properties bought so far is high, but this is because these are the deals which can be completed most quickly. The corporation expects the proportion of private treaty and repossession sales to increase significantly. All purchases will reduce the current over-supply of homes on the market and so have a beneficial effect in stabilising prices and stimulating confidence.

I am delighted with the rapid progress of the package so far, which has seen 11,812 purchases approved by 22 January. I congratulate the Housing Corporation and the housing associations involved.

Housing, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of housing starts in Hampshire in each year since 1987 by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* housing associations and *(c)* private companies.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of housebuilding starts by sector for each local authority area in Hampshire are shown in the publication "Local Housing Statistics". Figures for 1987 to 1991 are shown in tables 1(c) to 1(g) of the October 1992 edition—issue number 103. A copy of this publication is in the Library.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households were accepted as homeless and in priority need in each Hampshire district council area in each year since 1987.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities in England report the number of households they accept as homeless and in priority need in their annual housing investment programme (HIP1) returns.

The available information for individual authorities in Hampshire for 1987, 1988 and 1989 are in column C1B of

the "HIP1 All Items Prints" for those years, for 1990 and 1991 in column C2D1 of the "HIP1 All Items Prints" for those years and for 1992 in column C2A1 of the "1992 HIP1 All Items Print".

Copies of all documents are in the Library.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average level of housing association rents in Hampshire in each of the years 1987 to 1992 expressed in *(a)* actual prices and *(b)* 1989 prices.

Mr. Baldry: The averages on a weekly basis of registered fair rents for unfurnished housing association accommodation, and of assured tenancy rents for housing association lettings, in Hampshire are as follows:

£ per week including services

	Fair rents		*Assured tenancies*	
	Actual prices £	*1989 prices* £	*Actual prices* £	*1989 prices* £
1987	26·96	30·48	n/a	n/a
1988	26·81	28·89	n/a	n/a
1989	32·28	32·28	n/a	n/a
1990	33·79	30·87	39·91	36·46
1991	39·33	33·94	45·29	39·08
1992[1]	41·71	34·79	50·46	42·09

Source: Fair rents; DOE Rent Officers' Statistics.
Assured tenancies; National Federation of Housing. Associations CORE data base.
[1] January—September.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environ nent what was the average level of local authority rents in Hampshire in each of the years 1987 to 1992 expressed in *(a)* actual prices and *(b)* 1987 prices.

Mr. Baldry: Information for Hampshire is as follows:

Average weekly unrebated local authority rents (£ per week)

In April:	*Actual prices* £	*1987 prices* £
1987	19·63	19·63
1988	21·18	20·38
1989	23·18	20·65
1990	26·61	21·65
1991	30·66	23·45
1992	33·89	24·86

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of sulphur dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom; and what the level was two years ago.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) earlier today.

Repossession Orders

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many mortgage possession actions were entered in county courts in England and Wales in 1992; how many suspended orders were made; and how many outright orders were made.

Mr. Baldry: The information has been published today and placed in the Library.

Manchester Housing Committee

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reply the Minister for Housing and Planning is making to the letter sent to him on 18 January by the chairman of Manchester's housing committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has today written to the chairman of Manchester city council's housing committee explaining that the figure of 5,000 empty council homes in Manchester, which he quoted in his interview with Brian Walden on 17 January, is based on the council's own returns. It represents the total number of vacant council properties and does not distinguish between capital voids (ie properties awaiting demolition or improvement) and management voids (ie. units of accommodation which became vacant through the movement of tenants).

Landfill Pricing

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the report on landfill pricing commissioned by his Department in the summer of 1992.

Mr. Maclean: I intend that the report will be published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office next month.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *656*, how much of the funding of each urban programme authority listed was spent on crime prevention work for each of the last three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not available.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much funding each city challenge authority received at 1992 prices for each of the last three years; and how much of this was spent on crime prevention work.

Mr. Robin Squire: A total of £7·5 million will be made available to each city challenge authority in 1992-93, which is the first year of city challenge funding.

City challenge expenditure covers a wide range of activities contributing to urban regeneration. Each city challenge action plan reflects local needs and opportunities. Some plans place high priority on crime

prevention expenditure. However, it is not possible to quantify accurately expenditure directed solely at crime prevention.

HIP Allocations

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what housing improvement programme bid was made by Darlington borough council, and what was the actual allocation given for each year since 1983.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the housing investment programme is given in the table. The figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are not directly comparable with those for earlier years because of the revisions to the capital finance system introduced in April 1990.

Housing investment programme (HIP) bids by Darlington borough council, HIP allocations and housing capital expenditure, 1983-84 to 1992-93

£ thousand

	HIP bids	*HIP allocations*[1]	*Housing capital expenditure*
1983-84	4,475	2,502	4,186
1984-85	4,678	2,387	4,221
1985-86	4,869	2,052	3,474
1986-87	5,749	1,689	2,865
1987-88	6,950	1,639	3,569
1988-89	5,485	1,538	3,974
1989-90	6,373	1,156	3,883
New capital finance system[2]			
1990-91	5,468	2,081	2,476
1991-92	6,253	2,124	[3]2,989
1992-93	6,785	1,643	[4]3,623

[1] Allocations for 1989-90 and earlier years are final allocations, i.e., the initial allocation plus any increases to the initial allocation made in-year. The allocations figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are the HIP allocations (housing annual capital guidelines plus specified capital grants) issued prior to the start of the financial year. These figures do not include any supplementary credit approvals issued during the year.

[2] From 1990-91, under the new capital finance system, the HIP allocation is an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure rather than a directly borrowing approval. Borrowing approval is now conveyed by the single, all service, basic credit approval.

[3] Provisional.

[4] Estimated.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will show by region the housing improvement programme bids made and the allocation given for each year since 1982-83.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the housing investment programme is given in the table. The figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are not directly comparable with those for earlier years because of the revisions to the capital finance system introduced in April 1990.

Housing Investment Programme (HIP) bids, HIP allocations[1,2] and local authority housing capital expenditure by region 1982-83 to 1992-93

£ thousand

1982-83

DOE regions	*HIP bids*	*HIP allocations*	*Housing capital expenditure*
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	211,149	129,696	196,623
Yorkshire and Humberside	322,229	214,813	286,583
East Midlands	222,136	152,916	242,192
Eastern	249,754	152,985	281,711
Greater London	834,883	630,961	848,027
South East	316,018	211,882	338,330
South West	174,509	138,691	213,634
West Midlands	375,445	204,601	300,064
North West (including Cumbria)	492,519	355,393	452,269
Unallocated[3]	—	—	75,067
England	3,198,642	2,191,938	3,234,500

£ thousand

1983-84

DOE regions	*HIP bids*	*HIP allocations*	*Housing capital expenditure*
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	214,825	119,543	196,784
Yorkshire and Humberside	350,644	210,798	302,454
East Midlands	237,306	159,257	254,429
Eastern	280,535	161,744	313,747
Greater London	891,165	596,308	913,378
South East	331,701	235,447	406,041
South West	210,503	147,620	250,040
West Midlands	335,101	243,155	354,800
North West (including Cumbria)	517,041	359,275	499,611
Unallocated[3]	—	—	80,116
England	3,368,821	2,233,147	3,571,400

£ thousand

1984-85

DOE regions	*HIP bids*	*HIP allocations*	*Housing capital expenditure*
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	252,633	95,803	174,094
Yorkshire and Humberside	448,391	166,769	250,978
East Midlands	279,750	114,769	219,408
Eastern	359,215	138,040	343,076
Greater London	1,076,208	559,831	982,768
South East	446,847	187,414	418,363
South West	282,544	113,760	226,543
West Midlands	429,431	186,170	313,648
North West (including Cumbria)	609,042	289,927	441,485
Unallocated[3]	—	—	130,537
England	4,184,061	1,852,483	3,500,900

1985-86

£ thousand

DOE regions	HIP bids	HIP allocations	Housing capital expenditure
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	257,956	80,132	145,260
Yorkshire and Humberside	375,035	140,326	233,733
East Midlands	277,908	96,812	179,738
Eastern	404,675	123,705	309,108
Greater London	1,223,525	487,500	779,899
South East	494,149	166,480	354,171
South West	287,601	101,021	193,600
West Midlands	458,472	165,767	274,663
North West (including Cumbria)	685,710	243,720	407,237
Unallocated[3]	—	—	145,391
England	4,465,031	1,605,463	3,022,800

1986-87

£ thousand

DOE regions	HIP bids	HIP allocations	Housing capital expenditure
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	311,178	75,476	152,889
Yorkshire and Humberside	561,179	125,312	222,429
East Midlands	274,588	85,471	196,831
Eastern	429,795	106,760	302,005
Greater London	1,616,891	445,505	838,249
South East	506,657	148,141	363,876
South West	305,507	101,617	197,307
West Midlands	645,585	154,398	274,508
North West (including Cumbria)	730,052	215,950	382,852
Unallocated[3]	—	—	86,354
England	5,381,432	1,458,630	3,017,300

1987-88

£ thousand

DOE regions	HIP bids	HIP allocations	Housing capital expenditure
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	293,575	72,539	174,314
Yorkshire and Humberside	617,966	125,103	264,620
East Midlands	297,703	84,685	201,358
Eastern	478,892	102,705	327,060
Greater London	1,935,446	415,560	890,413
South East	554,364	138,627	430,473
South West	319,253	89,290	213,439
West Midlands	691,951	149,253	286,251
North West (including Cumbria)	790,314	222,296	431,672
Unallocated[3]	—	—	52,100
England	5,979,464	1,400,058	3,271,700

1988-89

£ thousand

DOE regions	HIP bids	HIP allocations	Housing capital expenditure
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	306,112	73,907	166,471
Yorkshire and Humberside	555,697	123,706	288,502
East Midlands	273,526	72,983	212,383
Eastern	536,860	81,935	427,654
Greater London	2,053,119	427,422	908,759
South East	644,217	116,224	533,282
South West	309,316	79,033	257,817
West Midlands	710,821	142,301	309,323
North West (including Cumbria)	838,917	213,130	434,326
Unallocated[3]	—	—	65,783
England	6,228,585	1,330,640	3,604,300

1989-90

£ thousand

DOE regions	HIP bids	HIP allocations	Housing capital expenditure
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	338,007	62,061	185,597
Yorkshire and Humberside	544,419	106,288	360,977
East Midlands	299,017	60,687	291,868
Eastern	[illegible]32	63,720	572,188
Greater London	2,024,910	329,458	1,504,462
South East	717,437	85,479	662,952
South West	360,668	62,319	411,579
West Midlands	603,263	127,808	423,342
North West (including Cumbria)	855,083	197,055	531,995
Unallocated[3]	—	—	181,040
England	6,305,436	1,094,874	5,126,000

1990-91

£ thousand

DOE regions	HIP bids	HIP allocations	Housing capital expenditure
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	329,145	99,103	142,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	573,678	171,199	271,000
East Midlands	319,611	104,420	185,000
Eastern	574,225	159,256	347,000
Greater London	2,109,436	538,872	791,000
South East	702,528	199,806	416,000
South West	383,869	153,269	250,000
West Midlands	665,650	198,040	313,000
North West (including Cumbria)	693,061	265,035	386,000
Unallocated[3]	—	—	63,000
England	6,351,203	1,889,000	3,164,000

1991-92[4]

£ thousand

DOE regions	HIP bids	HIP allocations	Housing capital expenditure
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	332,577	99,184	148,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	603,789	169,217	244,000
East Midlands	282,427	111,815	177,000

DOE regions	HIP bids	HIP allocations	Housing capital expenditure
Eastern	499,846	151,559	318,000
Greater London	1,823,538	528,064	625,000
South East	655,862	195,103	314,000
South West	380,114	155,399	220,000
West Midlands	743,105	204,137	269,000
North West (including Cumbria)	764,503	246,615	354,000
Unallocated[3]	—	—	51,000
England	6,085,761	1,861,093	2,720,000

£ thousand

1992-93

DOE regions	HIP bids	HIP allocations	Housing capital expenditure
Northern (excluding Cumbria)	331,845	88,263	n/a
Yorkshire and Humberside	545,798	162,516	n/a
East Midlands	266,485	117,693	n/a
Eastern	512,101	142,478	n/a
Greater London	1,860,531	548,158	n/a
South East	633,802	181,966	n/a
South West	359,321	140,473	n/a
West Midlands	696,595	201,916	n/a
North West (including Cumbria)	818,779	243,249	n/a
Unallocated[3]	—	—	n/a
England	6,025,257	1,826,712	2,600,000

[1] Allocations for the years up to and including 1989-90 are final allocations, ie the initial allocation plus any increases to the initial allocation made in-year. The allocations figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are the HIP allocations (housing annual capital guidelines plus specified capital grants) issued prior to the start of the financial year. These figures do not include any supplementary credit approvals issued during the year.

[2] From 1990-91, under the new capital finance system, the HIP allocation is an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure rather than a directly borrowing approval. Borrowing approval is now conveyed by the single, all service, basic credit approval.

[3] The regional expenditure totals do not sum to the overall England totals as these totals include some expenditure (eg the housing element of the urban programme, leasing) for which regional estimates are not available and because the England totals have been reconciled with other expenditure data reported by authorities.

[4] Provisional.

[5] Estimated.

City Grant

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region the city grant projects funded in each of the last three years, and the amount of funding allocated.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have today placed in the Library of the House details of city grant projects approved in each of the last three financial years by region. The list excludes projects which were approved but where the applicant did not proceed.

Chemical Industry

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the first tranche of the process guidance notes for the chemical industry sector processes prescribed under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will be available.

Mr. Maclean: I am pleased to report that nine notes, which are the first tranche of the chief inspector's guidance to inspectors in the chemical industry sector, are published today. These notes cover organic chemical processes, and have been drawn up following completion of research reviews. Relevant industries and other bodies have been given the opportunity to put forward their comments. The notes will provide a sound network within which inspectors can assess applications for the authorisation of new processes and existing processes. They represent a further stage in the introduction of integrated pollution control.

A set of the notes will be placed in the Library of the House as soon as they are published.

The preparation of guidance notes for the second and third tranches of chemical industry processes to come under control is well advanced. Further notes will be published later in the year.

House Purchases

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses have so far been purchased under the special package announced in the autumn statement; and from whom they have been brought.

Mr. Howard: Of the £750 million announced in the autumn statement to boost the housing market in the United Kingdom, £577 million went to the Housing Corporation to enable housing associations to purchase new, empty and repossessed properties in England. The latest figures from the corporation show that by 22 January approvals had been granted for the purchase of 11,812 properties; 3,394 from private individuals; 425 from mortgage lenders in possession; 7,724 from builders or developers, and 269 from other sources.

Another £20 million was made available to the corporation to support the tenants' incentive scheme and £30 million to local authorities to support the cash incentive scheme, to encourage housing association and local authority tenants in England to move out and buy their own homes.

Waste Disconnections

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families with children were disconnected from water supplies due to non-payment of water rates in 1992.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* Information on disconnections of water supplies to families with children is not available. Total numbers of domestic disconnections for 1991-92 were given in my answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) on 4 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *234-35*. Information on domestic disconnections for the six month period from 1 April to 30 September

1992 was given in my answer to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) on 18 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *204-5*.

Productivity Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the average annual percentage growth in productivity in the *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* construction industry in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available in each member country of the European Community.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* A comparison of labour productivity in the manufacturing industry between the United Kingdom and its major trading partners can be found in the Treasury Bulletin dated summer 1992, a copy of which can be found in the Library of the House. The available figures for other members of the European Community are set out in the table:

(a) Manufacturing

(Year-on-year changes: Percentages)

	Belgium	*France*	*Italy*	*Luxembourg*	*Denmark*	*West Germany*	*Spain*
1982	6·76	2·24	1·88	3·00	2·01	0·55	n/a
1983	8·00	2·46	4·92	7·42	6·53	4·62	n/a
1984	3·76	1·24	9·41	12·52	−0·44	3·20	n/a
1985	2·51	2·59	4·40	5·88	−2·36	2·10	n/a
1986	1·95	1·79	2·84	−0·04	−3·42	−1·56	n/a
1987	4·88	2·36	4·88	3·18	−2·78	−2·94	0·87
1988	7·24	5·33	6·16	15·16	2·13	3·13	9·51
1989	2·63	3·82	2·57	7·69	1·48	3·12	0·14

Note: Manufacturing is defined in terms of sections 5 to 8 of the Standard International Trade Classifications.

For the construction industry, the available figures are:

(b) Construction industry

(Year-on-year changes: Percentages)

	Belgium	*France*	*Italy*	*Luxembourg*	*Denmark*	*West Germany*	*Spain*	*Netherlands*	*United Kingdom*
1982	3·1	1·8	−3·2	−2·0	1·3	0·6	n/a	6·0	13·2
1983	2·2	1·9	−1·3	2·7	−1·7	4·1	n/a	5·9	11·4
1984	2·0	4·2	2·6	0·7	1·4	0·7	n/a	3·4	2·1
1985	0·9	3·5	1·4	0·2	2·7	−0·9	n/a	−0·1	0·2
1986	2·8	2·8	1·8	4·9	8·1	2·7	n/a	−1·7	9·2
1987	2·5	0·2	2·5	−0·3	1·5	−0·3	−3·2	−1·4	2·2
1988	6·8	3·2	2·9	5·6	4·4	2·2	0·2	8·4	−0·7
1989	0·0	0·5	4·4	1·4	−2·5	2·0	2·4	2·8	−8·6
1990	1·2	0·2	−0·2	−0·8	2·0	0·0	1·8	2·2	n/a

Notes:

Figures for Ireland, Greece and Portugal are not available.

This table has been compiled using OECD data on the construction industry contribution to GDP, expressed in constant prices, divided by OECD data on all persons in the industry. OECD data for the United Kingdom has been expressed at constant prices using the DOE All New Construction Output Price Index.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *264*, for what reasons he has decided not to place copies of responses to the first consultation exercise on contaminated land in the Library prior to his decision being announced.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* In my previous answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *264*, I indicated that we are still considering the way forward on the proposals. We are still receiving representations on the issues set out in our first consultation paper, which were subsequently modified in our second paper. We will publish responses once a final decision has been taken on the whole question of registers.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 January 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many justices of the peace are aged *(a)* under 30 years, *(b)* under 40 years, *(c)* under 50 years, *(d)* under 60 years *(e)* over 60 years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information can be supplied only at disproportionate cost. The aim of the advisory committees which advise the Lord Chancellor and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the appointment of justices of the peace is to find as many candidates as possible under the age of 55, and particularly those in their 30s and 40s, in order to maintain a balanced age structure.

House Buying

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to propose amendments to current legislation in order to secure that any commitment to buy or sell a house made orally, or in writing, is legally enforceable in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The law already allows any house buyer and seller to enter into a binding contract once the terms of that contract have been agreed. The Government do not propose to alter the legal requirement that contracts for the sale or other disposition of an interest in land shall be made in writing.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Cox: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to publish his Department's proposals for the reorganisation of the magistrates courts service in outer London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A consultation paper on the future geographical and structural organisation of the magistrates' courts service in the Greater London area will be published by my Department next month. decisions will be made following the three-month consultation period in the light of responses received.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has received for removing the necessity for defendants to be represented at unopposed adjournment hearings in the magistrates courts; and what estimate he has made of the savings that might thereby be achieved.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Law Society has made such a proposal. The Lord Chancellor will be considering how best to take it forward. Estimates of the likely financial effect will be produced in the course of that consideration.

Law Centres

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans the Lord Chancellor's Department has to promote the development of law centres.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Law centres are primarily a local service and as such their development is primarily a local concern. However, the Legal Aid Board and the Law Centres Federation have recently established a working party to examine ways in which new arrangements could be made for the payment of legal aid work by law centres and other agencies which employ solicitors involved in providing advice, assistance and representation.

Legal Aid

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the amount of legal aid paid out in North Yorkshire for each of the last four years; and if he will give the number of cases supported in each of those years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley), on 20 January, at columns *261-62*. North Yorkshire is covered by two Legal Aid Board area offices at Newcastle-upon-Tyne and at Leeds. It is not possible to distinguish between assisted persons residing in North Yorkshire and other areas served by those offices.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has received for cost penalties to be imposed on legal aid matrimonial litigants when their non-co-operation has led to delays occasioning increased costs; and what estimate he has made of the savings that might thereby be achieved.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Law Society has made such a proposal, which it acknowledges needs further thought. Estimates of the likely financial effect will be produced in due course.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has received to limit the availability of legal aid for the costs of *(a)* counsel being attended by a solicitors' representative and *(b)* two counsel when a QC is assigned; and what estimate he has made of the savings that might thereby be achieved.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Law Society has made such proposals, though they have been under consideration in the efficiency commission for some time and it has hitherto been difficult to secure any restraint on costs as a result. The Lord Chancellor will be considering how best to take these proposals forward. Estimates of the likely financial effect will be produced in the course of that consideration.

Legal Fees

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals his Department has received for fees for legal work to remain at the levels set in April 1992; and what estimate he has made of the savings that might thereby be achieved.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Both the General Council of the Bar and the Law Society have proposed that the statutory

rates for legal aid work in 1993-94 should remain at 1992-93 levels. This proposal formed part of a series of measures put forward by the professions as an alternative to measures to control legal aid expenditure announced by the Lord Chancellor. However, as the Lord Chancellor had not intended to propose an uprating for 1993-94 the professions' proposal would not achieve any savings other than those already considered by the Lord Chancellor.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Witness Protection

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review rules of evidence procedures, exchange of statutory requirements and court procedures in order to provide better protection of witnesses who are called to aid the prosecution of violent offenders.

Mr. Jack: A number of safeguards have been introduced to protect victims and other witnesses from intimidation or fear of intimidation. These include measures to prevent an individual's address appearing as a matter of course on witness statements; to delay, except in certain circumstances, disclosure of the address until the start of summary trial, full committal or Crown court trial; to allow child witnesses to give evidence in certain cases by closed-circuit television and to allow a video recording of an earlier investigative interview with a child witness to be accepted as evidence in chief; and to provide anonymity for victims of rape and other specified sexual offences. The operation of these, and other, safeguards is kept under general review, but we have no present plans for a more formal exercise.

Bail Offences

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what figures he has on the level of offenders re-offending while on bail, for the latest convenient period.

Mr. Jack: Such figures are not held centrally. Our research indicates that although the absolute number of offences committed by people on bail has risen by about 26,000 between 1985 and 1990, as the number of people granted bail has increased, the proportion of those found guilty of offences committed while they were on bail has remained at about 10 to 12 per cent.—"Offending whilst on bail: a survey of recent studies", Home Office research and planning unit paper 65, February 1992.

The incidence of offending on bail is a matter of concern and work is in hand to tackle the problem. This includes action research which is being undertaken in five areas and is designed to identify the scope for improving the bail decision-taking process, and thus minimising the risk of offending on bail.

Leicestershire Police

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what asssessment he has made of the effects of reductions in funding of Leicestershire police force on the number of posts and the level of overtime; and what representations he has received on the subject.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The force is currently holding 29 vacancies against an authorised establishment of 1,853. Overtime levels have been reduced as part of measures to keep within budgetary constraints. No representations have been received on this subject.

Prison Transfers

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the prisoners transferred between 1982 and 1992 from prisons in Northern Ireland to prisons in Great Britain were convicted of scheduled offences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the nature of the offences of prisoners transferred between United Kindom jurisdictions is not held centrally.

I will write to the hon. Gentleman with the information requested.

Immigration

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when an application for entry clearance made on 2 July 1992 to the Islamabad high commission can be processed; what is the average waiting time for an interview with the immigration service; and how long the average waiting time is for the report to be sent to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and for a decision to be made.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Where the entry clearance officer refers an application for inquiries in the United Kingdom by the immigration service, these inquiries should normally be completed within three months of receipt. If the hon. Member is concerned about the time taken to deal with any individual case, I shall be willing to look into it.

President Clinton

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the new United States Administration concerning inquiries undertaken by his Department over whether Mr. Clinton had applied for United Kingdom citizenship.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None.

Prisoners' Complaints

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he can report progress on his plans for the independent review of prisoners' complaints.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to announce that I have now agreed arrangements to appoint a prisons ombudsman to consider grievances from prisoners who have failed to obtain satisfaction from the present internal complaints system. He or she will have a wide remit to consider issues affecting individual prisoners. It will extend to grievances relating to contracted out prisons. It will not include complaints about non-prison bodies—the courts, the police and the Parole Board for example.

The prisons ombudsman will be able to consider the merits of cases as well as the procedures involved. He or she will make recommendations to the chief executive of the Prison Service, and to myself as necessary. The ombudsman will publish an annual report which will be laid before the House.

I will look to the prisons ombudsman to maintain good liaison with Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons and

with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. The rights of prisoners to approach the latter through a Member of Parliament will of course be unaffected by this new appointment. The post will be publicly advertised shortly. My aim is to announce an appointment in the spring in order to have the new office operating and considering grievances by the end of this year.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what analysis he has made of the benefits arising out of the operation of the scheme that gives tax relief for mortgage interest payments and of whether this represents value for the revenue forgone when compared with the cost of a scheme of universal housing benefits.

Mr. Dorrell: We keep the costs and benefits of all tax reliefs under continuous review. Mortgage interest relief helps some 9·8 million borrowers to buy their own homes, and is estimated to cost £5·2 billion in 1992-93.

Cigarette Consumption

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the tax revenue implications of the target to reduce the consumption of cigarettes by at least 40 per cent. by the year 2000 in the Department of Health White Paper, "Health of the Nation".

Sir John Cope: As part of the "Health of the Nation" commitment to reduce the consumption of cigarettes, the Government have undertaken at least to maintain the real level of taxes on tobacco products. A 40 per cent. fall in consumption of tobacco products would produce a 40 per cent. fall in the tobacco excise duty base. For the present real level of excise duties on tobacco products, this would represent an annual loss to the Exchequer of around £2·4 billion, in 1992-93 prices.

National Lottery

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what rate he intends to tax the national lottery.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend will make an announcement about the rate in due course.

Autumn Budget

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects purdah to commence for Treasury Ministers in advance of the autumn Budget.

Mr. Lamont: I shall be deciding that in due course.

Value Added Tax (Charities)

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the income to the Treasury in each of the last five years as a result of VAT levied on registered charities.

Sir John Cope: Information about the amount of VAT borne by charities is not collated centrally, but it is estimated that charities now pay up to £250 million in VAT each year.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries, for each of the last 10 years, where International Monetary Fund conditionality has been imposed for receipt of United Kingdom unilateral aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 January 1993]:* It is not possible to list all those occasions on which individual British aid commitments were made in association with International Monetary Fund reform programmes. But British balance of payments aid is usually provided only to countries that have programmes of structural adjustment agreed with the International Monetary Fund and the World bank in place. In doing so, we often act in concert with other donors. The objective is to enable recipients to purchase urgently needed imports to sustain or improve production and assist economic recovery. Commitments of such aid in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available were made to the following countries:

1982
Sudan
Zaire
Jamaica
Bangladesh
Pakistan

1983
Kenya
Sudan
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe
Jamaica
Bangladesh

1984
Ghana
Malawi
Sudan
Uganda
Zaire
Zambia
Zimbabwe
Jamaica
Bangladesh
Maldives

1985
Ghana
Mozambique
Somalia
Sudan
Zimbabwe
Bangladesh
Jamaica

1986
Gambia
Ghana
Mozambique
Somalia
Tanzania
Zaire
Zambia
Bangladesh
Jamaica

1987
Gambia
Ghana
Mozambique

Somalia
Tanzania
Uganda
Zaire
Zimbabwe
Bolivia
Jamaica
Bangladesh

1988
Gambia
Ghana
Kenya
Malawi
Mozambique
Sudan
Tanzania
Uganda
Bangladesh

1989
Gambia
Ghana
Kenya
Malawi
Mozambique
Nigeria
Senegal
Tanzania
Uganda
Guyana
Bangladesh

1990
Gambia
Ghana
Nigeria
Tanzania
Uganda
Zambia
Jamaica

1991
Ghana
Malawi
Mozambique
Nigeria
Tanzania
Uganda
Zimbabwe
Jamaica
Nicaragua
Bangladesh
India

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from Arab countries neighbouring Iraq about the recent bombing raids.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received no formal representations from Arab countries neighbouring Iraq about the recent bombing.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the nuclear installations declared by Iraq to the International Atomic Energy Agency up to July 1990 and those subsequently identified by United Nations inspectors.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* Parts of Iraq's principal nuclear site, Tuwaitha, were declared to the IAEA before July 1990. These facilities were covered by a safeguards agreement.

Details of nuclear installations subsequently identified by United Nations inspectors are contained in the reports of inspections carried out by the IAEA under the terms of Security Council resolution 687. Copies of these reports have been placed in the Library of the House.

Japanese Labour Camp Survivors

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support the claim of the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association for compensation from the Japanese Government.

Mr. Goodlad: Her Majesty's Government sympathise deeply with those who suffered so dreadfully as prisoners of war of the Japanese during the second world war. We owe a great debt of gratitude to them. However, the question of compensation was settled in the 1951 peace treaty with Japan.

Although the Government could not directly associate itself with the private attempts of groups to obtain further compensation, we would not, of course, impede or obstruct these attempts, with whose aims we sympathise.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many additional entry clearance officer posts it is planned to create in Dhaka in 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Entry clearance staffing at posts abroad is based on current and forecast demand for entry clearances. We review such staffing at all posts during the first quarter of each year, and in the case of larger posts such as Dhaka, at quarterly intervals thereafter.

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present waiting time for first interview for the four categories of applicants in Dhaka, Bangladesh; and what were the waiting times for the same categories one year and two years earlier.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The waiting time in months for first interview waiting times at the end of 1992, 1991 and 1990 were:

	Q1	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*
1992	3	6	7	9
1991	3	5	6	10
1990	2	3	3	9

Queue 1: Applicants with a claim to British citizenship, aged dependants over 70, compassionate cases;
Queue 2: Spouses and dependent children under 18;
Queue 3: Other dependants; fiance(e)s, others for settlement;
Queue 4: Reapplicants.

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current entry clearance officer staffing at the British high commission in Dhaka; and what is the full staffing complement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ideal entry clearance officer establishment in Dhaka is 12; there are currently 12 in post.

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearance officers in Dhaka are immigration officers on secondment from the immigration service.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are currently eight immigration officers on secondment as entry clearance officers in Dhaka.

TRANSPORT

Fuel (Tax Differentials)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of the decision at the last Budget to widen the tax differential between diesel and other fuels on the use of *(a)* diesel fuel and *(b)* diesel vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: At the last Budget the duties on diesel fuel and unleaded petrol were both increased in line with inflation—4·5 per cent.—while the duty on leaded petrol was increased by an extra 3 per cent. It is too early to assess the impact of the changes in duty. However, the number and proportion of cars and light vans using diesel fuel have increased rapidly over the last 10 years and this trend is expected to continue.

Airports (Night Restrictions)

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what review he carried out of the night restrictions which currently apply at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The current night restrictions were set in 1988 for a five year period. They end this year and if the current regime is not extended or replaced there will be no night restrictions. I have therefore carried out a wide-ranging review.

I have taken the opportunity to include Stansted in the review so that local people there should have the same level of protection against aircraft noise at night as people living around the other two airports.

The proposals maintain the policy of continuing to protect local communities from excessive exposure to aircraft noise at night without imposing unnecessary restrictions on the airline industry.

The aviation industry makes an important contribution to the economy of the south-east and to the United Kingdom as a whole. It is important for us to make reasonable provision for this—otherwise airlines and airports abroad will seize the business and the prosperity that goes with it. Equally, it is important that those who live around our airports should be able to enjoy a good night's sleep.

Our proposals for a new regime of night restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted are set out in a consultation paper, issued today. The proposals seek to give more flexibility to airlines but have been designed expressly to favour movements by the quieter types.

We are asking for comments on the proposals to be with us by Friday 30 April.

Transport and Environment Ministers

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the outcome of the joint meeting of Transport and Environment Ministers in Brussels on 25 January.

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom supported calls for an early meeting of EC Ministers to consider the implications of the oil pollution incidents at La Coruna and on Shetland and took a leading part in the proceedings. The United Kingdom was represented by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my noble Friend the Minister for Shipping and myself.

Prior to the meeting, the United Kingdom circulated a report on the Shetland oil spill. I am placing copies of this report in the Library. In it we drew attention to the work we have set in hand following this incident, including the accident investigation by the marine accident investigation board, the inquiry under Lord Donaldson of Lymington and the ecological steering group being set up in Scotland. We called for concerted action at national, European and global levels, emphasising the importance of the international Maritime Organisation—IMO—and by flag states throughout the world if real improvements in ship safety and pollution prevention are to be secured. We suggested early ratification by member states of the protocols to the international liability and fund conventions agreed at the diplomatic conference in London last year which provide for increased compensation amounts, and ratification of the salvage convention; and we encouraged early adoption of the EC directive concerning requirements for vessels carrying dangerous or polluting goods which was agreed last month during the United Kingdom presidency. We also suggested urgent examination of other possible measures including additional guidance to tanker operators and masters, routing measures, extension of radar coverage and vessel traffic service schemes, the role of salvage tugs and further port state control action.

The Council commended the United Kingdom on its prompt and effective response to the Braer incident. It recognised that further concerted action at national and Community level and in the IMO is essential to minimise threats to the marine and coastal environments from oil and hazardous cargoes. It urges the Community and member states to support the on-going work in IMO relevant to this objective. The United Kingdom has been urging the Commission to bring forward as a matter of urgency its communication "A Common Policy for Safe Seas". This now now expected to issue next month. The full text of the Council conclusions will be placed in the Library when it is available.

Station Car Parks

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that the existing level of car parking spaces are maintained at railway stations following their sale, franchise or vesting in Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: Where stations are being managed by franchisees, any conditions about the level of car parking spaces could be imposed through the franchise contract. Otherwise, car parking arrangements will be subject to the general oversight of the independent regulator.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that charges for car parking spaces at railway stations should not rise above the equivalent, in real terms, of charges as at February, following either their sale, franchise or vesting in Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: Where stations are being managed by franchisees, any restrictions on car park charges could be imposed through the franchise contract. Otherwise, car parking charges will be subject to the general oversight of the independent regulator.

London Underground

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the location of track, stations and ticket offices owned or managed by Briitsh Rail which provide facilities to London Underground on an agency basis;

(2) if he will list the location of track, stations and ticket offices owned or managed by London Underground which provide facilities to British Rail on an agency basis.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that the information requested is as follows:

Stations served jointly by London Underground and British Rail

1. Stations owned and staffed solely by BR, but served by trains of both operators
   (a) BR and LUL trains on same tracks
   East Putney*
   Harrow and Wealdstone
   Kew Gardens
   South Kenton
   Wembley Central
   Wimbledon Park*
   Gunnersbury
   Kensal Green
   North Wembley
   Southfields*
   Willesden Junction
   Harlesden
   Kenton
   Richmond
   Stonebridge Park
   Wimbledon
   * No timetabled BR passenger service, but served by BR trains diverted onto the route.

   (b) BR and LUL trains on separate tracks but serving adjoining platforms.
   Barking
   New Cross Gate
   Upminster
   Kensington Olympia
   Paddington (Suburban)
   New Cross
   Stratford (also served by DLR)

2. Stations owned and staffed solely by LUL, but served by trains of both operators
   (a) BR and LUL trains on same tracks
   Amersham*
   Harrow on the Hill*
   Chalfont and Latimer
   Rickmansworth
   Chorleywood

   (b) BR and LUL trains on separate tracks but serving adjoining plaforms.
   Barbican*
   Moorgate*
   Farringdon*
   Old Street*
   Greenford*
   * LUL also sells tickets for BR-only journeys on an agency basis

3. Interchange stations with separately owned (but physically interlinked) BR and LUL areas
   (a) BR and LUL each issue tickets at their own booking offices
   Balham
   Charing Cross
   Kings Cross St. Pancras*
   Paddington
   Blackfriars
   Euston
   Liverpool Street
   Victoria
   Cannon Street
   Finsbury Park
   London Bridge
   Waterloo

   (b) All tickets issued by BR at "joint" booking office
   Ealing Broadway
   Queens Park
   Walthamstow Central

   (c) All tickets issued by LUL at "joint" booking office
   Bank (also served by DLR)
   Kentish Town*
   South Ruislip*
   West Ruislip
   Blackhorse Road*
   Marylebone*
   Tottenham Hale*
   Highbury and Islington*
   Seven Sisters*
   West Ham*
   * LUL also sell tickets for "BR-only" journeys on an agency basis

Track served jointly by London Underground and British Rail

1. Track owned by BR, and served by trains of both operators.
   1.1 Wimbledon-East Putney[1]
   1.2 Richmond-Gunnersbury
   1.3 Queens Park-Harrow and Wealdstone

[1] No BR passenger service

2. Track owned by BR but served by LUL trains only.
   2.1 Track running into New Cross and New Cross Gate stations (used by East London Line).
   2.2 Track running into Kensington Olympia station (used by District Line).

3. Track owned by LUL, and served by trains of both operators.
   3.1 Amersham-Harrow on the Hill

InterCity Rail Services

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what subsidy the Government propose to make to InterCity rail services following rail privatisation or franchising.

Mr. Freeman: Any subsidy required will be determined by competitive bidding for a franchise.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what subsidy the Government propose to make to Railtrack in respect of track, tunnels and bridges which are used by InterCity rail services following rail privatisation or franchising.

Mr. Freeman: We shall expect Railtrack to recover its economic costs in providing and maintaining the railway infrastructure from the track access charges it will levy on future rail service operators. Operators awarded franchises may require a subsidy as a condition of operating their services.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make it his policy that InterCity executive rail services are maintained for each route now existing north of Glasgow and Edinburgh following franchising or privatisation;

(2) if he will make it his policy that InterCity executive rail services are maintained in respect of the whole of the west coast route from London to Glasgow, via Preston.

Mr. Freeman: Under our rail privatisation proposals, it will be for the franchising director to decide the precise specification of all services, including current InterCity services, to be offered for franchising in line with the guidance given to him by the Secretary of State. As we made clear in the consultation document "The Franchising of Passenger Rail Services" published in October, objectives for the franchising director will include basing the pattern of services to be provided on BR's existing service levels.

A12/M12

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive and publish the consultant's report on the proposal to build the M12 or upgrade the existing A12; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We expect to receive a report from our consultant this summer. The report will provide information about route options on which we hope to consult the public in late 1993. Information about the scheme studies will be available for inspection during the consultation.

A11

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement following the simultaneous inquiries into the improvements of the A11 to Abington and the A505/A11 and A604 junction; and when he expects work to commence.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I expect the announcement to be made in the next few weeks. Further progress will depend on the nature of the decisions, completion of the necessary statutory procedures and the availability of funds.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to resume on the A11 improvement between Newmarket and Four Westways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The work of dualling the A11 between Newmarket and Four Wentways was halted when the contractor, Lilley Construction Limited, went into administrative receivership. The receiver has received a number of offers from interested firms to complete the work. Until those negotiations are complete it is too soon to say when work can resume. The contractual completion date of the end of 1993 can still be met.

Railways Bill

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate a study of the operation of the railways run by the British Railways Board to identify those services or operations which can be made more effective or efficient consequent to the enactment of the Railways Bill.

Mr. Freeman: All passenger and freight services should be capable of more effective or efficient operation as a result of our reform proposals.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will identify those requirements for transport by rail, by general character, or on specific routes, currently provided by the British Railways Board that will be capable of being provided under the provisions of the Railways Bill, indicating in each case if they would be capable of realising a commercial return or be a charge on public funds.

Mr. Freeman: All rail services currently provided by the British Railways Board could be provided under the provisions of the Railways Bill. The competitive tendering process will determine the amount of subsidy, if any, required for any franchise service. Freight services will be provided on a commercial basis.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if loans from the European investment bank will count towards the £400 million private sector contribution required for the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Norris: It will be for the administrators of Olympia and York to determine sources of finance to enable them to make the agreed contribution.

Rail Depots

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what method he expects to allocate passenger rolling stock maintenance and stabling depots which are compatible with competitive services on the routes currently served by the respective depots.

Mr. Freeman: Where the depot concerned is dedicated to a passenger service which is to be let as a single franchise, the depot will usually be leased for the period of the franchise to the incoming franchisee. Where one franchisee will be the predominant user of the depot, he will usually acquire the lease subject to conditions requiring him to make facilities available to other operators. In some cases, it may be feasible to divide a depot into separate parts for use by different operators, or to lease a depot to a third party maintenance operator.

WALES

Elton Report

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to develop a post-school education strategy aimed at promoting socially responsible parenthood as recommended in the Elton report on discipline in schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This is an issue to which further and higher education institutions should give consideration in their overall provision for students.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of how many local education authorities and schools in each of these LEAs communicate with parents in languages other than English or Welsh in accordance with the recommendations of the Elton report.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. It is for local education authorities and schools to consider the need for communication with parents in languages other than English or Welsh in the light of local needs and circumstances.

School Lunch (Supervision)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities provide lunch-time supervision; what percentage of schools in each local education authority provide such supervision; how much is spent; and what assessment he has made of the extent to which this supervision meets the standards expected by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Arrangements for lunchtime supervision are the responsibility of local education authorities and the governing bodies of those schools with delegated budgets. Information about these arrangements is not held centrally.

Primary Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what plans he has to propose greater use of specific subject teaching;

(2) if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of teaching in relation to the time spent on various aspects of the curriculum;

(3) what measures he proposes to achieve a match of work to pupil's needs;

(4) if he will make a statement concerning the primary school curriculum and teaching methods;

(5) if he will make a greater use of specialist teaching; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what plans he has to introduce setting in schools; and if he will make a statement.

(7) if he will make a statement on whole-class teaching.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In February of last year I launched a debate on primary education in Wales with the publication of a report by Her Majesty's inspectorate on classroom organisation and teaching methods. That report addressed, among other things, issues concerned with whole class and specialist teaching, classroom management and teaching methods appropriate to the needs of individual pupils and the national curriculum.

The debate was taken forward by the Curriculum Council for Wales, CCW. Following a series of seminars attended by teachers throughout Wales, the Curriculum Council for Wales published in November a guidance document "Aspects of Primary Education in Wales". The document has been issued to all Welsh primary schools. I also sent a copy to all hon. Members in Wales. Further guidance is being prepared by the council on aspects of planning and managing the primary curriculum including teaching methods and the use of specialist staff. Schools will need to consider all this advice carefully and ensure that it is taken into account so that they can implement the national curriculum successfully.

It is obviously important that we should keep under review how this is being taken forward to schools and provide further guidance as necessary. I have therefore asked Her Majesty's chief inspector for Wales to include, as part of his programme of work in 1993-94, a further investigation into primary education teaching methods and practices and report to me by April 1994. I have placed a copy of my letter in the Library of the House. I will consider whether further action is necessary in the light of that report. I also intend to ask the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales which, subject to parliamentary approval, will succeed the Curriculum Council for Wales, to take part with the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority in the rolling review of national curriculum subjects which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education on 18 January.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new guidance he proposes to issue concerning primary education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister of State gave to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 28 January.

Land Use

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to produce an annual policy paper on land use and infrastructure planning in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. My right hon. Friend publishes policies on land use and infrastructure in a range of documents, including planning policy guidance notes and circulars. These documents are regularly reviewed and updated.

Investors in People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the companies within Wales which have *(a)* already been accredited and *(b)* pledged to work towards the targets outlined in the investors in people programme.

Mr. David Hunt: Nine companies have achieved the investors in people standard and 106 are committed to working towards it, but lists of individual companies are not collected centrally.

Productivity

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to adopt a target of increasing productivity rates in Wales by at least 5 per cent. in each year for the forthcoming decade.

Mr. David Hunt: I intend to continue the policies that have created the framework within which manufacturing productivity in Wales has risen from 7 per cent. below the United Kingdom average, in 1980, to 6 per cent. above the United Kingdom average, in 1990. Over this same period, United Kingdom manufacturing productivity itself grew faster than in any other country in the G7, including Japan.

Rural Areas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated by the Welsh Development Agency in 1992-93 to its rural affairs division for expenditure in the west Wales task force area; and how much is planned to be spent in 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: It is estimated that WDA expenditure within the task force area in 1992-93 will be £1·7 million.

For 1993-94, I announced earlier this week that the agency will spend a total of £3·7 million on its urban and rural activities. The agency will also administer a £250,000 programme under the EC Leader scheme in south Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total planned expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency on its rural affairs division programme in 1992-93; and what is the planned expenditure for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: The WDA's rural affairs division is expected to spend £4·55 million in 1992-93, and the allocation for 1993-94 is £6 million.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the planned expenditure by his Department on the rural initiative in Wales and each of the counties in Wales for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: The budget provision of the rural initiative capital grants scheme in 1993-94 is £6·6 million. The 297 bids submitted by local authorities throughout Wales under the 1993-94 round are currently being assessed. I will make an announcement in due course.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure on the rural initiative programme in Wales in 1992-93 in each of the counties of Wales and in total.

Mr. David Hunt: Expenditure in the current year on projects approved under the 1992-93 round of the rural initiative capital grants scheme is not yet complete. The round has an allocation of £6 million shared as follows:

	£ million
Dyfed	3·30
Gwynedd	1·12
Powys	0·73
Clwyd	0·44
Gwent	0·21

Note: Figures are rounded.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for alignment of the eastern boundary of the Wales region of the Environment Protection Agency in Wales in the area of nonconformity of the National Rivers Authority water catchment area boundary with that of other statutory environmental protection agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government have already said that there will need to be an appropriate presence by the agency in Wales. No decisions have been taken on the detailed regional structure of the agency, including its relationship to the England/Wales border.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a breakdown of the valleys programme spending by sub-programme for each year since 1988-89.

Mr. David Hunt: The table sets out the information requested.

Programme for the Valleys Expenditure

£ million

	1988-89 Outturn	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Outturn*
Urban Programme	11·950	16·000	19·400	23·800
Urban Development/UIG[1]	2·600	7·200	6·000	4·500
RIG[1]	28·875	16·100	14·500	16·140
WDA				
Factories	20·730	20·950	23·100	18·500
Land Reclamation	11·900	15·500	14·700	15·000
Environmental	0·780	0·600	0·600	1·500
Urban Renewal Unit	0·700	1·570	3·260	5·381
Investment	1·325	1·750	2·730	0·530
Business Development	0·720	1·000	1·000	0·980
Corporate Planning/Research	0·100	0·100	0·050	0·040
Roads	11·100	11·730	15·270	36·807
Employment Department	48·600	49·670	48·200	48·000
Total	139·380	142·170	148·810	[2]171·178

Note: Figures exclude housing programmes.
[1] These programmes are demand-led.
[2] (est).

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the pay review of the general manager and senior manager grades of NHS trusts in Wales, announced in the letter of 25 November 1992, from the Director of NHS Wales, to the chairmen of NHS trusts in Wales to be completed; how the current public sector pay policy will affect its implementation in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The review of the pay arrangements, for NHS general and senior managers is ongoing

and is expected to be completed later this year. Any implementation of possible changes during the period of the current public sector pay policy would be subject to the overall limits on wage settlements for this group.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his decision on the 1993-94 local government settlement and relevant notional amounts.

Mr. David Hunt: I have given careful consideration to the representations I have received on my provisional settlement proposals. I have also chaired two meetings of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance at which settlement issues were discussed.

I acknowledge that my plans for 1993-94 will mean local authorities in Wales having to make hard budgeting decisions and rigorously pursuing efficiency savings. Having taken account of all the representations made to me on the settlement, I remain of the view that my proposals represent the most that the country and local taxpayers can afford in the present economic circumstances. I have therefore decided to set total standard spending —TSS—at £2,599·8 million and aggregate external finance —AEF—at £2,344·2 million for 1993-94. Both TSS and AEF will include the additional resources of £1·6 million that I announced to the House on 14 December 1992 to take account of changes in the independent living fund arrangements.

AEF will comprise £1,669·3 million in revenue support grant, £470·2 million in distributable non-domestic rates, and £204·7 million in specific and supplementary grants. My decisions are, of course, subject to the approval of the House.

The TSS I have announced for 1993-94 represents an increase of 3·1 per cent. on 1992-93 plus an additional £35·9 million for care in the community. It means an increase of almost 29 per cent. for the three financial years since 1990-91. My plans mean that 90 per cent. of all local authority revenue expenditure in Wales would be met by central Government and should ensure a reasonable level of council tax for local taxpayers in Wales.

I trust that local authorities will budget prudently and play their part in restraining public expenditure.

On the matter of notional amounts in lieu of budgets for 1992-93 I have considered all the representations made to me by local authorities and have made amendments to the provisional figures issued in December where I have considered it appropriate to do so. My Department has today written to all local authorities informing them of their standard spending assessments for 1993-94 and their notional amounts. I have placed details of the figures in the Library of the House.

I propose to lay the Local Government Finance Report (Wales) 1993-94 and the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (Wales) 1993-94 before the House, for its approval, early next week.

Alcohol Projects

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps will be taken to ring fence money for residential alcohol projects in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[pursuant to his reply, 21 January 1993, c. 364]:* Unfortunately, owing to a typing error, a word was omitted from the answer. The correct answer is as follows. Resources being transferred for residential facilities under the care in the community arrangements will not be ring fenced. The Department will continue to support individual projects aimed at combating alcohol misuse.

EDUCATION

Under-fives

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of children under five years received nursery education *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1992.

Mr. Forth: In January 1979, 18 per cent. of three and four-year-olds were in maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in maintained primary schools in England. In January 1991, the latest year for which information on participation rates is available, the proportion was 25 per cent.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of three and four-year-olds in each local authority who were attending a primary school in January 1992.

Mr. Forth: The numbers of three and four-year-olds in nursery classes and infant classes in maintained primary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1992 are shown in the table.

Pupils aged three and four in maintained nursery and infant classes in maintained primary schools in England—January 1992

LEA	*Pupils in nursery classes*	*Pupils in infant classes*	*Total pupils in primary schools*
City	29	10	39
Camden	821	961	1,782
Greenwich	2,421	990	3,411
Hackney	2,047	836	2,883
Hammersmith	935	545	1,480
Islington	1,529	689	2,218
Kensington and Chelsea	563	345	908
Lambeth	1,847	946	2,793
Lewisham	2,338	1,045	3,383
Southwark	2,223	1,033	3,256
Tower Hamlets	1,992	925	2,917
Wandsworth	2,002	1,605	3,607
Westminster	884	429	1,313
Barking	1,750	1,391	3,141
Barnet	1,839	2,116	3,955
Bexley	947	907	1,854
Brent	2,151	2,120	4,271
Bromley	154	1,101	1,255
Croydon	706	2,640	3,346
Ealing	2,657	2,383	5,040
Enfield	1,484	2,186	3,670
Haringey	2,332	1,755	4,087
Harrow	958	1,557	2,515
Havering	247	1,892	2,139
Hillingdon	3,030	133	3,163
Hounslow	2,469	1,748	4,217
Kingston upon Thames	931	962	1,893
Merton	2,593	911	3,504
Newham	3,498	2	3,500
Redbridge	987	1,050	2,037
Richmond upon Thames	635	1,052	1,687
Sutton	1,444	44	1,488
Waltham Forest	2,181	868	3,049
Birmingham	7,975	9,806	17,781
Coventry	1,968	2,891	4,859
Dudley	2,810	1,281	4,092
Sandwell	4,424	2,769	7,193
Solihull	1,728	1,739	3,467
Walsall	3,431	2,481	5,912
Wolverhampton	3,089	1,074	4,163
Knowsley	2,477	1,577	4,054
Liverpool	5,789	4,452	10,241
St Helens	1,557	1,527	3,084
Sefton	2,155	2,364	4,519
Wirral	1,999	2,960	4,959
Bolton	2,558	2,407	4,965
Bury	1,295	1,566	2,861
Manchester	6,778	2,346	9,124
Oldham	2,386	2,195	4,581
Rochdale	1,085	2,016	3,101
Salford	2,473	2,026	4,499
Stockport	822	2,374	3,196
Tameside	2,150	2,090	4,240
Trafford	1,820	1,757	3,577
Wigan	1,929	2,786	4,715
Barnsley	2,771	1,045	3,816
Doncaster	3,326	2,849	6,175
Rotherham	2,601	1,125	3,726
Sheffield	4,967	2,426	7,393
Bradford	5,517	3,047	8,564
Calderdale	1,799	1,759	3,558
Kirklees	3,902	2,087	5,989
Leeds	7,996	3,542	11,538
Wakefield	3,846	1,795	5,641
Gateshead	1,728	1,600	3,328
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,302	2,232	4,534
North Tyneside	2,356	1,691	4,047
South Tyneside	1,448	1,380	2,828
Sunderland	2,131	2,681	4,812
Isles of Scilly	0	13	13
Avon	3,304	7,726	11,030
Bedfordshire	3,733	2,149	5,882
Berkshire	3,653	512	4,165
Buckinghamshire	2,177	2,784	4,961
Cambridgeshire	1,480	5,837	7,317
Cheshire	4,621	8,113	12,734
Cleveland	9,279	5,600	14,879
Cornwall	1,498	3,453	4,951
Cumbria	2,204	3,839	6,043
Derbyshire	7,444	5,210	12,654
Devon	2,450	3,902	6,352
Dorset	805	4,636	5,441
Durham	4,159	4,571	8,730
East Sussex	1,162	4,879	6,041
Essex	2,180	6,350	8,530
Gloucestershire	0	4,340	4,340
Hampshire	1,655	6,679	8,334
Hereford and Worcester	1,274	2,544	3,818
Hertfordshire	6,724	4,520	11,244
Humberside	7,627	5,073	12,700
Isle of Wight	186	914	1,100
Kent	1,893	12,041	13,934
Lancashire	3,477	12,281	15,758
Leicestershire	5,322	4,414	9,736
Lincolnshire	1,109	4,393	5,502
Norfolk	460	5,107	5,567
North Yorkshire	3,110	4,998	8,108
Northamptonshire	2,296	5,289	7,585
Northumberland	2,677	2,403	5,080
Nottinghamshire	12,730	1,990	14,720
Oxfordshire	1,492	772	2,264
Shropshire	1,224	2,063	3,287
Somerset	239	3,635	3,874
Staffordshire	4,531	8,746	13,277
Suffolk	2,852	2,572	5,424
Surrey	2,422	3,573	5,995
Warwickshire	1,366	4,057	5,423
West Sussex	143	2,601	2,744
Wiltshire	561	2,476	3,037
Total	277,531	299,976	577,507

Surplus School Places

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he has included places located within *(a)* temporary or mobile classrooms, *(b)* other temporary accommodation and *(c)* laboratories or workshops in the figures he has published for each local education authority concerning surplus places in schools.

Mr. Forth: The survey of school capacity, carried out during the 1990-91 academic year, measured surplus places in schools using the more open enrolment formula promulgated for primary and secondary schools in, respectively, circulars 6/91 and 11/88, both of which are available in the Library. The formula for primary schools contained in circular 6/91 took account of both permanent and temporary accommodation, including mobiles. Workshops or laboratories deemed by the admissions authority to be unsuitable for general teaching purposes were omitted. The formula for secondary schools contained in circular 11/88 took account of all available teaching space, whether permanent or temporary, including mobile classrooms. Laboratories and workshops were also included, but the formula allowed each workplace in such rooms to be a greater area than in a general teaching space in recognition of the additional space requirements of practical subjects.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what evidence he has about the buying of books by grant-maintained schools following the grant of grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The results of surveys of grant-maintained schools conducted by the grant-maintained schools centre suggest that schools are able to spend substantially more on books following incorporation. The annual report of HM senior chief inspector of schools, "Education in England 1990-91" referred to the improved book stock in many grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what level he has decided for the annual maintenance grant payable to grant-maintained schools *(a)* in Cambridgeshire and *(b)* elsewhere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The consultation period on the proposals for calculating annual maintenance grant for grant-maintained schools in 1993-94 closed on 7 January. We are now considering the responses received and will make our final decisions as soon as possible. I will write to my hon. Friend when the decisions are announced.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from the headmaster of George Dixon school in Birmingham about the benefits of grant-maintained status for black pupils at inner city schools; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations from the headmaster of George Dixon school in Birmingham. The advantages of grant-maintained status are becoming increasingly obvious as more schools opt for the autonomy it brings, as evident not least, from schools which have become grant-maintained in Birmingham. Pupils from all ethnic and social backgrounds in inner city schools can and do benefit from their schools becoming grant-maintained.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Roman Catholic schools have *(a)* been approved for grant-maintained status, *(b)* applied for such status and *(c)* expressed interest in such status.

Mr. Forth: Full information is not collected centrally. Aggregated figures for voluntary aided, voluntary controlled and special agreement schools are as follows: 97 are operating or have been approved for grant-maintained status; 43 more have published proposals which are before the Secretary of State for his consideration; 28 have voted yes in parental ballots but not yet published proposals; 23 have ballots pending. Of the 97 operating or approved for grant-maintained status, 20 are Roman Catholic.

Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will announce the appointment of the chairman and chief executive of the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend hopes soon to announce his choice for the chairmanship of the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The selection of the chief officer will follow. Both appointments will be subject to the passage of the Education Bill now before Parliament.

St. Mary's School, Rawtenstall

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish details of the supplementary credit approval granted to Lancashire county council in respect of St. Mary's Church of England primary school, Rawtenstall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: A supplementary credit approval of £76,000 was issued to Lancashire county council in 1991 in recognition of its expenditure needs at St. Mary's Church of England primary school, Rawtenstall. A further £906,000 within annual capital guidelines was allocated in 1992-93, followed by £556,000 for 1993-94, making a total sum of £1,538,000. These resources were allocated in respect of St. Mary's in response to a delegation to the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Fallon, from representatives of the school expressing concern about the state of the building. The allocation given was in line with the authority's cash bid. I am very concerned that the resources we have allocated have not so far been used for the urgent purpose of rebuilding the school.

Primary Schools, Charlesworth

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to make a decision on the request from Charlesworth primary school and St. John's Church of England primary school, Charlesworth, to merge.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce a decision shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

Business Regulation

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Prime Minister if his inquiries into regulation as a burden on business will extend to *(a)* the rules which require a business person to be or remain outside the United Kingdom in order to obtain leave to set up a business in the United Kingdom and *(b)* the removal of rights of appeal from business visitors refused leave to do business in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

As announced by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, on 12 January 1993, *Official Report,* columns *711-12,* Government Departments are examining the whole body of regulation for which they are responsible. All measures with an impact on business will be covered.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is making official visits to India, Saudi Arabia and Oman. I am pleased to advise the House that following discussions with the Sultan of Oman, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced that Oman is to purchase the Challenger 2 as its new main battle tank, together with its armoured repair and recovery vehicle. I am sure the whole House will want to join me in congratulating Vickers Defence Systems on this well-deserved success, which is the first export order for the Challenger 2.

Edinburgh Summit

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters he received from individuals concerned that third world needs would not be discussed at the Edinburgh summit.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister received a number of representations. Issues of major concern to developing countries were discussed, including the need for a successful conclusion to the GATT negotiations and for renewed growth in the economies of the European Community. Both of these would help to increase the export earnings of many developing countries significantly.

HEALTH

Hospital Care, Northumberland

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the cost to the national health service, per patient per night, for each of the five regions in Northumberland, during the last five years, of patients staying at least one night in hospital.

Mr. Sackville: Information in the precise form requested is not collected centrally. Information derived from annual financial returns submitted to the Department by the Northumberland district health authority is shown in the table:

Northumberland district health authority

	Average daily cost per patient using a bed[1] *£ (cash)*
1987-88	30
1988-89	39
1989-90	43
1990-91	48
1991-92	
Northern and Mental Health Unit	85
Northgate Unit	59
South East Northumberland Unit	130
Tynedale Unit	81

[1] Inpatients and day cases.

Notes:

1. The figures are average costs for all specialties provided. Those for 1991-92 are provisional.
2. There are discontinuities between the data for 1991-92 and those for earlier years. For the years 1987-88 to 1990-91 specialty cost returns were submitted on a district basis and covered treatment and diagnostic costs only. For 1991-92 the returns were submitted on a Directly Management Unit (DMU) basis and covered total costs (ie inclusive of estate and support services costs which were formerly excluded).
3. Daily costs will inevitably vary widely between specialties and individual patients. The average costs of particular DMUs will also be influenced by the range of specialties provided by the Unit and other local factors.

Smoking

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the number of cases of peripheral vascular disease, leading to amputation, that were caused by smoking.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Electromagnetic Radiation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been sponsored by her Department on modifications introduced in melatonin production in human cells arising from exposure to electromagnetic radiation.

Mr. Sackville: No such studies have been sponsored by the Department. However, the National Radiological Protection Board's advisory group on non-ionising radiation proposes to monitor any developments in this area in the light of recent work carried out in the United States.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what follow-up studies concerned with physical complications associated with abortion have been undertaken or funded by her Department;

(2) what information she has regarding abortion as a cause of *(a)* infertility in women and *(b)* spontaneous miscarriage in subsequent pregnancies.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has funded a major long-term study of the short and long-term sequelae of

abortion. This has been undertaken by the Manchester research unit of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

In an article published in the "British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, October 1991", volume 98, pages 1015-24, the researchers concluded that

"Overall, induced abortion was not associated with any important effect on the three measures of adverse outcome in the subsequent pregnancy".

The three main outcome measures were: non-viable outcome—spontaneous or missed miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy or stillbirth—birthweight and length of gestation.

In their study on the effect of induced abortion on subsequent fertility, the researchers concluded that

"Induced abortion was not related to future fertility".

Cancer Treatment

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultant cancer physicians are employed by the national health service; if she will list their location by hospital and region; and what is their average salary.

Dr. Mawhinney: The medical and dental census records the following number of consultant medical oncologists and radiotherapists and general surgeons in England in whole-time equivalents, as at 30 September 1991:

	Medical oncologists	*Radiotherapists*	*General surgeons*
Northern	1·0	10·0	74·9
Yorkshire	2·5	13·3	64·6
Trent	0·0	19·1	73·7
East Anglia	0·5	10·5	37·1
North West Thames	7·4	14·0	61·9
North East Thames	5·8	18·2	75·1
South East Thames	2·8	17·2	71·8
South West Thames	0·0	7·9	49·6
Wessex	2·1	11·4	48·7
Oxford	2·5	9·3	46·7
South Western	0·0	16·3	60·5
West Midlands	1·0	17·0	100·4
Mersey	1·6	10·7	47·8
North Western	2·2	16·2	88·4
SHAs	2·2	10·7	9·6
Total	31·6	202·6	910·8

Information on their average salary and the number of consultants in individual units is not held centrally.

Cardiac Specialists

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cardiac specialists were employed in the NHS for the years 1979, 1989 and 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: Numbers of doctors of all grades in the cardiology and cardiothoracic specialties in England for 1979, 1989 and 1991, by whole-time equivalent are given in the table. Data for 1992 are not yet available; figures supplied relate to 1991.

	1979	*1989*	*1991*
Cardiology	260·0	427·5	475·1
Cardiothoracic surgery	284·9	352·0	375·7
Total	544·9	779·5	850·8

This represents a 43 per cent. increase over the 10 years to 1989 and a further increase of 9·1 per cent. in the last two years.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many secure premises places are currently available for juvenile offenders; and what plans she has to increase the numbers of such places.

Mr. Yeo: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on 20 January 1993 at columns *318-19*.

South East Thames RHA

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answers given to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), of 17 December, 1992, *Official Report*, column *421*, and to the hon. Member for Greenwich, 27 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *618*, if she will make a statement on the number of administrative and clerical staff in the South East Thames region as at 30 September 1991; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 27 October 1992 at column *618*.

Undergraduate Education and Research

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the third (interim) report of the steering group on undergraduate medical and dental education and research will be published; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The report is published today, and copies are available in the Library. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and I are sending copies of the third (interim) report to all interested parties under cover of a message welcoming and endorsing the report's conclusions and recommendations. The steering group brings together all the main bodies involved in the organisation and delivery of undergraduate teaching and research, and we are grateful to the representatives of these bodies who have served on the group. This phase of the group's work has involved consideration of the arrangements for undergraduate medical and dental education and research against the background of the introduction of the national health service reforms, and we welcome the group's continuing emphasis on the need for close and effective co-operation between the universities, the NHS and research interests in order to achieve the common purpose of maintaining and improving standards of education and research. We have endorsed the report's recommendation that there should be a successor group to take forward the report's recommendations, which include extending the remit to enable it to consider additional issues which are likely to have an impact on undergraduate medical and dental education and research in the near future.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the global NHS budget for IVF treatment annually;

(2) what level of financial contribution was made by couples on IVF programmes in the last year for which figures are available;

(3) what was the expenditure level for each regional health authority for IVF treatments in the last year for which figures are available;

(4) how many women were placed on IVF programmes within the NHS for each regional health authority, in the last year in which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Ambulance Service, Greater Manchester

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish in the *Official Report* correspondence from Mr. P. A. Green, 45 Warwick avenue, Whitefield, Manchester, dated 18 January concerning the Greater Manchester ambulance service and her reply.

Mr. Sackville: Mr. Green's letter was received in the Department on 25 January 1993. A reply will be sent as soon as possible. Correspondence received by the Department is treated as confidential, but it is open to the recipient to make public the response he receives.

Gender Clinics

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to curb the activities of clinics which assist parents to determine the sex of their children.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action she intends to take to stop the genetic techniques in use at the gender clinic, London; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what guidelines she intends to issue governing the development and introduction of genetic techniques to determine the sex of children.

Mr. Sackville: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 already controls clinics where sex selection involves in-vitro fertilisation or artificial insemination by donor. The need for controls on other activities of clinics which claim to be able to offer this service is under consideration. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has issued a consultation document on the various issues raised by sex selection and the Government will carefully take the results of this exercise into account in deciding whether further action by the Government may be needed.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Tobacco Advertising

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has of the amount of money spent by the tobacco industry each year on advertising and promoting tobacco.

Mr. Leigh: The "Advertising Statistics Yearbook", published by the Advertising Association, contains figures on the amount of money spent on advertising tobacco products, excluding expenditure on sponsorship, sales promotion and billboard advertising.

The 1992 edition of the yearbook gives expenditure, at current prices, on tobacco advertising over the last five years as follows:

	£ million
1987	47·5
1988	47·1
1989	44·0
1990	50·0
1991	42·9

EC Energy Tax

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what assessment his Department is making of the relationship between *(a)* the balance between the carbon and energy elements of the proposed EC tax on carbon dioxide and energy, *(b)* the treatment of electricity and *(c)* the future market for British coal; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what analysis his Department is undertaking of the consequences of the proposed EC tax on carbon dioxide and energy in respect of *(a)* energy consumption, *(b)* economic activity and competitiveness and *(c)* social impact.

Mr. Eggar: The Government continue to examine carefully the European Commission's proposed directive on a tax on carbon dioxide emissions and energy. This is without prejudice to a decision on its eventual adoption.

Further clarification of a number of important aspects of the proposal, including the treatment of electricity and the question of exemptions in the industrial sector, is required before a full assessment can be made of the potential impact of the tax. These issues are the subject of continuing discussions with other member states and the European Commission, in which my Department is assisting.

However, preliminary analysis undertaken by my Department last year indicates that a carbon/energy tax along the lines proposed by the Commission, but assuming no exemptions for industry, could reduce energy demand by around 5 per cent., and CO_2 emissions by around 7 per cent. in 2,000, compared with projections set out in "Energy Paper 59". Different assumptions about the balance of the carbon and energy elements of the proposed tax would lead to different conclusions, with greater potential reductions coming from taxes weighted more towards carbon. Similarly, different bases for the treatment of electricity could lead to different effects.

The preliminary analysis also indicates that as coal is the most carbon-intensive fuel, the market for coal would bear a substantial share of any reduction in CO_2 emissions arising from the proposed tax. However, the analysis, which was carried out prior to the coal review, does not indicate the impact on coal mining in the United Kingdom because it does not distinguish between indigenous and imported coal.

The industrial competitiveness and social impacts of the proposed tax would depend on a number of factors. These would include the use made of the tax revenues, the extent to which other countries outside the Community introduced similar measures and the extent of any exemptions from the tax for industries which are disadvantaged by imports from countries without similar measures. In considering whether such a tax should be introduced, the Government would need to be satisfied that it would not have unacceptable impacts on any particular groups of households or on the competitive

position of United Kingdom industry. My Department has separately sought the views of industry on the Commission's proposals: among the wide range of issues raised, the likely impact on industrial competitiveness was the main concern.

Timber and Paper Products

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many prosecutions have been brought under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, concerning claims of the environmental friendliness and sustainability of timber and paper products in each of the last five years; and how many such prosecutions have been successful in each year.

Mr. Leigh: The Office of Fair Trading has been notified of 16 prosecutions by local authorities under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 concerning claims of the environmental friendliness and sustainability of timber and paper products over the last five years, all of which were successful. The number of convictions in each year was as follows:

	Number
1988	6
1989	5
1990	3
1991	1
1992	1

Textiles

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps the Government are taking to protect and encourage the textile industry in north-east Lancashire.

Mr. Sainsbury: Under the United Kingdom presidency, the EC concluded extensions to all its bilatural multi-fibre arrangement agreements, which regulate textile imports. These extensions will last until it is possible to implement a GATT agreement on trade in textiles and clothing which would phase out quantitative restrictions over 10 years.

More generally, it is the Government's policy to assist British business to become and remain more competitive, both nationally and internationally. To that end, they have created an environment in which business can flourish, characterised by low inflation, low interest rates, competitive exchange rates and reduced administrative burdens on businesses.

Export Contracts

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the export contracts which have been secured through the involvement of Government since May 1992; and if he will indicate how much each export contract is worth in pounds sterling.

Mr. Needham: It is companies which secure export contracts, not the Government, but the excellent services provided by my Department, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other Departments, are regularly used by large numbers of companies in identifying opportunities and obtaining contracts abroad.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the accident early in January at British Nuclear Fuels' Sellafield plant involving spillage of a litre of plutonium-contaminated solvent; when his Department was informed of the incident; and what radiological contamination occurred.

Mr. Eggar: The incident in question occurred in the Magnox reprocessing plant at Sellafield on 12 January when liquor overflowed into an instrument feed cabinet. Approximately one litre of the liquor, containing about a gramme of plutonium, leaked out of the cabinet and on to the floor below. The leak affected a small area of the workplace and was subsequently cleaned up. No worker was contaminated and there was no release of airborne activity.

The incident was reported to this and other interested Departments and relevant regulatory bodies on 13 January.

Details of the incident are contained in the Sellafield site's weekly newsletter, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information Her Majesty's Government have on the engineering equipment originating in the United Kingdom installed in the Zaafaraniyah plant in Iraq.

Mr. Needham: The Government have asked the United Nations special commission and the International Atomic Energy Authority for confidential details of any evidence of involvement by British companies in Iraq's weapons for mass destruction programmes. Any indication of wrongdoing will be urgently investigated and if export controls have been breached, it will, if appropriate, be a matter for the courts.

Sizewell B

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department has received concerning the safety of computer software for the proposed Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Eggar: I have received six letters from hon. Members forwarding representations from their constituents about the safety of the computerised primary protection system proposed for Sizewell B. In addition, my officials have replied to about 300 pre-printed postcards on this subject.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will require the nuclear installations inspectorate to conduct an independent investigation into the computer software system for the proposed Sizewell B power station.

Mr. Eggar: The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate will ensure that any proposed software is fully validated as part of its independent assessment of Nuclear Electric's safety case for Sizewell B.

Standing Charges

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what would be the cost of abolishing standing charges for gas, electricity and British Telecom for *(a)* all pensioner

households, *(b)* pensioner households on income support, *(c)* all households on income support and *(d)* all households on family credit.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 27 October 1992—(*Official Report*, column *562*.)

Shipbuilding

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which British shipyards and dockyards have the physical layout and capacity to build a ship of 70,000 gross registered tonnes and above.

Mr. Sainsbury: Depending on the specification and dimensions, a vessel of 70,000grt and above could be built by Cammell Laird Shipbuilders Limited, Birkenhead, Harland & Wolff Shipbuilding and Heavy Industries Limited, Belfast, Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Limited, Newcastle Upon Tyne and Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited, Barrow in Furness.

High Voltage Cables

Mr. Bowis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the most recent advice he has received about the health risks of high voltage overground or underground cables.

Mr. Eggar: The most recent advice received about the alleged hazards to health from electric and magnetic fields associated with high voltage electric power lines or cables is the report of the advisory group on non-ionising radiation, chaired by Sir Richard Doll, issued in March 1992. However, two reports of Swedish studies released in October 1992 have been referred to the advisory group and further advice from them is awaited.

Japanese Investment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what data he has available on the number, value and employment creation of Japanese inward investment projects in manufacturing industry in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* France, *(d)* Italy and *(e)* Spain in the latest 12-month period for which data is available.

Mr. Sainsbury: According to Japanese Ministry of Finance figures, the number and value of Japanese inward investment projects in manufacturing industry in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* France, *(d)* Italy and *(e)* Spain from April 1991 to March 1992, the latest 12-month period for which data is available, are as follows:

April 1991-March 1992

	Number	*Value (US$ million)*
United Kingdom	77	904
Germany	18	340
France	38	237
Italy	13	147
Spain	12	286

Source: Japanese Ministry of Finance.

Information on the employment creation of these investment projects is not available.

British Coal

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the current directors of British Coal; when they were appointed to their current contracts and when these will terminate; if he will give details of their salary and other remunerations; and if he intends to review these contracts.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The information is as follows:

	Current period of appointment/ re-appointment	*Salary* £
Mr. John Neil Clarke (Chairman)	1 January 1991 to 31 December 1995	234,360·00
Mr. Albert Wheeler CBE (Deputy Chairman)	1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993	110,000·00
Mr. Michael Howard Butler (Finance Director)	1 April 1991 to 31 March 1993	93,744·00
Mr. Kevan Hunt (Employee Relations Director)	1 April 1991 to 31 March 1993	88,536·00
Part-time Members		
Dr. Thomas John Parker	1 September 1992 to 31 August 1993	7,499·50
Dr. David Valentine Atterton	1 September 1992 to 31 August 1994	7,499·50
Mr. David Bruce Walker	1 July 1991 to 30 June 1994	7,499·50
Mr. Johannes Petrus Erbe	1 June 1992 to 31 May 1995	7,499·50
Mr. Antony Peverell Hichens	6 December 1991 to 5 December 1994	7,499·50

Apart from the normal process of consideration in respect of appointments which are due to expire, and to agree annual reviews of salary, I have no present plans to review these appointment.

Fraud

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce a system whereby his Department should be able to bring proceedings in the civil courts to recover *(a)* compensation for victims, *(b)* punitive damages for dishonesty and *(c)* reimbursement of the costs of the proceedings in cases falling within certain categories of allegedly fraudulent conduct; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* Sections 6 and 61 of the Financial Services Act 1986 provide for application to the court for restitution on behalf of the victims of certain contraventions and offences under that Act. In addition, section 438 of the Companies Act 1985 permits the Secretary of State to bring proceedings in the public interest in the name and on behalf of a company if it appears to him from an inspector's report or information obtained under the investigation powers of the Act, the civil proceedings ought to be brought. I have no plans for further legislation along these lines.

Scotts Greys Travel Ltd

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action had been taken by his Department to investigate repeated late filing of accounts by Scotts Greys Travel Ltd., from 1985 prior to the company's collapse in 1992.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the chief executive of Companies House executive agency for which my Department is responsible. I have, therefore, asked Mr. David Durham to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Durham to Mr Alan Milburn, dated 26 January 1993:

I refer to your Parliamentary Question concerning the action taken by Companies House Executive Agency to investigate repeated late filing of accounts by Scotts Greys Travel Limited from 1985 prior to the company's collapse in 1992. I have been asked to reply as Chief Executive and Registrar of Companies House Executive Agency.

If companies fail to file on time Companies House instigate a procedure for achieving compliance. This system has changed considerably over the last two years, and coupled with the introduction of late filing penalties in July 1992, has resulted in a marked improvement in timeliness.

Prior to July 1992 once companies filed, albeit late, all pursuit action ceased. This would have been the case in respect of this company.

The company's accounts for the period ending 31 December 1991 should have been delivered to me by 31 October 1992. No accounts were received and on 16 November a letter warning that the accounts were overdue was issued to the company at its Registered Office. No response was received and on 29 December 1992 a notice was issued to Mr David Scott at his home address warning him that if the document was not received within the next 28 days, criminal proceedings would be instituted against him.

However, on 19 January the Registrar received a copy of an order for the compulsory winding up of the company. The Official Receiver is now dealing with the liquidation and in the circumstances, Companies House will not pursue the outstanding accounts.

The role of Companies House is to maintain an up-to-date company register, to ensure that companies comply with the filing requirements of the Companies Act 1985 and to make this information available to the public. Companies House does not investigate the reasons for late filing once the document in question has been filed. It is not the responsibility of Companies House to scrutinise accounts filed beyond establishing that they comply with legal requirements. The records that Companies House make available to the public exist to provide anyone doing business with a limited company, information about its structure, ownership and financial standing. The absence of statutory documents on the file should be a warning to potential creditors.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is proposing to take following the collapse of Scotts Greys Travel Ltd.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* Scotts Greys Travel Ltd. was wound up by the court on 7 January 1993. The Official Receiver, who is also the liquidator, has a duty to investigate the causes of the company's failure and report any misconduct to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of how many customers have been affected by the collapse of Scotts Greys Travel Ltd.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* The Official Receiver has not yet obtained details of the total number of customers who have been affected by the liquidation of this company.

Offshore Licences

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Pembroke of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *336*, if he will give details of the special conditions that have been agreed with the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Joint Nature Conservation Council relating to blocks 103/2, 103/3, 103/6, 103/7, 106/25, 106/29, 107/21, 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/19 and 104/21;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Pembroke of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *336*, if he will now place in the Library copies of the advice he received from the Countryside Council for Wales and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on blocks 103/2, 103/3, 103/7, 106/25, 106/29, 107/29, 107/21, 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/18, 104/19, and 104/21 prior to their inclusion in the 14 round of offshore drilling licensing.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* Consultation with other Departments and interested bodies, such as the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Countryside Council for Wales, was on the basis that the information they provided would be treated in confidence. As I have already indicated in my answer of 21 January, their comments were taken into account, and are reflected in conditions to be attached to these blocks if awarded. A copy of the indicative conditions for blocks 103/2, 103/3, 103/6, 103/7, 106/25, 106/29, 107/21, 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/19 and 104/21 will be placed in the Library of the House.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Expenses

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the information available to him on the *(a)* salary, *(b)* various office costs allowances, *(c)* travel allowances and entitlements, *(d)* postage and telephone allowances, *(e)* entertainments allowances and *(f)* other free or subsidised facilities available to elected members of the parliamentary assemblies of (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) Germany, (iii) France, (iv) the United States of America, (v) Australia, (vi) Spain, (vii) Eire, (viii) Denmark and (ix) the European Parliament, basing his comparison on the exchange rates at the close of business on 1 January.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, last year the review body on top salaries carried out a review of the House of Commons office costs allowance (Report No. 32, Cm 1943, July 1992) which included in appendix E

"The secretarial, research and office accommodation and expenses of legislators in thirteen countries: a comparative survey 1991".

Calculations for this survey were based on the rate of exchange prevailing on 15 April 1991. This report is available in the House of Commons Library.

Select Committee Reports

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the *(a)* titles and *(b)* publication dates of reports by Select Committees which have not yet been debated by Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Details of the debates on select committee reports are given in the Sessional Returns for each Session from 1987-88 to 1991-92, copies of which are in the Library.

The substantive reports from departmentally-related select committees this Session up to 25 January 1993 are as follows:

Committee	*HC Paper No.*	*Title*	*Date of formal report (in Votes and Proceedings)*	*Date of Publication*
Agriculture				
First	258	Arrangements for the importation of bananas into the United Kingdom—interim report	9 December 1992	12 January 1993[1]
Defence				
First	218	Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992	11 November 1992	30 November 1992
Second	306	Britain's Army for the 90s: Commitments and Resources	14 January 1993	*[not yet published]*
Employment				
First	308	Employment in the horseracing industry and the new VAT regime after 1 January 1993	9 December 1992	16 December 1992
Second	263	Employment consequences of British Coal's Proposed Pit Closures	13 January 1993	21 January 1993
Foreign Affairs				
First	205	Europe after Maastricht—interim report	4 November 1992	19 November 1992
Health				
First	321	NHS Trusts—interim conclusions and proposals for further inquiries	30 November 1992	16 December 1992
Second	221	The European Commission's Proposed Directive on the Advertising of Tobacco Products	14 December 1992	20 January 1993
Home Affairs				
First	265	Accountability of the Security Service	14 December 1992	13 January 1993
National Heritage				
First	249-I	Export of Works of Art	3 November 1992	11 January 1993[2]
Second	249-II	Export of Works of Art	12 November 1992	11 January 1993
Third	389	National Lottery etc. Bill	14 January 1993	20 January 1993
Science and Technology				
First	228	The policy and organisation of the Office of Science and Technology	10 December 1992	17 December 1992
Social Security				
First	189	The operation of pension funds—the recovery of assets	15 December 1992	12 January 1993
Second	359	Low income families 1979-1989	15 December 1992	14 January 1993
Transport				
First	375	Future of the Railways in the Light of the Government's White Paper Proposals: Interim Report	13 January 1993	20 January 1993
Treasury and Civil Service				
First	210	The 1992 Autumn Statement and the conduct of economic policy	16 December 1992	13 January 1993

[1] Published in typescript on 9 December 1992.
[2] Published in typescript on 3 November 1992 and in printed form in one volume with Second Report.

The following select committee reports have been debated this session:
1. Second Report of the Environment Committee 1991-92 HC 17 on Coastal Zone Protection debated on Estimates day on 10 December 1992.
2. Public Accounts Committee: 36th to 43rd Reports 1990-91, 1st to 24th Reports 1991-92 and 1st to 11th Reports 1992-93 on 28 October 1992.
3. Report of the Sittings of the House Committee 1991-92 HC 20-I on 13 July 1992.
4. Members' Interests: First Report 1990-91 and Second Report 1991-92 on 23 June 1992.

In addition, the following committee reports have been listed as relevant for debate on the Order Paper on the dates shown below:
Treasury and Civil Service Committee: 6 November 1992; BCCI Bingham Report, Second Report (HC26 1991-92) and Fourth Report

(HC177 1991-92), Third Special (HC302 1991-92), First Special Report (HC178 1992-93), Second Special (HC248 1992-93)
National Heritage Committee: 25 January 1993: Third Report on the National Lottery etc. Bill.
There remain in the current session two and a half Estimates days on which select committee reports will be debated.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ozone-depleting substances

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what proportion of his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances become controlled waste in terms of section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(2) what action has been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances consumed by his Department are identified as controlled wastes when they are no longer in use.

Mr. Atkins: The Environmental Protection Act 1990 does not extend to Northern Ireland. Ozone-depleting substances which become waste are disposed of in an environmentally acceptable way.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within his Department's buildings in the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many chlorofluorocarbon domestic fridges are contained within his Department's buildings;

(2) how many CFC and HCFC installations are contained within his Department's buildings.

Mr. Atkins: The information is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures have been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances in use by his Department, identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, do not reach the atmosphere.

Mr. Atkins: All relevant equipment is checked for leakage during routine planned maintenance.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what targets have been set for the recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals within departmental buildings.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide details from the maintenance and servicing record of the quantity and type of ozone-destroying chemicals used annually in his Department's refrigeration and air conditioning equipment for servicing and in leakages; and what proportion is removed for recycling.

Mr. Atkins: The information sought is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much funding has been allocated or spent to specifically deal with measures to reduce his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Atkins: Funding is not specifically allocated for measures to reduce the Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances. Where plant can be modified or is replaced zero or low ozone-depleting substances are used.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by his Department are considered essential.

Mr. Atkins: Use in certain refrigeration plant and refrigerators which have not yet reached the end of their useful lives.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the quantity of ozone-depleting substances recycled within his Department and returned to the manufacturer;

(2) what quantity of HCFC 22 is purchased by his Department per annum;

(3) what the latest figures are for his Department's total purchase of CFCs and HCFCs.

Mr. Atkins: The information sought is not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by what date his Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform with EC regulations on limits on these chemicals.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's policy is to eliminate the use of ozone depleting chemicals if possible in advance of the dates set out in the EC regulation and the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to purchase only ozone-friendly fridges that do not contain CFCs or HCFCs for his Department.

Mr. Atkins: Department policy is to purchase only those fridges which contain ozone-friendly refrigerants.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidance has been sought and received on alternatives or substitutes to the ozone-destroying chemicals in use by his Department.

Mr. Atkins: Guidance on alternatives or substitutes to ozone-destroying chemicals is obtained from the chemical and refrigeration industries, appropriate professional institutions, relevant official publications and the Building Research Establishment.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many portable halon fire extinguishers are contained within departmental buildings; and what measures are being taken to ensure their recycling and replacement.

Mr. Atkins: Information on the number of Halon fire extinguishers is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Where a Halon extinguisher has been discharged, damaged or reached the end of its recommended working life it is replaced with a carbon dioxide extinguisher.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in his Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the Departmental green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures; which possible measures have been considered and rejected; and on what grounds.

Mr. Atkins: I have promoted protection of the ozone layer by specific policy measures relating to the recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals. Other measures to reduce the use of these chemicals, or products containing them, include a purchasing requirement—whether for goods or services—to seek out and use suitable substitutes. A measure which has been rejected is the complete replacement of existing plant or supplies containing these substances, which would be cost prohibitive.

Environmental Information

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he plans to introduce legislation to transpose EC directive 90/313 on freedom of access to information on the environment into law.

Mr. Atkins: Regulations to introduce the directive will be introduced on 1 March 1993.

Prevention of Terrorism Acts

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are at present excluded from Northern Ireland under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts.

Mr. Mates: Two.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been excluded from Northern Ireland under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in each year since 1974.

Mr. Mates: The information is as follows:

Number of persons excluded from NI under section 6 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989 (or its predecessors)

Year	Numbers
1974	—
1975	—
1976	—
1977	—
1978	—
1979	—
1980	1
1981	6
1982	—
1983	—
1984	—
1985	—
1986	—
1987	1
1988	—
1989	1
1990	—
1991	—
1992	—

School Pupils

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many pupils are at each of *(a)* the primary and *(b)* the secondary schools in the constituency of Newry and Armagh in (i) the maintained, (ii) the controlled and (iii) the integrated sectors of education;

(2) how many pupils are at each of *(a)* the primary and *(b)* the secondary schools in the constituency of Strangford in (i) the maintained, (ii) the controlled and (iii) the integrated sectors of education.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to answers that I gave him on 15 and 16 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *382-83* and *465-67*. I will write as soon as the information in respect of 1992-93 becomes available.

Local Authority Performance Indicators

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to make local authorities publish performance indicators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Local Government Auditor will issue a consultation paper to all district councils in February 1993 setting out proposals for the introduction and use of performance indicators. Once decisions have been taken on the indicators to be used, councils—in common with local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland—will be required to publish the results. It is anticipated that publication of the first results will relate to the financial year 1993-94.

I am convinced that the publication of such information will benefit councils and ratepayers alike. Councils will set standards and targets to be achieved and ratepayers will be able to assess the performance not just of their own council but also how it compares with other councils.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Local Government Finance

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to disregard all income from compensation payments paid to people who had been held in Nazi concentration camps in calculations for community charge benefit and council tax benefit.

Mr. Burt: People who have suffered from National Socialist persecution already receive special recognition in all of the income-related benefit schemes, including community charge benefit and, from April 1993, council tax benefit. The first £10 a week of the pension they receive as a consequence of their persecution is completely ignored. We have no plans to change these rules.

Social Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what proportion of social fund applications to visit a sick child in hospital were refused *(a)* in each district area and *(b)* nationally, for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest available figures for expenditure on housing benefit to tenants in private rented accommodation and the level of income since the previous year.

Mr. Burt: The estimated outturn of expenditure for 1991-92 is £2,115 million. Planned expenditure for 1992-93 is £2,522 million.

Notes: The source of information is the 1992 Department Report published in February 1992. The 1993 Departmental Report, due to be published no later than 12 February 1993, will update the information contained in the reply. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Benefit Schemes

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *101*, what method was used to assess the value of a universal housing benefit scheme; and what other means are used in his Department to assess the benefits of proposals for social security schemes.

Mr. Burt: The Department has received various proposals for extending the housing benefit scheme. Departmental analysts assess the financial impact of a policy by using micro-simulation models to compare, for a sample of the population, estimated benefit entitlement before and after the proposed change.

The main data sources used are the Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry, the Family Expenditure Survey, and forecasts produced by the Government Actuary's Department for caseloads of non income-related benefits.

Income Support

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *103*, if he will publish an estimate of the regional and national distribution of claimants and payments of income support for mortgage interest.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

Regions	*Number of income support recipients with mortgage interest added in the assessment*	*Annual amount of mortgage interest added in the assessment £ millions*
North Eastern	52,000	81
London North	80,000	247
South Western	40,000	107
Wales	27,000	49
Midlands	69,000	127
North Western	58,000	86
Scotland	18,000	33
London South	67,000	220
Great Britain	411,000	949

Notes:

1. Due to rounding the sum of the individual amounts for each region does not equal the total for Great Britain.
2. The regions are DSS administrative regions prior to 1991.

Source: Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry, May 1991.

Local Offices, Paisley

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to develop and construct new premises in the Paisley area for the executive agencies responsible to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Plans to develop new premises in the Paisley area for the executive agencies of the Department of Social Security are matters for the chief executives of those agencies. Mr Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency will reply on their behalf to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Gordon McMaster, dated 27 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency (BA), it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about plans to develop and construct new premises in the Paisley area for the Department's Executive Agencies.

Of all the Department's Executive Agencies, including the planned Child Support Agency from April 1993, only the BA has plans to construct new premises in the Paisley area. It is planned that the building, in addition to BA staff, will also house staff from the Contributions Agency and Child Support Agency.

An application for planning consent has been lodged with Renfrew District Council and, subject to a satisfactory outcome, the sale of the site for the new office in Paisley, to replace the existing Social Security office, will then be concluded. It is hoped that matters will be cleared within the next six to eight weeks.

Funds are available for the construction of the new building and a start on site is expected immediately the site purchase is completed.

On current estimates the building should be ready for occupation by late 1994.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Mrs. Elizabeth Snoxall (Ref. WA 237496B) can expect to receive a decision on her disability living allowance application.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr Robert B. Jones, dated 27 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational

matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Miss Elizabeth Snoxall's application for Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

I can confirm that outstanding action has now been completed on Miss Snoxall's claim which has been notified to her. The DLA Unit replied separately on 24 January to your earlier correspondence to them about the case.

Clearly your constituent has not received the standard of service which she has every right to expect from the Agency. I offer my sincere apologies for the delay in dealing with her claim and for the distress and frustration this must have caused. My letter of 19 October 1992 to all MPs explained the problems the Agency has faced since the successful launch of the new benefits and the positive steps taken to improve the situation. I can assure you that every effort is being made by staff and management to improve the response time and service to our customers.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will apper in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of how many people qualify for cold weather payments in each district.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 27 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for an estimate of how many people qualify for Cold Weather Payments in each District.

An estimate of the number of Income Support recipients in each Benefits Agency District, based on figures for those claiming Income Support in November 1992, who may qualify for a Cold Weather Payment should the area be triggered is in the attached annex.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Annex

District	*Qualifying IS recipients*
Newcastle	20,602
North Durham	16,965
North Tees	15,110
North Tyneside	8,953
Northumberland	11,101
South Durham	13,659
South Tees	18,822
South Tyneside	20,592
Wearside	18,887
Barnsley	9,742
Doncaster	13,569
East Yorkshire	10,966
Hull	24,494
Rotherham	16,851
Sheffield East	16,243
Sheffield West	15,672
South Humberside	17,431
Bradford	21,048
Halifax	14,700
Kirklees	16,834
Leeds North	15,275
Leeds South	18,891
North Yorkshire	14,088
Wakefield	14,160
Glasgow Anniesland	8,625
Glasgow City	9,345
Glasgow East	15,888
Glasgow Laurieston	15,941
Glasgow South West	11,318
Renfrew	11,331
Springburn and Cumbernauld	11,160
Clyde Coast and Cowal	7,881
Coatbridge	9,632
Forth Valley	11,344
Highlands and Islands	14,355
Irvine and Kilmarnock	10,765
Lomond and Argyll	8,840
Motherwell	13,552
South West Scotland	13,040
East Lowlands	14,171
Fife	13,567
Grampian and Shetland	12,432
Lothian Central	10,183
Lothian West	11,603
Tayside	18,353
East Lincolnshire	16,511
East Nottinghamshire	15,258
Chesterfield and Worksop	14,517
North Leicestershire	17,416
North Nottinghamshire	12,131
South Leicestershire	16,659
West Lincolnshire	15,524
West Nottinghamshire	15,017
Birmingham Chamberlain	17,127
Birmingham Heartlands	15,192
Birmingham North West	16,476
Birmingham South East	15,070
Birmingham South West	15,809
Coventry	19,011
Hereford and Worcestershire	19,203
Warwickshire	15,819
Central Derbyshire	14,484
Central Staffordshire	14,024
North Staffordshire	19,551
North Worcestershire	18,548
Sandwell	19,270
Shropshire	15,453
South Derbyshire	10,918
Walsall	15,224
Wolverhampton	18,387
Cynon Merthyr & Rhymney Valley	13,525
Gwyneddigion	11,675
Mid Wales and Maelor	10,408
North Gwent and Brecon	11,131
North Wales Coast	13,435
Ogwr Afan Nedd	12,460
South Glamorgan	22,312
South Gwent and Islwyn	11,846
Swansea	13,875
Taff Rhondda	9,489
West Wales	13,703
Knowsley	15,410
Liverpool Central	10,942
Liverpool North	13,764
Liverpool South	16,323
Sefton	17,559
South Cheshire	17,408
South West Lancashire	14,407
Wirral	19,736
Manchester Central	11,960
Manchester North	8,626
Manchester Salford	12,760
Manchester South	18,257
North Cheshire	16,353
Oldham	15,869
Sale and East Cheshire	11,615
Stockport	12,635
Tameside	11,341
Blackburn	12,251
Blackpool	14,904
Bolton	16,003
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	11,179
Lancaster and South Cumbria	12,016

District	Qualifying IS recipients
North Cumbria	10,989
Preston	13,968
West Pennine	18,790
Wigan and Leigh	14,205
Cambridgeshire	20,813
Leaside	30,302
Northamptonshire	21,303
North and East Hertfordshire	12,541
Norwich	22,549
Suffolk	20,484
West Hertfordshire	13,645
Barnet	16,257
Bedfordshire	20,337
Buckinghamshire	18,423
Ealing	26,368
Euston	34,092
Harrow and Hillingdon	15,361
Oxford	15,169
Bankside	11,947
London Central	5,838
North Surrey	25,250
Palace	29,940
South Downs	18,846
South West Thames	26,151
West Sussex	23,026
Bristol Brunel	19,468
Bristol Severnside	22,093
Cornwall	22,229
Dorset	25,553
Exeter and North Devon	21,680
Gloucester	18,568
Somerset	15,621
South Devon	25,876
Barking and Havering	17,124
City East	14,975
Essex South East	16,927
Essex South West	23,382
Hackney and Islington	27,877
Lea Roding	26,905
Newham	21,559
North Essex	17,182
Canterbury and Thanet	12,956
Channel	12,112
East Sussex	15,958
Lewisham and Brixton	27,105
Neasden	20,534
North Kent	25,432
Thameside	20,600
West Kent	19,025
Berkshire	23,456
Hampshire North	16,330
Hounslow and Kingston	20,767
Solent and New Forest	24,107
South East Hants and Wight	22,609
Surrey Downs	20,160
Wiltshire	18,566

Registered Homes (Amendment) Act

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment has been made of the effect of the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 on the benefits of those who are currently part of adult fostering schemes, supported lodgings or adult placement schemes.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), 20 January 1993, *Official Report*, columns *294-95*.

Retirement Pensioners

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of people in receipt of the state retirement pension; what percentage of this figure *(a)* pays income tax, *(b)* pays no income tax but is not in receipt of income support and *(c)* is in receipt of income support.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested as the data are not directly comparable. Figures for (b) are not available.

At 31 March 1992 (the latest date for which figures are available) 10,005,570 persons were in receipt of a contributory state retirement pension, 592,720 of whom were resident outside Great Britain.

I understand from the Inland Revenue that it is estimated that in the 1990-91 tax year 3·5 million persons in Great Britain in receipt of state retirement pension were liable to pay income tax.

At 31 May 1991 (the latest date for which figures are available) the number of income support claimants and partners in receipt of state retirement pension was (rounded to the nearest thousand) 1,383,000.

Care Allowances

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people would benefit and what is his estimate of the cost of extending entitlement to the carer premium to carers over retirement age who could establish underlying entitlement to invalid care allowance.

Mr. Burt: It is not possible for a person who becomes a carer after age 65 to establish entitlement to invalid care allowance. Information is not available on which to base a reliable estimate of the additional numbers who would qualify for the carer premium and the consequential cost.

Correspondence

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Chelmsford can expect a substantive reply to his letters of 14 August, 5 November and 11 December 1992 to the chief executive of the Benefits Agency concerning his constituent, reference number DB103964.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that he replied in full to my hon. Friend on 27 January 1993 and apologised for the delay.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

GATT

1. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has made of the effects on British agriculture of the agreements so far reached in GATT.

Mr. Gummer: The agreement reached between EC and US negotiators last November takes full account of the common agricultural policy reforms agreed last May. A GATT deal based on that agreement would assure the future of the CAP support arrangements.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a detailed analysis of the effect of the GATT agreement on each sector of agriculture.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on 30 November 1992 *(Official Report,* column 59). The Commission's paper has since been deposited in the Library of the House.

Battery Hens

13. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures he intends to implement in order to improve the conditions under which battery hens are kept.

Mr. Soames: The Government's policy is that welfare standards for all systems of keeping hens should be set on a Community basis. We are pressing for major improvements in the current Community directive on battery hens.

Set-aside

14. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress of the set-aside scheme.

15. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in the new set-aside rules.

Mr. Curry: On 13 January, agriculture departments announced further details of the new arable payments scheme including claim procedures, rules on land transfers, a relaxation of the rules on set-aside in different yield regions and a more detailed EC regulation on non-food crops.

Tobacco

16. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how large are the current intervention stocks of tobacco held *(a)* in the European Community as a whole and *(b)* in the United Kingdom; and how much it costs (i) the European Community and (ii) the United Kingdom Government to purchase and store these stocks of tobacco.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission's most recent figures show 8,313 tonnes of tobacco held in intervention stores in Greece and Italy, the Community's main tobacco producers.

In 1991, the Community spent £37 million [54 million ecu] on storing tobacco, around 4 per cent. of CAP expenditure on tobacco for that year.

The United Kingdom does not produce or store tobacco. Our budgetary contribution is made to the EC budget as a whole.

Arable Aids Scheme

17. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning his Department's booklet on the arable aids scheme.

Mr. Curry: None.

Promotion of Agricultural Products

18. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last attended an exhibition in the United Kingdom for the promotion of agricultural products.

Mr. Gummer: Two days ago.

Milk Marketing Board

19. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received on the proposals for the reform of the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Curry: The future of the Milk Marketing Board has been debated in detail during consideration of the Agriculture Bill in another place.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will detail the number of animal welfare officers in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There are 239 veterinary officers in the state veterinary service whose duties include the monitoring of livestock welfare on farms.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on developments relating to animal welfare and the EC.

Mr. Soames: The Government continue to press for improvements to welfare standards in the Community. Commission proposals are currently awaited on further rules to protect animals in transport and on welfare of laying hens.

Food Marketing

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the recent food marketing seminar held at 10 Downing street.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the recent food marketing seminar held at 10 Downing Street.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister chaired a seminar with leaders of the agriculture and food industries on 13 January. This considered ways to improve opportunities for British food suppliers to encourage our industries to become more competitive and to encourage investment in the UK.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to meet representatives of the British food industry to discuss the sale of food produced in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: We meet the industry constantly. Last week alone there were three meetings specifically devoted to promote export and food marketing.

24. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet representatives of British supermarkets to discuss food marketing.

Mr. Curry: My ministerial colleagues and I and our officials frequently meet supermarket representatives to discuss current issues of concern, including food marketing.

Badgers Act 1991

25. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the Badgers Act 1991.

Mr. Soames: In addition to the responses to the consultation exercise on licensing under the Badgers Act 1991, more than 150 letters from hon. Members and more than 320 letters from members of the public have been received on the licensing arrangements which will permit interference with badger setts.

Food Prices

26. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the price of food in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: We have received a number of representations about the effects of the recent green pound devaluations on the price of food in the United Kingdom.

Pig Industry

27. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the British pig industry to discuss problems relating to the industry.

Mr. Curry: All Ministers meet representatives of the industry.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when suckler cow premium payments will be made to farmers in North Yorkshire.

Mr. Curry: The Northallerton regional service centre, which covers North Yorkshire, has to date processed a third of the claims received for suckler cow premium under the 1992 scheme for payment. The remainder are being processed as quickly as possible.

Industrial and Marine Bacteria

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *341-42*, if he will give a breakdown of the use of the further £140,000 allocated to the work of the National Collections of Industrial and Marine Bacteria Ltd. for 1993-94; and what assessment he has now made of the long-term value of the collections as a national scientific resource.

Mr. Curry: The further £140,000 provided for NCIMB Ltd. is a reduction on the previous allocation but is the level of aid which will enable the company to remain in operation until March 1994. The Ministry has not stipulated the precise apportionment of this money between the various operating costs of the company but I understand the bulk of these funds will be used to pay the staff who maintain the collections.

The long-term value of the collections as a national scientific resource is being considered by the Office of Science and Technology and I refer the hon. Member to the answer that he received on 17 December from my right hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Office of Public Service and Science (*Official Report*, column *351*).

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on common agricultural policy costs to the United Kingdom in the last 12 months.

Mr. Curry: I receive numerous representations on all aspects of the CAP.

Forestry

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to develop a unified grant scheme to encourage and reward forest owners for developing conservation benefits to new and existing woods in the United Kingdom.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Government encourage forest and woodland owners to develop plans under the woodland grant scheme, which provides grants for the creation and management of woodlands to ensure that they yield a wide range of benefits, including conservation.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement outlining the timetable for the adoption of the Government's forestry strategy with special reference to restocking and replanting.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Government's aims and objectives for forestry, which include new planting and restocking, are described in the booklet "Forestry Policy for Great Britain", a copy of which is in the Library.

A number of forestry and environmental interests have suggested that the Government should prepare a forestry strategy which would set out how these aims and objectives are implemented. The Government will be considering the merits of preparing such a document in the light of discussions that the Forestry Commission are having with interested organisations.

SCOTLAND

Salmon

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the figures for the number of salmon caught in Scotland during the season 1991 and the season 1992, on rod and line and by commercial nets.

Sir Hector Monro: Details of reported catches of salmon in Scotland are published annually in The Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin—Fisheries Series. Copies of this publication are available in the Library. The reported catches of salmon in the 1991 season by method of catch (net and coble and fixed engine for netsmen and rod-and-line for anglers) are set out below.

Reported Catches of Salmon in Scotland-1991

Method	*Reported Catch*
Net and coble	9,528
Fixed engine	10,529
Rod-and-line	45,136

Figures for the 1992 season are currently being collated ready for publication in the summer of this year.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will produce an information leaflet on child abuse, setting out such matters as *(a)* the law on child abuse, *(b)* organisations that provide counselling and/or support, and *(c)* what a responsible adult should do if he/she suspects a child has suffered abuse.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In guidance to local authorities and other agencies, my right hon. Friend has provided information on a wide range of aspects of child protection. He also provides direct financial suport for organisations such as Childline (Scotland) which provide information, advice and counselling about child abuse. In addition, local authorities produce public information on child care matters, including child protection.

Mr. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance is provided by his office on the circumstances under which child abusers may or may not apply for access to the children they have abused.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: When a child is referred to a children's hearing and grounds which include abuse have either been accepted or found proved by the sheriff, the hearing has responsibility to determine in the light of the information before them whether the child needs compulsory measures of care to protect him or her from harm. If the hearing decides to make a supervision requirement, it has discretion to regulate access to the child according to its view of the child's best interest. It is open to the parents or the child to appeal to the sheriff against the terms of a supervision requirement.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to end plea bargaining in cases of child abuse.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Decisions as to which pleas, if any, to accept in criminal cases, including cases of child abuse, are a matter for Crown counsel and procurators fiscal in the exercise of their independent discretion and having regard to all the circumstances. It would not be proper for the Secretary of State to attempt to interfere with the exercise of this discretion.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide guidance to social workers on avoidance of coercion when attempting reconciliation between victims of abuse and the offenders.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Cases of child abuse are often complex and give rise to conflicting interests and emotions, but social workers have to give primary consideration to the best interests of the child and to take account of the child's wishes and views. My right hon. Friend has recently established a working party to produce practice guidance to assist social workers engaged in all aspects of child protection.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the application of interdicts preventing access of abusers to child victims in order to estimate how successful they have been in protecting their safety.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Law Commission has considered the working of section 14 of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981 relating to matrimonial interdicts in their Report on Family Law (Scot Law Com No. 135). Among other matters the commission recommends extension of the circumstances in which matrimonial interdicts and powers of arrest under the 1981 Act can provide protection for an applicant spouse or child of the family against domestic violence. The commission's recommendations are being considered.

Special Advisers

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the salaries of special advisers in his Department are determined; how this relates to the civil service pay structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The salaries of the special advisers in my Department are determined from guidance set out by the Cabinet Office and approved by HM Treasury. They do not relate to the civil service pay structure.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of his special advisers are engaged in other remunerated employment outwith the civil service.

Mr. Lang: Two special advisers have been appointed to my Department; neither is engaged in other remunerated employment outwith the civil service.

Indigenous Plants

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to make available additional resources for the planting of indigenous species along the M8 corridor; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is the policy of the roads directorate of the Scottish Office Industry Department to appoint landscape consultants as part of the design team on motorway and trunk road schemes to ensure that all environmental aspects are considered and that, as far as possible, the planting is harmonious with the natural character of the local area. A strategy for enhancing the landscape of the M8 corridor between Newbridge and Newhouse was prepared in 1988. The roads directorate in partnership with a wide range of interests, including the local authorities, the Central Scotland Countryside Trust and Scottish Enterprise implemented a phased annual planting programme of predominately indigenous species. It is planned to spend £160,000 in Phase V in spring 1993. Further expenditure will be determined by the outcome of the "Future Strategy for the M8" study commissioned in December 1992.

Following consultation with the Royal Fine Arts Commission for Scotland and the local district council it has been decided to significantly expand the planting programme on the M8 to the west of Glasgow at the St. James interchange scheme. Detailed proposals have yet to be finalised but it is anticipated that indigenous species will be included where these are compatible with the aims of the design philosophy. The estimated cost is £500,000 and will be funded by the roads directorate and Strathclyde regional council.

Construction Industry (Taylor Report)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many jobs have been created in the construction industry in Scotland as a result of implementation of the recommendations of the Taylor report on football stadium safety.

Sir Hector Monro: This information is not available centrally.

MV Braer

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has carried out an environmental impact study of the sinking of the MV Braer.

Sir Hector Monro: A range of specialist studies on the environmental effects is already underway. I understand that the Shetland Islands council is undertaking a substantial impact assessment. My right hon. Friend announced on 26 January the setting up of an ecological steering group under the chairmanship of Professor Bill Ritchie. One of its tasks will be to oversee these studies.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many veterinary checks have been carried out on Shetland livestock following the MV Brear oil spillage.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* A number of sheep which have been on contaminated grazing have been acquired for slaughter and laboratory examination for hydracarbon residues in the flesh.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his current estimate of the number of livestock affected and the number destroyed as a result of oil contamination in Shetland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* My Department has estimated that some 2,000 sheep were on grazings contaminated by oil from the MV Braer; the majority have been moved to cleaner grazing or out of the affected area altogether; the remainder are being fed hay or other fodder; and none have had to be destroyed.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies he has commissioned on the aftermath of the Shetland oil spill.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* Work has begun on the systematic monitoring of fish, shellfish, seawater, soils, herbage, crops and livestock. Shetland Health Board and the Environmental health (Scotland) unit have in hand a detailed health survey, which includes the offer of a general clinical examination to some 600 people living near the wreck, with funding from the Scottish Office. Among the other bodies already active in this field are the Scottish agricultural colleges, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Royal Botanic Gardens (Edinburgh), the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology and Shetland Islands council. All these strands will be drawn together by the ecological steeing group which my right hon. Friend announced on 11 January.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what long-term studies of the ecotoxicology of oil are planned by his Department in relation to birds, fish, invertebrates, marine mammals and others.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* My right hon. Friend announced on 11 January that he intends to set up an ecological steering group to oversee studies of the ecological effects of the oil pollution caused by the wreck of MV Braer on the coast of Shetland. The chairman and terms of reference of the group will be announced shortly. It will certainly be taking an expert view on what long-term studies should be undertaken.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sites of special scientific interest affected by the Shetland oil spill and the species found in them.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* The information is set out in the table. Many common species are found in these sites in addition to those which led to their notification. St. Ninian's is a site notified for its physiographical interest.

Site affected and species for which the site has been notified

Lochs of Spiggie and Brow
- Neomysis integer (crustacean)
- Potamopyrgus jenkinski (gastropod)
- Diaptomus wierzejskii (zooplankton)
- Chara aspera (macrophyte)
- Potamogeton iliformis (macrophyte)
- Nitella opaca (stonewart)
- Fontinalis antipyretica (moss)
- Whooper swans
- Goldeneye
- Pochard
- Tufted Duck

Pool of Virkie
- Arenicola marina (lug-worm)
- Seabirds and seaduck
- Waders

Sumburgh Head
- Kittiwake
- Guillemot
- Puffin
- Shag
- Arctic Tern

Quendale
- Marram
- Moonwart
- Curved Sedge
- Felwort
- Potamogeton friesii (pondweed)
- Water Crowfoot
- Waterfowl

St. Ninian's Tombolo
- Physiographical features only

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the risk of pollutants from the MV Braer oil spillage being passed via livestock to human beings through the food chain.

Sir Hector Munro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* The livestock in the affected area are cattle and sheep. The cattle are housed indoors at this time of year and it is unlikely that any contamination will reach them. However, the milk and the water supplies to the dairy farms are being regularly sampled and analysed and to date these results show that there has been no contamination. Very few, if any, of the sheep in the area would normally be going for slaughter at this time of year, and farmers have been advised not to send sheep for slaughter at present. In any case, post mortem inspection at the abattoir would reveal any pronounced taint in the meat and would be grounds for condemnation. In order to ascertain whether significant hydrocarbon residues remain

in the tissues of sheep exposed to this contamination a sample number of animals have been obtained for slaughter and laboratory examination.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his best estimate of how long it will be before pasture vacated following oil contamination may safely be used for grazing.

Sir Hector Munro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]*: It is not yet possible to provide such an estimate. Much will depend on the extent of the contamination and the information arising from the programme of testing of sheep, herbage and soil samples now in progress. Monitoring and testing will continue as long as is necessary. The Scottish Office agriculture and fisheries department will provide advice with regard to safety in the light of the scientific evidence.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken to date, and what action he intends to take, to set up ecological studies into the short and long-term effects of the oil spill from the MV Braer oil tanker.

Sir Hector Munro *[holding answer 15 January 1993]*: My right hon. Friend announced in his statement to the House on 11 January that an ecological steering group was being established. He announced the terms of reference of that group, under the chairmanship of Professor Bill Ritchie, on 26 January. The group's immediate task will be to develop urgently the best strategies, both in the short and longer terms, for dealing with the implications of the incident for the natural environment of Shetland. The group will oversee special studies of the ecological effects of the incident and will advise on more general lessons which may be drawn for the future.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what precautionary measures are being taken by his Department to ensure that foodstuffs are not being sold to the public which have been contaminated by the oil spill in the Shetland Islands.

Sir Hector Monro: The primary responsibility for the safety of foodstuffs on Shetland rests with Shetland Islands Council, as food authority. My Department has maintained contact with the Islands Council continuously since the grounding of the MV Braer, and I am satisfied that the council has taken all necessary steps within its power, for example by ensuring that contaminated vegetable crops do not reach the market and that milk supplies are monitored. In addition the Government has made an order under Part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 defining an area within which fishing and harvesting of farmed fish are prohibited. This designated area is constantly being kept under review on the basis of test results from water and fish sampling.

My Department has advised farmers not to send sheep for slaughter meantime, and has purchashed a sample number of sheep for slaughter and laboratory examination to assess whether any significant hydrocarbon residues remain in their tissue.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are being taken to protect wildlife sites in the Minches against possible oil contamination.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]*: Coastal local authorities have agreed emergency contingency plans with the marine pollution control unit at the Department of Transport to deal with contamination by sea borne oil. In addition Scottish Natural Heritage stands ready to provide advice and practical assistance in any case where wildlife and wildlife habitats are affected by oil pollution. Similar help would also be available to those voluntary bodies who assist with the recovery and rehabilitation of wildlife in such circumstances. The Ecological Steering Group which is being established by my right hon. Friend following the grounding of the MV Braer will study the effects on wildlife habitats in the Shetland Islands of that incident and advise on the lessons to be learned which could be applied should a similar incident take place in future in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans have been drawn up for compensation payments in the event of delay in the slaughter of fatstock due to contamination by toxic residues arising from the MV Braer oil spillage.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]*: The Government have made available assistance to producers who are suffering economic hardship through a bridging fund, which will be operated for the Government by Shetland Islands council. Details of the Fund's operation were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland in answer to a question from the hon. Member from Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) on 21 January.

Sandeels

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will continue the ban on the industrial fishing of sandeels in Shetland waters into the 1993 season; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 26 January 1993]*: The decision on whether to continue the closure of the Shetland sandeel fishery will be taken on the basis of the latest scientific analysis of the state of the stocks. I expect to receive the scientific advice within the next few weeks. We shall also have to take account of any implications of the recent oil spill from the MV Braer. The final decision will be taken after full consultation with all interested parties.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 January 1993]*: Two contracts were awarded by The Scottish Office to KPMG Management Consultants in the 12 months to 31 December 1992:

Evaluation of NHS trusts; and

Advice on future administrative and information technology systems and procurement of IT systems for the Scottish Office superannuation division.

Scotland in Bloom Competition

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what support and assistance he provides to the Scotland in Bloom competition; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* The Beautiful Scotland in Bloom competition is run by Keep Scotland Beautiful and is funded through commercial sponsorship.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements are in place to monitor the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944; how many complaints there have been in each year since 1985 alleging contravention of section 9(5) of the Act; how many of these have led to prosecutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provisions of the 1944 Act are monitored in a number of ways:

(i) by a rolling programme of inspections of employers quota records;
(ii) by undertaking an annual postal survey into the quota position of employers;
(iii) by reminding employers of their duties and obligations;
(iv) by maintaining records locally of employers who are subject to quota and of their quota positions;
(v) as part of the work helping people with disabilities find suitable employment and by promoting the employment of disabled people generally.

The employment service receives a small number of complaints each year from registered disabled people who consider that their dismissal contravenes section 9(5) of the 1944 Act. Precise figures are not available. All complaints are investigated and, in the period since 1985, none have led to the prosecution of an employer.

The employment service continues to administer the quota scheme in accordance with legal requirements. It is generally accepted that the scheme is not working as originally intended and we are keeping the position under review.

Employment Training

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of people with disabilities in *(a)* London and *(b)* the south-east, found jobs on leaving employment training in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The percentage of people with disabilities going into jobs after leaving employment training was 16 per cent. in London and 23 per cent. in the south-east. These figures are for all leavers who said they had a disability in the period April 1991 to March 1992, the latest period for which information is available.

Partially Sighted People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she next plans to meet representative of the Partially-Sighted Society to discuss the needs and rights of the partially sighted; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of States has no plans at present to meet the Partially-Sighted Society.

Youth Training

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people graduating from youth training schemes in *(a)* the London borough of Lewisham and *(b)* south-east London secured full-time permanent employment related to their training within (i) six months and (ii) one year of the completion of their course, in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many eligible young people in Hampshire have currently been unable to obtain a place on a youth training scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 21 January 1993]:* Information on the total number of young people eligible for youth training is not available.

Sellafield

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give details concerning the leak of radioactive plutonium at the Sellafield reprocessing plant in September; and what assessment she has made of the effect on the health of workers at the plant and those who live in close proximity to it in the short and long term.

Mr. McLoughlin: This incident was fully investigated by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate who considered that there was no escape of radioactivity to the environment and there was no additional radiation exposure to workers on the site at the time of the incident. Doses to workers engaged on remedial activities have been controlled within statutory dose limits and to be as low as reasonably practicable. A statement of the incident was published in HSE's quarterly statement on incidents at nuclear installations on 4 January 1993, and also in BNFL's Sellafield site newsletter. Copies of the statement and the site newsletter have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes Stockton, North.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Cook, dated 28 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the Stockton North area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers for the unemployment office which covers the Workington constituency.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, dated 28 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in Workington. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes St. Helens, North parliamentary constituency.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. John Evans, dated 28 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the St Helens North area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit imposed by adjudication officers on people living in the London borough of Wandsworth; and how many people have been affected by such decisions in each of the last three years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 28 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about adjudication decisions affecting people in the London Borough of Wandsworth and, although your question does not specifically say so, I am assuming that you are seeking information about disqualifications. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Information about the length of disqualification periods imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

The maximum period of disqualification for receiving unemployment benefit is 26 weeks.

Unfortunately, information is not available in the form you have requested. We compile information on disqualification by region and the Wandsworth area is included in our London and South Eastern Region. The statistical table attached gives the figures for the number, but not the lengths, of disqualifications imposed in that region.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

London and South Eastern Region—Disqualifications

	Year ending March 1992	*Quarter ending March 1991*	*Year ending December 1990*	*Year ending December 1989*
Left voluntarily	48,019	11,647	20,813	54,115
Misconduct	18,805	3,563	7,618	18,287
Refusal of employment	201	89	929	1,279
Refusal of premature termination of training	—	4	32	91
Neglect to avail of on offer of employment	121	27	163	626
Refusal or failure to comply with written instructions	574	175	114	9
Trade dispute	151	nil	nil	134

Notes:

1. Starting with April 1991 the statistical year runs from April to March.
2. Decisions on absence from Great Britain; imprisonment or detention in legal custody; and, from April 1991, those relating to training are not separately identified in the statistical summary of decisions made and have not been included above.

light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many claimants *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the area containing Nottingham, North have been subject to unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in each of the last five years;

(2) what information is available regarding the lengths of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed by adjudication officers in the area which includes Nottingham, North;

(3) what guidance exists for adjudication officers when imposing unemployment benefit disqualification; as to the length of time of that disqualification; what is the maximum period of such disqualification; and how often it was imposed *(a)* in area containing Nottingham, North and *(b)* nationally in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr Graham Allen, dated 28 January 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your three Parliamentary Questions to her about the guidance available to adjudication officers and the numbers and length of periods of unemployment benefit disqualifications in the Nottingham North area and nationally. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All decisions on claims for unemployment benefit are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Although adjudication officers are employed by us, they are appointed by the Secretary of State specifically to give independent decisions on questions relating to benefit entitlement. These decisions must comply with Social Security legislation and established case law.

Adjudication officers are assisted in their decision making by guidance contained in the Adjudication Officers Guide. This brings together the law and case law, both of which are also published and available to them, and provides further guidance based on precendent and legal advice. The Guide is written by the Office of the Chief Adjudication Officer (Central Adjudication Services) for all adjudication officers who handle questions and appeals related to social security benefits. It is hoped that its publication by Her Majesty's Stationery Office will be of help to others interested in social security, such as welfare rights groups. However, the guide is primarily designed for the use of adjudication officers and this is reflected in the way it is written and presented.

Information about the length of disqualification period imposed is not collated or published as each is decided in the light of the circumstances surrounding the individual case. Without knowledge of these circumstances no meaningful interpretation of the information could be made.

The maximum period of disqualification for receiving unemployment benefit is 26 weeks. Unfortunately because we do not collect the information about the length of disqualificaiton imposed I am unable to provide the details you requested on how often the maximum period of disqualification is imposed.

Unfortunately, the information we have is not available in the form you have requested. We compile information on disqualificaions by region and nationally. The Nottingham North area is included in our East Midlands and Eastern Region. The statistical tables attached give the number of disqualifications imposed both for that region and nationally.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

The number of people disqualified nationally and in the East Midlands and Eastern region during the past five years is as follows:

Year ending 31 December	*National*	*East Midlands and Eastern Region*
Leaving voluntarily:		
1987	329,516	14,727
1988	261,838	12,593
1989	202,328	21,580
1990	174,786	19,025
Quarter ending March 1991	37,226	4,007
Year ending 31 March 1992	140,725	13,392
Misconduct:		
1987	98,317	3,565
1988	80,659	3,269
1989	65,495	7,103
1990	53,765	5,931
Quarter ending March 1991	12,937	1,725
Year ending 31 March 1992	54,005	5,951
Refusal of employment:		
1987	2,320	135
1988	2,291	121
1989	2,799	336
1990	2,224	244
Quarter ending March 1991	186	24
Year ending 31 March 1992	458	51
Neglect to avail oneself of an offer of employment:		
1987	2,036	129
1988	3,114	241
1989	2,941	779
1990	1,443	402
Quarter ending March 1991	328	92
Year ending 31 March 1992	1,307	424
Refusal to comply with written instructions:		
1987	61	Nil
1988	78	2
1989	101	13
1990	1,138	2
Quarter ending March 1991	2,354	Nil
Year ending 31 March 1992	575	Nil
Trade disputes:		
1987	496	6
1988	299	1
1989	313	Nil
1990	598	Nil
Quarter ending March 1991	32	Nil
Year ending 31 March 1992	353	1
Refusal or premature termination of training:		
1987	6,607	333
1988	3,987	252
1989	881	136
1990	748	75
Quarter ending March 1991	33	2

Note:

1. Starting with April 1991 the statistical year runs from April to March.

2. Decisions on absence from Great Britain; imprisonment or detention on legal custody; and, from April 1991, those relating to training are not separately identified in the statistical summary of decisions made and have not been included above.

Unemployment, Ashfield

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the total number of people unemployed in Ashfield.

Mr. McLoughlin: In December 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 5,623 claimant unemployed people in the Ashfield local authority district.

Training, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the Liverpool travel-to-work area are currently being trained on Government financed schemes; what percentage of trainees leaving schemes last year are known to have found employment: and if she will express these figures as a proportion of the total number of people registered for employment benefit in Liverpool.

Mr. McLoughlin: At November 1992, the latest date for which information is available, there were about 12,600 people on employment and youth training in the Merseyside training and enterprise council area. Estimates are not available for the Liverpool travel-to-work area. In the latest full year to March 1992, 22 per cent. of employment training leavers and 33 per cent. of youth training leavers were in a job after leaving their programme. People on Government training schemes are not included in the monthly unemployment figures.

Training (Homeless People)

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research her Department has commissioned into training initiatives for homeless people.

Mr. McLoughlin: In May 1992 a report was produced by Conran Roche Planning for the employment service regional office in Birmingham called "Access Needs of Homeless People into Employment and Training". I will arrange for a copy to be sent to the hon. Member.

In October 1992 my Department commissioned the production of a good practice guide for training and enterprise councils based on initiatives to help homeless people find suitable training and employment. I will ensure a copy of the guide is sent to the hon. Member when it is issued.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds are waiting for a youth training place *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in Nottinghamshire and *(c)* in the city of Nottingham.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 11 January 1993]*: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State has already announced the estimated numbers of young people seeking training at national level in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 1 December 1992, at columns *127-28*.

Changes have been introduced to improve the estimates of demand for places at local level. My right hon. Friend is considering what further information to make available in the light of advice on the reliability of the statistics.

Management Charter Initiative

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what efforts are currently undertaken by her Department to promote the management charter initiative code of practice, specifically among small and medium-sized enterprises.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government have been instrumental in helping the management charter initiative (MCI) to become established and fully support its efforts to promote the code of practice to all enterprises, including the small and medium sized. With the Department of Trade and Industry and Scottish Enterprise, the Employment Department is sponsoring an MCI development project to help training and enterprise councils, local enterprise councils and chambers of commerce better ensure that the management development needs of small and medium sized enterprises are met.

Pit Closures

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what date she was informed of the extent of the job losses announced in the recent British Coal pit closure programme.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on consultation with the Department on pit closures is set out in a memorandum and supplementary memorandum to the Employment Seclect Committee which the Committee has published.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Children's Play

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress has been made on discussing Sports Council funding for the national children's play and recreation unit; and what measures will be implemented to fund children's play after March 1993 pending the completion of these talks.

Mr. Brooke: The Sports Council's budget proposals for 1993-94 include provision for some continuing work on children's play. I shall make a further statement in due course.

National Lottery

177. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has made of the annual costs incurred in connection with administering the national lottery by *(a)* the Office of the National Lottery, *(b)* the National Heritage Memorial Fund, *(c)* the National Lottery Charities Board, *(d)* the Millenium Commission, *(e)* the Arts Councils of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and *(f)* the Sports Councils of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as a percentage of turnover.

Mr. Brooke: I have estimated that the annual costs of Oflot will be £1·5 million in 1993-94, and around £2 million thereafter. The percentage of turnover which these figures represent will depend on the success of the national lottery. It is not possible to say with any exactness what proportion of the funds allocated to each distributor will be spent on administration, since this will largely be

determined by the volume of funds generated for distribution, and the volume of applications to be processed. The national lottery administration costs of the distributive bodies will be voted by Parliament annually in the normal way, and fully covered by receipts from national lottery proceeds.

Minority Languages

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to make a final decision regarding his Department's position on the Council of Europe convention on regional or minority languages.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom decision on whether to ratify the Council of Europe convention on regional or minority languages will be taken by the Government as a whole. The Government hope to be able to announce their decision shortly.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the organisations and individuals with whom he has had consultations on the Council of Europe convention on regional or minority languages since 5 November 1992.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have been asked to reply.

The Council of Europe convention on regional or minority languages places obligations on national Governments. Consultations on the implications of the convention have therefore taken place within the Government.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Stock

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of housing stock is unfit for habitation or in serious disrepair, in each standard region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The latest reliable figures on the percentage of unfit dwellings in each English standard region are presented in the table. The figures are from the 1986 English house condition survey and relate to the fitness standard in operation prior to the changes made in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Data on the percentage of dwellings in serious disrepair are not available at standard region level from this survey.

Region	*Percent Unfit*
North	5·4
Yorkshire/Humberside	5·8
North West	6·1
East Midlands	4·8
West Midlands	6·7
South West	4·1
East Anglia	4·3
Inner London	5·5
Outer London	3·9
Rest of the South East	3·1
Total England	4·8

Local Government Finance

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total level of local authority debt for each financial year since 1980.

Mr. Robin Squire: The toal external debt (temporary and longer-term) of local authorities in the United Kingdom at 31 March each year was as follows:

	£ billion
1980	33·5
1981	35·8
1982	35·9
1983	36·0
1984	37·3
1985	40·2
1986	42·7
1987	45·0
1988	47·8
1989	50·8
1990	51·7
1991	53·7
1992	54·4

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the outcome of the consultation on the local government finance settlement for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I am today laying before this House the Local Government Finance Report (England) 1993-94, the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (England) 1993-94, and the Special Grant Report (No. 5). These reports establish the amount of grant to be paid to local authorities and the basis of its distribution for 1993-94, and specify the amounts which are to be used as the basis of comparison for measuring increases in local authorities' budget in 1993-94 for the purposes of capping. I shall be sending copies of these reports to all authorities, together with a table showing the standard spending assessments and grant entitlement of each authority; these will be placed in the Library and have been placed in the Vote Office. I also reaffirm the provisional capping criteria that I announced last November.

Marston Moor Airfield

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to respond to the inspector's report following the public inquiry on the planning proposal to permit flying on the Marston Moor airfield near York.

Mr. Baldry: The planning inspector's formal report of the local inquiry, held on 8 to 11 September last year, was submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend at the beginning of this month and is being considered urgently. Unless there are unforeseen difficulties, my Department expects to issue the appeals decision within eight weeks of receiving the inspector's report.

Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will make a decision as to the distribution of the special grant for local authorities faced with exceptional costs arising from the influx of refugees from former Yugoslavia, announced on 16 November 1992; and what criteria will be applied in the making of that decision.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is today laying the

Special Grant Report (No. 5). That report, inter alia, sets out the determination of the amounts of Yugoslav displaced persons grant to be paid to certain charging authorities in support of expenditure incurred in the financial year 1992-93. The criteria applied in making the determination are set out in the report.

Homelessness

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate the 10 highest spending borough or district councils in the year 1991-92, or forecast for 1992-93, or 1993-94, in their statutory duties for homelessness *(a)* by sum involved and *(b)* by amounts per head of adult population, giving the figures in each case.

Mr. Baldry: The available information is as follows:

Budgeted expenditure on homelessness[1] 1992-93

Highest spending local authorities	*£ million*
1. Haringey	11·7
2. Hackney	11·5
3. Tower Hamlets	10·2
4. Westminster	9·6
5. Lambeth	7·0
6. Newham	7·0
7. Camden	6·1
8. Southwark	5·1
9. Hammersmith and Fulham	5·1
10. Hounslow	4·2
	[2]*£/head*
1. Hackney	90·4
2. Tower Hamlets	86·9
3. Haringey	73·1
4. Westminster	70·5
5. Newham	45·0
6. Camden	44·9
7. Hammersmith and Fulham	42·7
8. Lambeth	37·2
9. Southwark	30·4
10. Hounslow	27·7

[1] From General Fund Revenue Account.
[2] Relevant Population.

Homelessness

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were turned down as not being officially homeless under the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 in Nottingham, and not offered temporary accommodation, in the last year for which figures are available; and how many were accepted.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The available information for 1991 is contained in edition No. 102, table 9(b) of "Local Housing Statistics: England and Wales", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Urban Air

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the report of the quality of urban air review group will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The executive summary of the report was published last December. The full report is published today. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library. I am grateful to Professor Roy Harrison and his colleagues for their thorough assessment of the current state of knowledge on urban air quality. We will study their recommendations with care.

Controlled Waste

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals have been made against the refusal by waste regulation authorities to register applicants as carriers of controlled waste; and whether he has issued any decisions.

Mr. Maclean: Carriers of controlled waste are required to register with waste regulation authorities under the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 and the Controlled Waste (Registration of Carriers and Seizure of Vehicles) Regulations 1991. The registration system is an important part of the measures being introduced by the Government to improve the handling and disposal of waste. The legislation provides for applicants to appeal to the Secretary of State against a decision to refuse to register them. To date 25 appeals have been made.

The first decision letter on such an appeal was issued on 22 December 1992. The appeal was made on the grounds that it was unreasonable for the waste regulation authority to conclude that, in the light of the appellant's convictions for prescribed offences, it was undesirable for him to be authorised to transport controlled waste. The appellant argued that steps had been taken to ensure that the offences are not repeated. The Secretary of State's decision in this case was to uphold the appeal and direct the waste regulation authority to register the appellant.

The Secretary of State does not consider that operators should be forced out of business unnecessarily as a result of the registration system. He is of the opinion that waste regulation authorities should normally register operators who have taken steps to ensure that there is no repetition of the offences for which they have been convicted. Powers are available to regulation authorities to revoke a person's registration if that person is subsequently convicted of a prescribed offence and the authority considers that it is undesirable for the registered carrier to continue to be authorised to transport controlled waste.

Construction Industry Training Board

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to establish a statutory construction industry training board.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

There has been a statutory industry training board since 1964.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to discuss with the United States Secretary of State for Defence the future access to the Nevada test site that will be afforded to the United Kingdom for safety tests of nuclear warheads.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend looks forward to discussing a range of subjects of mutual interest with Mr Aspin.

Maritime Defence Exhibition

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution his Department plans to make to the international maritime defence exhibition and conference to be held in Brighton on 31 March to 2 April.

Mr Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. i have therefore asked the chief executive to reply directly to the hon. Member.

Letter from J.A.R. Chisholm to Mr Llew Smith, dated 28 January 1993.

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that I would be replying directly to your question regarding the International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference.

The event is being organised by a private company, Spearhead Exhibitions Ltd., and sponsored by the Defence Research Agency. The MOD and the DRA both plan to have stands at the Exhibition. They will also be members of the Conference Committee and will almost certainly be presenting papers at the Conference.

I hope you will find this helpful.

RAF Boulmer

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF Boulmer married quarters are currently vacant in the village of Longhoughton, Northumberland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 December 1992 there were 14 vacant RAF Boulmer married quarters in Longhoughton. Five of these properties were already allocated to service families who were due to move in shortly and the remainder were either undergoing or awaiting major works services. In addition a further 40 houses were emptied between September and December 1992 to allow extensive modernisation and refurbishment to take place. Once this work is completed the properties will be used to accommodate service families.

Retired Personnel

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what applications have been received from personnel in his Department for permission to transfer to the private sector on retirement.

Mr. Aitken: Between 300 and 600 applications seeking permission to take up employment in the private sector are made by crown servants in my Department each year. These represent all applications required under the business appointment rules, in respect of crown servants who retire, resign or are made redundant from crown service. In 1992, of 403 applications made under these rules, 364 were submitted because the applicant had retired.

Rosyth and Devonport Dockyards

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Devonport Management Ltd. was first invited to file its original tender for nuclear refit work.

Mr. Aitken: In July 1991, both contractors at the royal dockyards were invited to make proposals to the Ministry of Defence for concentrating all nuclear refitting, refuelling and decommissioning work at the dockyard each manages. No tenders have yet been sought for this work.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he made before 6 January of Babcock Thorn's second bid, entitled "Scheme IV", for nuclear refit work at Rosyth.

Mr. Aitken: Babcock Thorn Ltd.'s proposals to upgrade docks at Rosyth were given appropriate consideration.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make an announcement about the future of Rosyth and Devonport dockyards.

Mr. Aitken: As soon as possible.

Mr. McLeih: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assurances were given to Babock Thorn Ltd. on the evaluation of "Scheme IV" for the nuclear refit work at Rosyth dockyard, submitted on 10 December 1992.

Mr. Aitken: BTL asked my Department if it would consider a proposal to upgrade docks at Rosyth as an alternative to its previous proposals. In acceding to this request, my Department gave no assurances on the evaluation of the response.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that officials working on the future of Rosyth and Devonport dockyards have no conflicts of interest.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am confident that officials working on the future of the royal dockyards have no conflict of interest.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedure he will adopt for the assessment of Rosyth's second nuclear docks proposal entitled "Scheme IV."

Mr. Aitken: The proposal will be given fair and equal assessment against the same criteria used to assess other proposals submitted for nuclear refitting. All relevant factors will be taken into account.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what experience each of the officials concerned with the evaluation of tenders submitted by Rosyth and Devonport dockyards has of working in the private sector.

Mr. Aitken: It is Government policy to encourage the interchange of civil servants with the private sector in order to broaden their experience. Given the number of officials concerned with providing advice on the future of the royal dockyards, it would take disproportionate time and effort to provide the information sought.

Proof and Experimental Sites

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates he has made of the possible cost of making each proof and experimental establishment site environmentally safe and suitable for alternative use.

Mr. Aitken: This matter is being addressed by the director general of test and evaluation in his overall review of test and evaluation facilities within the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the contractors involved at each of

the proof and experimental establishments (land); and what was the volume and value of their work in 1991-92 and in the current financial year.

Mr. Aitken: The site contracts at the proof and experimental establishments at Cold Meece, Eskmeals and Shoeburyness (including Lavington) are currently with SERCO; the contract for the environmental test centre at Foulness is with Assessment Services Ltd; and that for the proof and experimental establishment at Pendine is with Airworks Ltd. The volumes of work and their value are a matter of commercial confidentiality between the Department and the relevant contractors.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide economic comparisons of the cost effectiveness of each of the proof and experimental establishments (land) including the financial turnover per year, the number of employees, details of profit and loss-making facilities and any other direct quality and efficiency comparisons; and if he will make the information available for public scrutiny.

Mr. Aitken: The cost-effectiveness of all Ministry of Defence test and evaluation facilities is an important part of the overall review that is being undertaken by the director general of test and evaluation; the results of this will not be known until May. Any proposals that emanate from this review which have an impact on the size or location of the civilian work force will be subject to consultation with the trades union and other interested parties. Any consultation document will contain relevant financial information.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the Government's proposals for market testing the work now being carried out by the proof and experimental establishments (land).

Mr. Aitken: In line with Government policy, the Ministry of Defence is committed to a substantial rolling programme of market testing to demonstrate that it provides good quality services that represent value for money to the taxpayer. As part of this exercise, the directorate general of Test and evaluation is required to market test activity amounting to £45 million. Plans for doing this will be finalised after decisions on the rationalisation of facilities have been completed.

Procurement Executive

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress there has been in his plans to allocate his Department's procurement executive at a site near Bristol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to announce to the House that, following a careful review, the Government have decided to proceed with the construction phase of this important project.

A detailed planning statement was registered with Northavon district council, the local planning authority, on 22 January 1993. Following completion of the formal consultation process, we expect that the construction of the development will commence with the site infrastructure works in the spring of this year, with construction of the buildings starting in late summer. The site has been designed to accommodate a total population of some 5,500, including support staff. Occupation is scheduled to start in the autumn of 1995 and I expect all PE HQ business operations to be managed from Abbey Wood by the late autumn of 1996.

This ambitious project will provide not only a considerable stimulus to the local economy but also to the hard pressed construction industry who will be competing for work. We expect that up to 1,500 jobs will be created during the construction phase; in the longer term, up to 1,000 posts at the new headquarters will be filled by local recruitment, together with further job opportunities to meet the need for efficient running and support of the complex.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 January 1993

HOME DEPARTMENT

South Yorkshire Fire Service

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the budget of the South Yorkshire fire service *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* for 1993-94; and what estimate he has made of the effect of compliance with the capping requirement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority's revenue budget for the financial year 1992-93 is £31·614 million. The authority has yet to set a budget for the financial year 1993-94. In doing so, it must have regard to the intended designation criteria for council tax capping announced on 26 November 1992 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, to the nationally recommended minimum standards of fire cover, and to its statutory duties under the Fire Services Act 1947.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the establishment level of the South Yorkshire fire service; and what the forecast actual manning level is for March 1994.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The establishment scheme notified to me on 26 February 1992 by the South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority provided for a whole-time establishment for the South Yorkshire fire service on 1 January 1992 of 1,084 posts, and for a retained establishment on that date of 192 posts. The authority has not yet notified me of the establishment scheme for 1 January 1993. Any forecasts of actual staffing levels in the future are a matter for the authority.

Naturalisation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he expects to make in the procedures related to application for naturalisation to become British citizens consequent to the implementation of the treaty on European union; and what information he has on the principal differences in the procedures adopted from those of other member states.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to amend the requirements for naturalisation. He is aware of the broad principles governing naturalisation in member states of the European Community.

Danish Citizens

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the rights and obligations of *(a)* a Danish citizen resident in the United Kingdom and *(b)* a United Kingdom citizen resident in Denmark occasioned by implementation of the inter-governmental decision agreed at Edinburgh and how they differ from those currently obtaining.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: When the treaty on European union enters into force, Danish nationals resident in the United Kingdom—like other European Community nationals—will, in addition to the existing rights of free movement and residence as provided in the treaty of Rome and in measures adopted to give it effect, gain the rights to vote and stand in local and in European parliamentary elections, to petition the European Parliament and to apply to a European ombudsman.

United Kingdom and other European Community nationals resident in Denmark already enjoy the right to vote in local elections.

The Edinburgh decision does not affect this position but makes clear that union citizenship does not replace national citizenship and the rights and obligations accruing from it, which will continue to be decided by reference to the national law of the member state concerned.

Police Statistics

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civilian staff there were in each police force in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991; and what percentage of total employees these figures represented in each year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table:

Civilian strength in England and Wales as at 31 December

Force	*1981*	*1991*
Avon and Somerset	711	909
Bedfordshire	291	387
Cambridgeshire	309	451
Cheshire	419	510
Cleveland	258	434
Cumbria	259	403
Derbyshire	701	487
Devon and Cornwall	808	1,038
Dorset	309	557
Durham	480	532
Dyfed Powys	197	250
Essex	721	1,055
Gloucestershire	231	367
Greater Manchester	1,507	2,259
Gwent	214	304
Hampshire	725	1,039
Hertfordshire	379	551
Humberside	511	676
Kent	871	1,018
Lancashire	881	1,095
Leicestershire	430	676
Lincolnshire	334	457
Merseyside	1,036	1,569
Norfolk	267	442
Northamptonshire	258	420
Northumbria	835	1,193
North Wales	323	444
North Yorkshire	335	439
Nottinghamshire	581	706
South Wales	847	1,079
South Yorkshire	637	892
Staffordshire	623	749
Suffolk	337	500
Surrey	359	565
Sussex	717	932
Thames Valley	975	1,410
Warwickshire	187	323
West Mercia	541	843

Force	1981	1991
West Midlands	1,489	2,270
West Yorkshire	1,294	1,833
Wiltshire	257	473
City of London	288	295
Metropolitan	13,824	14,131
Total	37,556	46,963

Civilian staff represented 24 per cent. and 26 per cent. respectively of total strength of the police service in those years.

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police force in England and Wales in 1981 and 1991 the number and percentage of entrants who were over the age of *(a)* 30 years and *(b)* 40 years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not held centrally and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Judiciary (Training)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total cost of training for the judiciary for each year since 1979.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Judicial Studies Board, which is responsible for training the judiciary, was established in 1979. Until 1987 it had no separate budget and expenditure on training for the judiciary in that period cannot be discretely identified. Since 1987-88 the Judicial Studies Board has had its own budget. Annual expenditure has been as follows:

	£
1987-88	604,330
1988-89	601,100
1989-90	977,909
1990-91	1,535,720
1991-92	1,765,460
1992-93	[1]1,800,000

[1] Estimate.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many days training per year were undertaken by the judiciary in *(a)* the Court of Appeal, *(b)* the High Court and *(c)* the circuit bench for each year since 1987.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Training for the judiciary is organised by the Judicial Studies Board. The numbers of judges trained at courses and seminars arranged by the Judicial Studies Board since January 1987 were as follows:

	Days
(a) 1987	
Circuit judges	300
(b) 1988	
Court of appeal judges	4
High court judges	34
Circuit judges	519
(c) 1989	
High court judges	16
Circuit judges	383
(d) 1990	
Court of appeal judges	41
High court judges	116
Circuit judges	936
(e) 1991	
Court of appeal judges	31
High court judges	19
Circuit judges	840
(f) 1992	
High court judges	19
Circuit judges	546
(g) 1993 (to date)	
Court of appeal judges	30
High court judges	72
Circuit judges	56

In addition, each circuit judge attends an annual circuit conference chaired by the presiding judges. Precise figures for these are not available.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the names of those judges who have not undertaken any training *(a)* since their appointment to the bench, *(b)* in the last five years and *(c)* in the last 12 months.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information required is not available. Each year conferences are arranged on each Circuit for all circuit judges. Recorders and assistant recorders and also for district judges and deputy district judges. In addition a wide range of training is available through the Judicial Studies Board in the form of courses, seminars and other training events. When they are appointed all assistant recorders and deputy district judges attend induction courses and thereafter attend refresher seminars. If the hon. Member has a more specific question I invite him to write to me.

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the composition of the advisory committee for the appointment of JPs in the Mansfield area.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The membership of the Mansfield advisory sub-committee of the Nottinghamshire advisory committee is:

J. Archer Esq JP
Mrs. J. Dennis JP
Mrs. C. M. Gaster JP
Mrs. M. Harper JP
E. Higham Esq JP
T. King Esq JP
P. R. Marsh Esq JP
Mrs. K. Winson

The membership of the Nottinghamshire advisory committee is:

Sir Andrew Buchanan JP
C. M. Dennis Esq JP
R. A. Hassett Esq JP
T. King Esq JP

Mrs. J. E. Latham JP
P. R. Marsh Esq JP
Mrs. J. M. Parry JP
Colonel A. R. Ripley TD, DL

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many *(a)* women, *(b)* trade union members and *(c)* members of ethnic minorities have been appointed as JPs in the last five years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: During the five-year period ending 31 December 1992 a total of 9,823 persons were appointed to the magistracy, of whom 4,832 were women. Figures for appointment of members of ethnic minorities have been collected only since January 1989 since when a total of 375 persons has been appointed. No records are kept of trade union membership.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for each local education authority, the latest available figures for the numbers of pupils attending *(a)* schools which have grant-maintained status, *(b)* schools which have had proposals to acquire grant-maintained status approved and *(c)* the total of *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Forth: The numbers of pupils in schools currently operating as grant-maintained and in schools which have had proposals to acquire grant-maintained status formally approved and the total for each LEA in England are given in the table. Authorities with no such schools are left blank. Pupil numbers shown relate to January 1992, the latest date for which information is available.

Pupils in schools operating as grant-maintained or in schools with proposals approved in England.

LEA	GM schools operating	Schools with proposals approved	Total
City	—	—	—
Camden	—	—	—
Greenwich	—	—	—
Hackney	—	—	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,197	—	1,197
Islington	—	—	—
Kensington and Chelsea	622	—	622
Lambeth	838	877	1,715
Lewisham	198	—	198
Southwark	389	413	802
Tower Hamlets	879	—	879
Wandsworth	4,605	—	4,605
Westminster	—	—	—
Barking	—	—	—
Barnet	3,117	—	3,117
Bexley	448	—	448
Brent	1,891	—	1,891
Bromley	11,065	—	11,065
Croydon	958	1,047	2,005
Ealing	5,301	—	5,301
Enfield	—	—	—
Haringey	—	—	—
Harrow	—	—	—
Havering	—	—	—
Hillingdon	9,176	—	9,176
Hounslow	—	—	—
Kingston upon Thames	894	—	894
Merton	—	—	—
Newham	574	—	574
Redbridge	—	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	—	—	—
Sutton	4,012	1,660	5,672
Waltham Forest	1,058	—	1,058
Birmingham	4,827	3,352	8,179
Coventry	—	—	—
Dudley	564	—	564
Sandwell	652	—	652
Solihull	495	—	495
Walsall	2,363	—	2,363
Wolverhampton	1,777	—	1,777
Knowsley	—	—	—
Liverpool	1,043	—	1,043
St. Helens	—	—	—
Sefton	—	—	—
Wirral	—	—	—
Bolton	1,158	—	1,158
Bury	—	—	—
Manchester	—	—	—
Oldham	—	—	—
Rochdale	242	—	242
Salford	—	—	—
Stockport	—	—	—
Tameside	794	759	1,553
Trafford	—	821	821
Wigan	—	—	—
Barnsley	—	—	—
Doncaster	—	—	—
Rotherham	—	—	—
Sheffield	71	—	71
Bradford	938	828	1,766
Calderdale	1,415	—	1,415
Kirklees	1,192	—	1,192
Leeds	—	—	—
Wakefield	—	—	—
Gateshead	—	—	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	—	—	—
North Tyneside	—	—	—
South Tyneside	—	—	—
Sunderland	—	—	—
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—
Avon	1,455	—	1,455
Bedfordshire	2,851	272	3,123
Berkshire	8,203	—	8,203
Buckinghamshire	4,625	1,834	6,459
Cambridgeshire	6,285	1,830	8,115
Cheshire	547	1,786	2,333
Cleveland	—	—	—
Cornwall	—	—	—
Cumbria	5,012	—	5,012
Derbyshire	4,198	2,619	6,817
Devon	1,381	844	2,225
Dorset	5,836	—	5,836
Durham	—	—	—
East Sussex	—	—	—
Essex	27,087	9,253	36,340
Gloucestershire	13,529	—	13,529
Hampshire	6,285	2,981	9,266
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	6,266	—	6,266
Humberside	76	—	76
Isle of Wight	—	—	—
Kent	26,522	2,043	28,565
Lancashire	4,121	—	4,121
Leicestershire	364	747	1,111
Lincolnshire	14,333	—	14,333
Norfolk	7,273	770	8,043
North Yorkshire	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	9,185	384	9,569
Northumberland	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	334	—	334
Oxfordshire	—	—	—
Shropshire	481	—	481

LEA	GM schools operating	Schools with proposals approved	Total
Somerset	612	—	612
Staffordshire	917	—	917
Suffolk	—	—	—
Surrey	8,619	—	8,619
Warwickshire	3,650	1,086	4,736
West Sussex	—	—	—
Wiltshire	1,795	—	1,795
England	236,595	36,206	272,801

Further Education

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the most recent figures for revenue spending by each local education authority in England and Wales per full-time student aged 16 to 19 years at *(a)* further education colleges, *(b)* sixth-form colleges and *(c)* sixth forms in secondary schools.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not collected centrally for local education authorities in England. Expenditure returns from LEAs contain information about their total spending on all secondary education, including sixth-form education, and on further education, but this information cannot be disaggregated between particular age ranges.

Dyslexia

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the available facilities for pupils with dyslexia problems in the London boroughs.

Mr. Forth: Comprehensive information about such facilities is not held centrally.

TRANSPORT

Signal Failures

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate the number of reported signal failures on the railways of *(a)* the British Railways Board and *(b)* London Underground Ltd., giving the number of reported wrong side failures of signals for each year since 1981; and what steps have been taken to reduce their numbers.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate began recording reported wrong side failures in 1990, following recommendations in Sir Anthony Hidden's report of the investigation into the Clapham junction accident.

The figures available are:

	Figures
1990	
BR	1,298
LUL	0
1991-92	
BR	698
LUL	4

Of those, only one in 1990 and five in 1991-92 led to reportable accidents. Also, of the respective years' totals, 847 and 277 incidents involved failures of position light signals which are usually located in yards and sidings not used by passenger trains, and where speeds are low.

The reduction is due largely to BR's total quality campaign whereby a systematic approach to quality is closely aligned with safety management.

Level Crossings

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the railways inspectorate to publish its requirements for level crossing of railway lines by footpaths and bridleways.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate expects this section of its revised requirements to be published shortly. The full title will be "Railway Construction and Operation Requirements, Part F Level Crossings, Protection of Footpath and Bridleway Level Crossings (Section 18)" (ISBN 0-11-882115-6).

Company Cars

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of total car mileage is shown by the national travel survey to be accounted for by company cars; and what proportion of company car mileage is shown to be for commuting and other personal, as against business, purposes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In 1985-86, the national travel survey showed that 20 per cent of total car mileage was by company-owned cars, of which 57 per cent. was for commuting and other personal purposes as against 43 per cent. for business purposes.

Newly Qualified Drivers

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research or evidence his Department has commissioned on the casualty reduction consequences of restrictions on driving on the display of "P" or "R" plates by newly qualified drivers in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We are considering the available evidence on the effectiveness of probationary driving schemes in Northern Ireland and overseas. The Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) has commissioned a study by Queen's university, Belfast into the working of the "R" plate system in Northern Ireland.

Railways Bill

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out details of his calculations for the numbers of staff required in the offices of the rail regulatory and the franchising director respectively under the Railways Bill; and what estimate he has made of the changes in personnel *(a)* required in the railway section of the Department of Transport and *(b)* to occur in the British Railways board and combined new companies relative to those currently employed by the board.

Mr. Freeman: The number of staff estimated for the offices of the rail regulator and the franchising director reflects their expected workloads and is broadly comparable with the numbers working in other regulators'

offices. Once the new regime for the railways is established, we expect there to be a small saving in the number of departmental staff concerned with the railway industry. It is not possible to predict with any accuracy future employment levels within the railway industry.

Concessionary Rail Travel

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate the number of people entitled to concessionary travel from British Rail in total and categorised as *(a)* employees, *(b)* pensioners, *(c)* employees' dependants and offspring, *(d)* former employees of British Transport Docks Board, *(e)* former employees of British Transport Hotels, *(f)* former employees of Sealink, *(g)* former employees of Wightlink, *(h)* British Transport police and *(i)* pensioners of British Transport police; and what estimate he has of the cost in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that the number of people entitled to concessionary travel, as at 9 January, totals 561,922, made up as follows:

	Numbers
(a) Employees	137,488
(b) Pensioners	262,825
(c) Employees dependants and offspring	150,669
(d) Former employees of British Transport Docks Board	3,611
(e) Former employees of British Transport hotels	431
(f) Former employees of Sealink	2,340
(g) Former employees of Wightlink	Nil
(h) British Transport police	1,677
(i) BTP pensioners	2,881

The extra costs to British Rail of providing concessionary travel arrangements are not quantifiable.

Biofuels

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action is currently undertaken by his Department to promote the production and use of biodiesel in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Government are sponsoring a number of research projects looking at a wide range of alternative fuels, including biodiesel.

Although biodiesel offers the possibility of reduced carbon dioxide emissions through the growth of plant feedstock, available evidence regarding exhaust emissions and other environmental impacts suggests that the case for its use is not obvious. Current technology biodiesel is also some two and a half to three times as expensive as conventional diesel. It would therefore be premature to encourage its widespread use. Further study is needed.

To improve our understanding of this fuel the Department is carrying out emissions tests on one of the vehicles being used in the Reading Buses biodiesel fuel trial. The results will be made available when testing is complete.

Cycle Routes

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to increase the marking of cycle priority routes in London.

Mr. Norris: There are no cycle priority routes in London. My hon. Friend may be referring to the proposed 1,000-mile strategic cycle network. Provision of cycle routes falls to the Department on trunk roads and the London borough councils on local roads. The traffic director for London is responsible for approving cycling facilities which may be contained in local plans for priority red routes. There are no current plans to change marking requirements for cycle routes.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that his proposals for bus deregulation will give priority to tendering for existing services by the private sector.

Mr. Norris: London Transport will be offering at least a further 5 per cent. of London's bus routes to competitive tender this year. We have also announced plans to begin privatisation of all London Buses Ltd. subsidiaries by the end of the year. All bus routes will therefore be operated by private operators competing on level terms before deregulation of the London bus market.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy, under the Government's policy with regard to the additionality of funding of projects by the EC, that offers of funding from EC sources for the electrification of railway lines will not be netted off from other funds earmarked by the Government for transport projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The policy for the treatment of European regional development fund grants remains that which was announced by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the House on 17 February 1992, *Official Report*, columns 22-37.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the policy which was adopted by Her Majesty's Government towards the suggested EC funding for the electrification of the north Wales railway line from Crewe to Holyhead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It would be for British Rail, in conjunction with local authorities as appropriate, to apply for European funding of any electrification of the Crewe to Holyhead line. British Rail is upgrading the line to allow 90 mph running and is financing this itself. It has no plans at present for electrifying the line.

Official Travel

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions he has used trains for his official duties since being appointed to his present position.

Mr. MacGregor: I have travelled by train for my official duties on several occasions since becoming Secretary of State for Transport.

Estuarial Rail Bridges

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish the maintenance and upkeep costs of *(a)* the Tay rail bridge and *(b)* the Forth rail bridge in each year since 1980;

(2) if he publish the number of safety checks carried out, and their cost, on *(a)* the Tay rail bridge and *(b)* the Forth rail bridge since 1980;

(3) if he will publish the cost of maintaining estuarial rail bridges in the BR network in each year since 1980.

Mr. Freeman: The Department does not hold this information. These are matters for British Rail.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Shining Path

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to extradite to Peru known members of the Shining Path terrorist organisation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am not aware of any extradition request from Peru. Any such request would have to satisfy the conditions set out in schedule 1 of the Extradition Act 1989 and the terms of the UK/Peru extradition treaty of 1904.

Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the status of the European convention on human rights in each signatory state.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The European convention on human rights has been incorporated into domestic law in all signatory states except Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Hong Kong

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to revise the Hong Kong Emergency Regulations Ordinance.

Mr. Goodlad: The Hong Kong Government have no immediate plans to revise the Emergency Regulations Ordinance, but it is examining its provisions to ensure that there is no conflict with the Bill of Rights Ordinance.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects Radio Television Hong Kong to become an incorporated company.

Mr. Goodlad: The corporation of Radio Television Hong Kong remains under consideration by the Hong Kong Government.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to repeal the broadcasting authority ordinance in Hong Kong before the handover of the colony in 1997.

Mr. Goodlad: The Hong Kong Government have no immediate plans to repeal the Broadcasting Authority Ordinance. They are, however, reviewing all aspects of the law relevant to freedom of information.

International Events

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the major international events in the United Kingdom and overseas in which Her Majesty's Government will participate in 1993; and which Minister will attend in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On present plans, in 1993, we will participate in the following major international events overseas:

(a) two Western European Union ministerial meetings attended by the Foreign Secretary;
(b) two North Atlantic Council meetings attended by the Foreign Secretary;
(c) two European Council meetings attended by the Prime Minister accompanied by the Foreign Secretary;
(d) the G7 economic summit attended by the Prime Minister accompanied by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary;
(e) the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting attended by the Prime Minister accompanied by the Foreign Secretary;
(f) the United Nations General Assembly attended by the Foreign Secretary.

We have no current plans to participate in any major international events in the United Kingdom in 1993.

Yugoslavia

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been decided by the EC Council of Ministers on establishing an ad hoc war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia; what action has been taken by the French and Italian Governments on drafting a statute for the tribunal; what action has been taken by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: EC Foreign Ministers expressed their readiness on 13 January to support the creation of an international criminal court at the United Nations to deal with war crimes in former Yugoslavia. We understand that, separately, the French and Italian Governments have tasked committees of national legal experts to examine options to bring those responsible to justice.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will establish a committee of United Kingdom experts to draft the statute for an ad hoc war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. A United Kingdom initiative along these lines would unnecessarily duplicate work being done by Ambassador Corell, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe human rights rapporteur, and in other forums on a draft statute.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Mastitis Research Centre

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what funding the mastitis research centre at Compton, Berkshire receives from sources other than the Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: As well as receiving Government funding from the Office of Science and Technology and the

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the milking and mastitis centre has recently received a three-year grant of £140,000 from commercial sources.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many non-departmental public bodies are currently in existence; and when the annual list of such bodies will be published.

Mr. Robert Jackson: On 1 April 1992 there were 369 executive bodies, six fewer than in 1991; 846 advisory bodies, 28 fewer than in 1991, 66 tribunals, two more than in 1991; and 131 boards of visitors, the same as in 1991. In total there are 1,412 non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs)—a fall of 32 over 1991. Details can be found in "Public Bodies 1992" published today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Details are also included of the number of appointments to boards and tribunals which are held by women. The figures show that at 1 September 1992, 26 per cent. of such appointments were held by women.

Included for the first time are details of the number of public appointments held by members of the ethnic minorities. Ethnic monitoring of all public appointees has now been introduced and statistics will be published each year. The first figures show that, at 1 September 1992, 2 per cent. of all appointments were held by members of the minority groups.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table of annual income and expenditure for each training and enterprise council since its inception.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested from these accounts is not recorded by the Department and the cost of doing so would be disproportionate to the information supplied.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many members of the public in training and enterprise council areas are informed about TEC's spending priorities and projects.

Mr. McLoughlin: A summary of the TEC's business plan and a full copy of the corporate plan are available at the TEC's business premises and can be accessed by any member of the public. Over and above this, every TEC is required to hold a public meeting once a year to explain their plans and activities and to produce an annual report.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will provide a table showing the total allocation to training and enterprise councils for 1993-94 for each programme or activity and the allocation for each programme or activity to each TEC.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information that the hon. Member has requested is not yet available. We are currently in negotiations with TECs on targets and funding for 1993-94 and have not yet agreed TEC 1993-94 budgets.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Stefan Kiszko

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Attorney-General for what reasons he has decided that he will not publish the papers relating to the investigations into the wrongful imprisonment of Stefan Kiszko; and if he will make it his policy to place the papers in the Library.

The Attorney-General: I have taken no such decision. Police inquiries into the events that led to the prosecution and conviction of Mr. Kiszko are continuing and a report is shortly to be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Such reports are by their nature confidential and should not therefore be placed in the Library of the House.

Local Government Corruption

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Attorney-General how many local government *(a)* councillors and *(b)* employees have been convicted of corruption in connection with their council duties in each year since 1979.

The Attorney-General: My Department does not keep records sought by the hon. Member.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change Convention

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration his Department has given to the financial consequences for the United Kingdom of the climate change convention agreed at the Earth summit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The cost of complying with the convention's commitments on limiting emissions of greenhouse gases will depend on what measures the Government decide to take—the Government issued a consultation paper on possible measures to limit carbon dioxide emissions last month. The United Kingdom will also be expected to contribute to the costs of the bodies established to administer the convention and towards the costs that developing countries incur in complying with their commitments.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, column *317*, what assessment he has made of the research carried out by the world conservation monitoring centre for the International Tropical Timber Organisation on the conservation status of African and Asian tropical timber species threatened by trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We expect to assess all relevant scientific information on tropical timber later this year, when deciding whether to propose further species for listing in the appendices to the convention on international trade in endangered species (CITES). Our proposal at the last CITES conference to list *Pericopsis elata* in appendix II was based on a report undertaken for the European

Commission by the world conservation monitoring centre. It is the first significantly traded tropical timber species to be listed in this appendix.

Climate Change

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being undertaken by his Department to secure test baseline data collected by the United Kingdom for the first conference of the parties to the climate convention distinguishing between naturally occurring and anthropogenic changes.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom is making a major contribution to the second assessment report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change which is scheduled to be produced in 1995. This will include the latest information on the extent and impact of naturally occurring and human-induced climate change.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to make representations to the first conference of the parties to the climate convention to secure the establishment of an independent body of experts under the statutory body for implementation in order to *(a)* review the implementation of the convention and *(b)* devise an effective greenhouse gas monitoring regime.

Mr. Maclean: The Government believe that effective procedures for reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the convention are vital. Consideration of the precise mechanisms for achieving this is still at an early stage, but we will be pressing for these matters to be resolved at the first conference of the parties.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to make representations to the first conference of the parties to the climate convention to secure that a new baseline date is established for collecting information on emission levels.

Mr. Maclean: The framework convention on climate change includes a requirement for all parties to develop and periodically update national inventories of anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases, as well as sinks for their removal. Developed countries will be required to take steps aimed at returning emissions of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2000, so 1990 is in effect the initial baseline date for the inventories. The conference of the parties will decide how frequently inventories should be updated in the future.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make representations to the first conference of the parties to the climate convention to secure that greenhouse gas emissions are categorised according to sector.

Mr. Maclean: In the United Kingdom emissions are already categorised by sector, and we will be encouraging others to adopt a similar approach.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the EC proposal Com 92 508 final, 14 December 1992 for all EC nations to ratify the climate change convention simultaneously before 30 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom is committed, with our G7 partners, to seeking to ratify the convention by the end of 1993. We would hope to do so alongside our Community partners, and are currently discussing with them what the earliest practicable date might be.

Toxic Waste Imports

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to announce a cut-off date for imports of toxic waste into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 9 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *570*.

The Government are also intending to use powers under the EC waste shipments regulation to reduce the amount of waste imported for disposal in the United Kingdom particulary from developed countries. Potential imports from developing countries will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Water Pollution

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the potential pollution of water supplies to Sunderland and the River Wear resulting from ceasing pumping operations at Easington and Vane Tempest collieries.

Mr. Maclean: None. It is for British Coal and the National Rivers Authority in the first place to assess any environmental effects of pit closures in the north-east. This will allow the water companies to assess any consequences for water supplies.

Builders (Infrastructure Charges)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the infrastructure charges currently imposed on builders of new developments.

Mr. Baldry: Responsibility for water and sewerage infrastructure charges rests with the Director General of Water Services. He is aware of concern over the level of these charges, and has announced his intention to undertake a fundamental review as part of the overall review of water company charges in 1994. He will shortly be issuing a consultation paper which will set out the options for change to the basis of infrastructure charges. The results of this review will be reflected in infrastructure charges payable from 1 April 1995.

Property Purchases

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many additional purchases of properties from the private sector by housing associations have so far taken place using the additional funding announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Baldry: Of the £750 million announced in the autumn statement to boost the housing market in the United Kingdom, £577 million went to the Housing Corporation to enable housing associations to purchase new, empty and repossessed properties in England. The latest figures from the corporation show that by 22 January approvals had been granted for the purchase of 11,812 properties: 11,746 of these are for purchases from the private sector.

Another £20 million was made available to the corporation to support the tenants incentive scheme and £30 million to local authorities to support the cash incentive scheme, to encourage housing association and local authority tenants in England to move out and buy their own homes. This is expected to result in some 3,500 additional first-time buyers.

Woodland

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to offer statutory protection to all remaining areas of ancient forest and woodland in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: Adequate statutory provision is already available.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the Member for Dumfries (Sir Hector Monro), has today set out the operation by the Forestry Commission of the felling licence provisions of the Forestry Act 1967 in an answer to the hon. Member.

The felling of woodland associated with development proposed under the planning system is exempt from felling licensing arrangements and is dealt with under normal planning procedures.

Where appropriate, specific protection can be afforded to individual woodlands under the provisions of conservation legislation. Such woodlands can be designated by the relevant agencies as sites of special scientific interest, protecting them against damaging operations of all types: some are also declared and managed as national nature reserves. In addition local authorities have powers to safeguard woods of amenity value by the making of tree preservation orders.

Community Charge Leaflets

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he issues to community charge registration officers and other relevant local authority officials, with regard to the distribution of registration forms and related explanatory leaflets in languages other than English; whether similar provisions are intended in respect of the council tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: There is no statutory requirement for community charge registration forms in England, and we do not issue guidance about the language in which they should be written. There will be no registration for the council tax.

We leave the design of forms and local information material to local authorities, which are best placed to identify the needs of their own areas. Questions relating to the production of such material should therefore be addressed to them.

The Department of the Environment is producing a series of general information leaflets about the council tax. These are being translated into 11 ethnic minority languages, as well as Braille, large print and audio tape.

Northern Hemisphere Ozone

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons his Department has decided not to ask EASOE—the European Arctic Stratospheric Ozone Experiment—to research any assessment of northern hemisphere ozone loss this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department supports the decision of the EC/EFTA task group on stratospheric ozone research that the results of the 1991-92 EASOE experimental campaign should be fully analysed before mounting a further campaign in 1993-94. Monitoring of northern hemisphere stratospheric ozone will continue by the participating EASOE groups, including important contributions by scientists funded by my Department.

Fire Hydrants

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what arrangements the fire services are charged for the use of water from hydrants; to whom payments are made; and what levels of payment have been in force for each of the last four years.

Mr. Maclean: Under section 147 of the Water Industry Act 1991 no charge may be made by a water undertaker for water used by a fire authority for extinguishing fires or any other emergency purpose. But under section 57 of the Act, the expenses incurred by a water undertaker in providing and maintaining fire hydrants requested by a fire authority are chargeable to the fire authority concerned. Information on the level of these charges is not held centrally.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans Her Majesty's Government have to exempt land owned by British Rail from the register of contaminated land.

Mr. Maclean: There is no power under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to exempt sites from registers of land subject to contaminative uses on the basis of their ownership.

Local Government Employees

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time in local government in Northamptonshire in each year since 1983.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is given in the table for each authority in Northamptonshire. Totals have not been given because data for some authorities are not available centrally.

Numbers employed in local authorities in Northamptonshire
At June of each year

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987	
Authority	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
Northamptonshire County	11,784	9,751	11,832	9,735	11,857	10,254	11,890	10,934	11,594	11,223
Corby	527	122	550	112	582	108	572	141	583	170
Daventry	268	48	268	43	275	53	287	54	298	59

Authority	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
East Northamptonshire	263	70	266	73	264	73	265	72	261	69
Kettering	509	92	494	105	486	103	485	108	478	109
Northampton	1,606	172	1,608	159	1,599	183	1,606	178	1,482	216
South Northamptonshire	261	35	263	34	257	34	252	37	255	43
Wellingborough	386	67	389	73	384	77	376	79	378	83

	1988		1989		1990		1991		1992	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Northamptonshire County	11,819	11,477	11,536	11,295	11,032	12,365	10,943	10,966	10,752	10,409
Corby	580	135	613	134	667	153	621	135	613	133
Daventry	311	79	n/a	n/a	314	106	312	118	315	86
East Northamptonshire	260	80	267	78	213	57	200	57	203	57
Kettering	478	96	468	104	464	105	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Northampton	1,431	235	n/a	n/a	1,554	192	1,602	281	1,518	151
South Northamptonshire	255	26	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	342	43
Wellingborough	384	90	388	93	388	105	392	100	383	119

n/a = Data not available.
Source: Joint Staffing Watch for England.
Note: Education, passenger transport, fire services, police and social services are administered by Northamptonshire County Council. The other authorities shown are District Councils which, amongst other services, administer housing and refuse collection.

Urban Programme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the voluntary organisations and associations which he consulted before reducing urban programme funding from the planned totals announced in February 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire: It became clear only at a very late stage of the public expenditure negotiations for 1993-94 that changes to the urban programme were necessary. Because of the timing of the decisions and the fact that the new arrangements for the urban programme formed part of the autumn statement, consultation was not possible. However, since then, I have met representatives of the voluntary sector to discuss the impact of these changes.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been given under the urban programme to projects aimed at the ethnic minorities for each of the last three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1990-91	27
1991-92	25
1992-93	28

Source: Department of the Environment departmental reports.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of urban programme schemes run by the voluntary sector were *(a)* capital projects and *(b)* revenue projects for the past three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not available.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the urban programme standard output measures for each authority for each of the last three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is not our policy to publish output data for each individual authority under the urban programme. However, national output data for the urban programme are available in the Department's annual reports.

Standard Spending Assessment, Tower Hamlets

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the standard spending assessment for the London borough of Tower Hamlets in 1993-94 has been reduced as a result of the reduction in population density due to the borough assuming responsibility for the whole of Victoria park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: There has been no reduction in the standard spending assessment for Tower Hamlets for 1993-94 due to that authority assuming responsibility for the whole of Victoria park. The boundary change giving effect to the change in responsibility is not intended to take place before 1 April 1994.

Local Government Finance

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what information the estimate of population numbers for the calculation of standard spending assessments is based.

Mr. Robin Squire: The population numbers used in the calculation of standard spending assessments for 1993-94 are those provisionally estimated by the Registrar General for 30 June 1991. The estimates are based primarily on information collected in the 1991 census on numbers of residents in each local authority area, but adjustments have been made to allow for differences in definition and reference dates and to take account of under-enumeration in the census.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a table showing for each authority *(a)* its 1992-93 standard spending assessment with and without adjustments for changes in local authority functions, *(b)* the 1993-94 standard

spending assessment consistent with the local government finance report laid before the House on 28 January and *(c)* the percentage changes between both versions of the 1992-93 standard spending assessment.

Mr. Redwood: I have today placed in the Library a table providing the information requested.

Inland Quarries

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his draft planning guidelines in respect of inland quarries will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department published draft revised planning guidelines for provision of aggregates in England and Wales (Minerals Planning Guidance Note 6) for consultation on 4 January. These were accompanied by a policy issues paper. The draft guidelines set out policies for aggregates provision from a range of sources including inalnd quarries and seek views on how future requirements should be met. A copy is in the Library, but I will arrange for a copy to be sent to the hon. Member.

Recycling

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his conclusions about the use of economic instruments for promoting the recycling of solid waste.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 27 January 1993]:* We are currently considering a consultants' report on "Economic Instruments and Recovery of Resources from Waste", commissioned by my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry. The DTI have invited comments on the report, which is available from HMSO, by 1 March. I intend to publish and invite comments on a related report, on landfill pricing, next month. We will announce our conclusions on economic instruments for solid waste once we have received and considered comments on both of those reports.

Cetaceans

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the numbers, species and location of cetaceans found washed ashore and reported to his Department since 1 January; together with details of cause of death from any post-mortem or examination his Department has carried out.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 January 1993]:* The natural history museum has advised that it received reports of five common dolphins and one dolphin of species unknown found dead on the south coast of England since 1 January 1993. It also received reports of a harbour porpoise and a whale, possibly a minke whale, found dead in Wales. The species and locations are as follows:

Species	*Location*	*Date found*
Common dolphin	Mullion, Cornwall	5 January
Common dolphin	Mullion, Cornwall	8 January
Harbour porpoise	Llanelli, Dyfed	9 January
Common dolphin	Portwrinkle, Cornwall	11 January
Common dolphin	Portwrinkle, Cornwall	Precise date not known
Whale (possibly minke)	Tal-y-Bont, Gwynedd	12 January
Dolphin (species unknown)	Porthleven, Cornwall	14 January
Common dolphin	Bournemouth, Dorset	17 January

Postmortem examination of three of the common dolphins has been carried out by veterinary pathologists at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries investigation centre at Truro and at the Institute of Zoology, London. Further laboratory examination will be necessary to see whether the cause of death can be established.

Native Forests

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to minimise clearfelling of native forests within the United Kingdom.

Sir Hector Monro: I have been asked to reply.

The felling of trees and woodland in Great Britain is already effectively controlled through the licensing system operated by the Forestry Commission under the Forestry Act 1967. When considering applications for felling licences, the Commission follows a strict policy of protecting ancient and semi-natural woodlands, and operates a general presumption that felling licences will be granted only on condition that felled areas are replanted.

Pylon Line, Cleveland

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the decision on the pylon line from Lockerby to Picton across Cleveland.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The Lackenby-Picton-Shipton overhead line public inquiry proceedings and inspections were concluded on 11 December 1992. It is now for the inspectors to prepare their report and submit it to my right hon. and learned Friend who will deal with it and give his decision in a timely manner.

SCOTLAND

Shetland Oil Spill

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to monitor the effects of the Shetland oil spill and publish the results.

Sir Hector Monro: I have nothing to add to my replies of 28 January.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many soil, air, water and sediment samples have been taken by, or on behalf of, his Department for analysis of oil and oil breakdown products following the wreck of MV Braer; and if the results will be published.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer of 27 January 1993]:* Very extensive sampling is being undertaken in the course of a range of studies of the Shetland environment which are now being pursued: work by the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, for example, involves taking hundreds of samples over a 5 to 10 acre area of each of seven

different soil types. Shetland Islands council also has an extensive programme in hand. All this work will be drawn together by the ecological steering group which my right hon. Friend announced on 11 January. Results will be published in due course or, if of a technical and complex nature, made available on request.

WALES

Management Charter Initiative

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the companies within Wales which have adopted the management charter initiative code of practice to date; and if he will indicate which of the companies are officially designated as small and medium-sized enterprises.

Mr. David Hunt: The list I have is for organisations, including companies, which are not differentiated by size.

List of MCI Members in Wales

Acom Business Services
Amethyst Learning and Development
Anglesey Aluminium Ltd.
Antur Teifi
ASW Holdings Plc
Barry College
BREFI Group Ltd.
Bridges Ltd.
Cardiff Group Training
Carmarthenshire College of Technology and Art
CCTA
Central Statistical Office
Cardiff City Cardiff
Coleg Pencraig
Coleg Powys
Companies House
D. C. Gardner and Co. Ltd.—Human Resource Development Group
East Dyfed Health Authority
Epitaxial Products International Ltd.
Gwent College of Higher Education
Gwent County Council
Gwent Education Committee
Gwent Health Authority
Gwent Network
Gwent School of Business
Gwynedd County Council
Gwynedd Health Authority
Health Care Gwent
Hill Training and Management Consultancy Services
Imperial Tobacco Ltd.
Institute for Financial Education and Training
Integrated Business Services Ltd.
International Baccalaureate Organisation
Landsdowne Hospital
Laura Ashley Ltd.
Llandrillo College
Mainport Training
MCS
Menter Gwynedd CYF
Mid and North Wales Training Group Ltd.
Mid Glamorgan County Council Social Services Department
Mid Glamorgan TEC
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority
Mid-Wales Training Ltd.
Minerva Enterprises Development Ltd.
Minerva Training
Multitrain
Myrick Training Services Ltd.
Network Training Services Ltd.
Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce
North East Wales Institute
North Wales Training Agency
Open Learning Centre
Peckham, Shepstone and Associates
Pembrokeshire College
Philip Williams—Personnel Consultants
Powys County Council
Powys Health Authority
Powys TEC
Powys Training
Rhymney Valley District Council
South East Wales Institute of Nursing and Midwifery
South Glamorgan County Council
South Glamorgan Health Authority
South Glamorgan Network
South Glamorgan TEC
Targed, North West Wales TEC
University College of North Wales
University Hospital of Wales
Welsh Health Common Services Authority
Welsh Office

School Discipline

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many local education authorities have developed strategies for supporting the behaviour policies of their schools which meet the standards expected by his Department;

(2) how many LEAs have schools which have whole school behaviour policies as recommended in the Elton report on discipline in schools; what information he has on the percentage of such schools in each LEA; and to what extent they meet the standards expected by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what research he has commissioned on the impact of imposing on parents civil liabilities for the acts of their children in schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Ron. Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial provision he has made for the years 1993-94 and 1994-95 for the construction of new school buildings as described in schedule 5 of the Education (Grant-maintained Schools) (Finance) Regulations 1990.

Sir Wyn Roberts: While it is open to grant-maintained schools to include such proposals in their bid for capital grants under these regulations, no money has been specifically set aside for the construction of new school buildings.

Teachers (Professional Development)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities provide management consultancy services for head teachers and support services for the professional development of teachers which meet the standards expected by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Urban Expenditure

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list public expenditure per head on urban regeneration in Wales for each year since 1980 in *(a)* cash prices and *(b)* real terms—1992 prices.

Mr. David Hunt: A wide variety of programmes contributes to urban regeneration in Wales and it is not possible to calculate total spend per head except at disproportionate cost. However, spend on the main programmes, that is, urban programme, urban development grants/urban investment grants, Welsh Development Agency—urban development (1987-88 onwards) and Cardiff Bay development corporation is shown in the table.

£ million

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Urban Programme/Urban Development Grant	8·70	9·10	17·40	[1]15·00	[1]20·80	[1]29·30	[1]27·40	[1]30·40	[1]24·60	25·00	[2]29·90	[2]35·40
Urban Investment Grant	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·30	6·70	3·20
Welsh Development Agency Urban Renewal	Not available on a programmed basis							0·30	1·00	4·70	7·85	11·90
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11·50	18·20	29·00	33·30	32·50
Total	8·70	9·10	17·40	15·00	20·80	29·30	27·40	42·20	43·80	65·00	77·75	83·00
1991-92 prices	17·02	16·24	28·99	23·88	31·52	42·11	38·15	55·70	53·88	75·03	83·12	83·00

[1] Including Urban Development Grant.
[2] From 1990-91 figures exclude local authorities' 25 per cent. revenue contribution.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the urban expenditure per capita in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A very wide variety of programmes contribute to urban expenditure in Wales and it is not possible to calculate total spend per head except at disproportionate cost. However, spend in 1991-92 on the main central Government and agency programmes, that is, urban programme, urban development grants/urban investment grants, Welsh Development Agency—urban development and Cardiff Bay development corporation was £83·0 million which represents £28·75 per head of total population.

Gwent County Council

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from Gwent county council concerning its allocations of funds from central Government for the forthcoming financial year; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received representations from Gwent county council on provisional proposals for its 1993-94 standard spending assessment, its 1992-93 notional amount and capping. I have announced my final decisions on the 1993-94 local government revenue settlement. These take account of the representations made to me by Gwent county council, in particular those concerning its notional amount. I propose to lay the Local Government Finance Report (Wales) 1993-94 and the Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts (Relevant Notional Amounts) Report (Wales) 1993-94 before the House, for its approval, early next week. I will make my final decisions on capping in the spring.

Littlewoods Pools

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will visit the Littlewoods Pools operation in Cardiff.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes.

Publicity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) of 2 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *430*, what is his current estimate of expenditure on publicity in the present financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: I estimate that my Department will spend in the region of £2·5 million on information and publicity this financial year.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement in relation to the instruction dated 27 April 1992 to all heads of division not to invite the Wilprint Group to tender for printed publicity-related material until further notice; whether the instruction is still in force; what proposals he has to review it; and what consultations he has had with non-departmental public bodies in relation to recommended lists of supplies of such material;

(2) what policy considerations led to the instruction of 27 April 1992 to all heads of division to delete the Wilprint Group from the recommended list of suppliers of printed publicity-related material.

Mr. David Hunt: No. The information requested is commercial in confidence.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) of 2 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *430*, what are the main components of publicity expenditure in the "other" category.

Mr. David Hunt: The main components of the "other" category in my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 2 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *435* are the costs of publications, films and videos and exhibitions.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the memorandum of 27 April 1992 from the head of establishments to all heads of division, deleting the Wilprint Group from the recommended list of suppliers.

Mr. David Hunt: No.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those occasions on which Welsh hospitals and bed bureaux have had yellow and red alerts in the year 1991-92 and in the first half of 1992-93.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally. The system of red and yellow alerts is operated at the discretion of individual health authorities.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to advertise the post of chairman of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. David Hunt: Advertisements have been placed in *The Times, Financial Times, Western Mail* and *Liverpool Daily Post.*

Valleys (Job Creation)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales *(a)* how many new jobs have been created and *(b)* how many new companies have been attracted to (i) Merthyr Tydfil borough, (ii) Rhymney Valley district, (iii) Rhondda Valley district, (iv) Cynon Valley district and (v) Blaenau Gwent district as a result of his Department's and the Welsh Development Agency's support in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: Comprehensive information in the form requested is not available.

Printing Costs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 November 1992, *Official Report,* columns *323-24,* what was his total expenditure on printing, publicity and stationery for school governors in Wales in each year since 1988 and in the first-half year of 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 22 January 1993]:* The information is as follows:

	£
1989-90	92,929·77
1990-91	16,036·41
1991-92	37,240·92
1992[1]	50,450·11

[1] April-September

Details for the years preceding 1989 are not readily available.

HEALTH

Pharmaceutical Prices

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average rate of return of historic capital produced by the pharmaceutical price regulation system for the pharmaceutical industry in each year since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Ophthalmology, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the size of the ophthalmology waiting list at St. James's hospital, Leeds, for each year since 1985.

Mr. Sackville: Information on waiting times by specialty for each district health authority and national health service trust is given in "Hospital Waiting List, In-Patient and Day Cases" published twice a year, copies of which are available in the Library. Waiting time information on St. James' university hospital was not collected centrally prior to its becoming an NHS trust on 1 April 1991.

Cancer Treatment

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS specialist cancer centres there are in Britain; if she will list their locations; and what is their average annual running cost.

Mr. Sackville: Services for people with cancer are provided in most district general hospitals in England. Specialist centres are not separately identified.

Information relating to Scotland and Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales respectively.

Dentistry

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps her Department is taking to reduce delays in delivering dental treatment to patients with a disability particularly those who require domiciliary visits.

Mr. Mawhinney: The Department has no information suggesting that people with disabilities are experiencing undue delays in getting dental treatment or domiciliary visits.

Hospital Creches

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service hospitals operate creches for *(a)* staff and *(b)* patients and visitors.

Mr. Yeo: Full information on the number of national health service hospitals that operate a creche is not held centrally. In 1991 a survey showed that at least 181 health authorities and hospitals in the NHS provided a workplace nursery for their staff.

Expenditure

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish figures showing capital receipts as a proportion of capital expenditure in the national health service for each year since 1988.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the table.

National health service capital expenditure

	Gross	Net	Receipts	Capital receipts as a proportion of gross NHS capital expenditure per cent.
1987-88	1,129	926	204	18·1
1988-89	1,221	921	300	24·6
1989-90	1,454	1,221	232	16·0
1990-91	1,603	1,425	178	11·1
1991-92	1,668	1,502	167	10·0

Note Figures are derived from the appropriation accounts.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish figures showing health expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is in the table.

United Kingdom NHS[1] expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product

	Gross expenditure as a percentage of GDP
1978-79	4·7
1979-80	4·7
1980-81	5·3
1981-82	5·5
1982-83	5·5
1983-84	5·3
1984-85	5·4
1985-86	5·2
1986-87	5·2
1987-88	5·1
1988-89	5·1
1989-90	5·1
1990-91	5·3
1991-92	5·7
1992-93[2]	5·8

[1] NHS includes HCHS, FHS, CHMS, Departmental Administration and NHS trusts.
[2] Figures for 1992-93 are estimates.

Blood Donors

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she will take to ensure that all blood donors are aware of the possibility of giving bone marrow; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Regional transfusion centres are able to supply blood donors with information on how they can become bone marrow donors. Awareness of the possibility of giving bone marrow has increased among blood donors in recent years. The British bone marrow and platelet donor panel recruits donors exclusively through the blood transfusion services and in 1992 recorded a net increase of 12,000 donors.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish figures showing community care expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product for each year since 1979.

Mr. Yeo: Available figures are given in the table. Figures for earlier years are not comparable due to changes in the method of data collection for expenditure on community health services. Figures for 1991-92 are not yet available.

Expenditure on core services for community care (cash) England
£ million

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Community care expenditure	5,755	6,494	7,653
GDP (nearest equivalent calendar year)	336,022	370,662	402,422
Per cent.	1·71	1·75	1·90

Notes:
1. Percentages are based on gross domestic product (GDP) for England in the calendar years 1988 to 1990. GDP figures for England only are not available on a financial year basis.
2. Community care expenditure is taken to mean expenditure on domiciliary and residential care provided by local authorities for adults; community health services provided by the NHS for adults; and certain social security and housing benefits which support community care objectives.
3. Local authority expenditure is in gross terms before any income from charges is taken into account.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for changes to the standard prescription charge; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on Tuesday 12 January at column *699*.

Selected List Prescribing

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received with regard to the Government's proposals to expand the selected list prescribing system; and when she expects to make a full statement on those specific drugs to be added to the selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received a number of representations about the extension of the selected list scheme from hon. Members, various organisations and members of the public. The timing of announcements about specific products in the new categories will depend on the future work programme of the advisory committee on national health service drugs, which I understand that the committee will be considering shortly.

Patients with Learning Disabilities

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will establish an inquiry into the standards of management of, and the safety of in-patients at hospitals for people with learning disabilities;

(2) if she will establish an independent inquiry into the management of Stallington hospital, with particular reference to the case of Freda Latham and other examples of maltreatment of in-patients which have recently come to light.

Mr. Yeo: No. We have seen no evidence that there is a national problem regarding the standards of management of, or the safety of patients in hospitals for people with learning disabilities.

Any further inquiry into the Stallington hospital is a matter for West Midlands regional health authority in conjunction with North Staffordshire district health authority. A review team has been set up by North Staffordshire health authority to oversee the implementation of the findings of their inquiry into the death of Freda Latham.

South Birmingham Health Authority

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to reply to the letters of 25 November 1992 and 5 January about South Birmingham health authority.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received two letters from the hon. Member dated 25 November 1992 about South Birmingham district health authority, and I replied on 14 and 17 December respectively. I will be responding to the letter of 5 January 1993 very shortly.

West Midlands RHA

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the full remuneration paid each year since 1983 to the former chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The annual rates of remuneration paid to regional chairman since 1983 are as follows:

	£
To 31 July 1983	7,590
1 August 1983	8,122
1 January 1984	8,424
1 April 1984	8,626
1 November 1984	8,970
1 July 1985	9,651
1 March 1986	10,326
1 July 1986	10,749
1 April 1987	11,205
1 October 1987	11,259
1 April 1988	11,709
1 October 1988	11,868
1 April 1989	12,462
1 April 1990	18,921
1 January 1991	19,110
1 April 1991	20,545
1 December 1991	20,925

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Arts Councils

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proportion of the annual income received by the Arts Councils of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is spent on administration.

Mr. Brooke: Of its grant-in-aid in 1992-93 of £221·2 million, the Arts Council of Great Britain spends £7·97 million, or 3·6 per cent. on administration. It also funds the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils and the regional arts boards in England, all of which incur administrative expenditure; this, like that of ACGB, is subject to cash limits. For the funding system as a whole in 1992-93, administration accounts for £20·47 million, or 9·25 per cent., of the grant-in-aid, although these costs are partly offset by income RABs receive from other sources.

Sports Council

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proportion of the annual income received by the Sports Council is spent on administration.

Mr. Brooke: The forecast expenditure by the Sports Council on salaries and running costs in 1992-93 is £18 million. This represents approximately 34 per cent. of forecast income and 37 per cent. of the Government's grant-in-aid.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proportion of the annual income received by the Sports Council is spent on parliamentary lobbying.

Mr. Brooke: The Sports Council estimates that its expenditure over the last twelve months on parliamentary lobbying was £43,650, or less than one tenth of 1 per cent. of its current grant-in-aid.

Football Stadiums

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many jobs have been created in the construction industry as a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the Taylor report on football stadium safety.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is not available from Government sources.

Royal Collection

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) how many people are employed in the royal collection department of the royal household; and if he will list their grades and duties;

(2) if he will publish the work in progress on the inventory of the royal collection;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *540*, what items in the royal collection are the personal property of the sovereign; and whose consent is required for the sale or other disposal of items in the royal collection;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *540*, what items in the royal collection are located in the private residences of the sovereign.

Mr. Brooke: The Government have no funding or supervisory responsibility for the royal collection. The questions raised are matters for the Director of the Royal Collection, to whom the hon. Member may wish to write.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Chancellor (Legal Fees)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what cost benefit analysis he has made into the Exchequer contribution to the cost of the legal fees he incurred in relation to his former tenant.

Mr. Nelson: The basis on which this payment was made was set out in the answer which I gave to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) on 8 December, *Official Report*, column *571*. It was subsequently described in the memorandum to the PAC by the Comptroller and Auditor General and covered in oral evidence given by the accounting officer at the PAC hearing on 25 January. I have nothing further to add.

Social Security

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what considerations underlay his choice of the benefits to be included in the definition of cyclical social security in paragraph 2107 in the autumn statement, Cm 2096; and if he will provide ready reckoners of the effects of *(a)* the new control total by Department, as in table 2A.5 and *(b)* on the new control total by spending sector and on the other components of general Government expenditure, as in table 2A.4, of each increment of 100,000 on unemployment above the working assumptions of table 2D.1 of the autumn statement, Cm 2096.

Mr. Portillo: In defining the new control total the intention has been to include as many elements of public spending as possible to ensure that it is effective in restraining the trend in growth of public spending below the trend rate of growth of the economy as a whole. Only as much cyclical spending has been excluded from the NCT as is necessary to capture most of the cyclical variation in public expenditure.

Ready reckoners on the effects of an additional 100,000 unemployed are due to be published on 11 February in the Department of Social Security's departmental report.

Set-aside Land

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to adjust the tax regime on bio-fuels to encourage British farmers to grow the appropriate crops on set-aside land.

Sir John Cope: Under the EC mineral oils duties structure directive agreed last year, all substitutes for mineral oils are required to be subject to duty at the same rates as the oils themselves, although there is an optional provision under which member states can introduce a duty exemption for pilot projects. How this directive is implemented in the United Kingdom is a matter which my hon. Friend will consider in the run-up to the Budget. In view of this it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this stage.

The European Commission has also made a proposal on reduced rates of excise duty for biofuels but this has not yet been agreed. The Government are carrying out detailed analysis of the proposals.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining those steps which have been taken by his Department since 9 April 1992 specifically to assist the United Kingdom manufacturing industry; and what future action he intends to take to assist manufacturing industry.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* Specific measures outlined in the autumn statement included substantial help for manufacturing industry. Examples are:

a temporary increase in first-year capital allowances;
the abolition of the car tax;
the relaxation of the rules for private financing of public sector projects; and
additional ECGD cover to help exporters in certain important but risky markets.

There is evidence that businesses now recognise the opportunities created by the measures in the autumn statement, low inflation and lower interest rates, and the lower exchange rate. This is reflected in the CBI economic situation report for January, which shows business optimism at its highest level since April 1988.

Construction Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining those steps which have been taken by his Department since 9 April 1992 specifically to assist the United Kingdom construction industry; and what future action he intends to take to assist the construction industry.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The measures outlined in the autumn statement included substantial help for the construction industry:

assistance to the housing market, such as extra spending by the Housing Corporation;
local authorities allowed to spend 100 per cent. of all capital receipts realised between 12 November 1992 and the end of 1993;
priority given to investment and construction expenditure within public expenditure plans wherever possible;
over £1·2 billion allocated to the Jubilee Line Extension over next three years. The project will go ahead, subject to successful outcome of negotiations with the administrators of Canary Wharf;
the roads programme baseline was protected, allowing an increase in the volume of work, given lower construction prices;
relaxation of rules on private sector financing of public sector projects should encourage a wider range of joint ventures
additional £700 million of ECGD cover in 1992-93 and 1993-94 in important but risky markets will help construction projects run by United Kingdom companies abroad.

In conjunction with the other measures in the autumn statement to help industry in general, as well as low inflation, recent reductions in interest rates, and the lower exchange rate, this package should have a beneficial impact on construction.

Economic Policy Advisers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what period of time will be spent in an average month by his seven new advisers on economic policy; what remuneration package has been set for their work; and how often he expects to meet them in the average year.

Mr. Lamont *[holding answer 28 January 1993]:* The primary role of the panel of forecasters is to provide an

independent source of advice on Britain's economic prospects. The panel will produce a report three times a year. Meetings of the forecasting panel will be chaired by the chief economic adviser, and other Treasury officials will put the report together on the panel's behalf. I look forward to receiving the panel's reports.

The amount of time spent per month on this work by panel members will vary according to when and how often they produce forecasts independently. For those members who publish forecasts frequently the time required will be less than those who do not. At this stage it is not possible to estimate the time spent. Remuneration will be £125 plus expenses per meeting attended.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside Land

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total amount of money paid to farmers in settlement for set-aside in each of the last three years.

Mr. Curry: The total amount of set-aside payments to farmers in England and Wales in each of the last three years was:

	£
1990-91	15,533,000
1991-92	20,654,000
1992-93	[1]39,176,000

[1] Estimate.

Notes:

Payments in 1990-91 and 1991-92 were under the five year scheme.

Payments in 1992-93 were under the five year and one year set-aside schemes.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total acreage of farm land in England and Wales in set aside as of 18 January.

Mr. Curry: Around 91,000 hectares, 222,950 acres, of arable land were set aside under the five-year set-aside scheme on England and Wales as of 18 January 1993. Information on land set aside under the new arable area payments scheme will not be available until growers have to declare the area later this year.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for involving the fishing industry organisations in the process of decision making about the future of the industry.

Mr. Curry: It is the Department's policy formally to consult the fishing industry on matters affecting its future.

Abattoirs

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about small rural abattoirs; what he intends to do to promote their viability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Minister gave to a question from the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 2 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *223-24*. Many right hon. and hon. Members have written to me about small abattoirs since 2 December.

On the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Minister, the December Council of Agriculture Ministers agreed to increase the throughput limit for small slaughterhouses from 12 to 20 units per week until 31 December 1994. The Commission has been asked to review during 1993 the implications of the meat hygiene directives for small businesses. The Government will work closely with the Commission as it carries out this review.

No small business was forced to close on 1 January because it did not comply with the structural standards required by the fresh meat directive. The agriculture departments have issued time-limited licences to all businesses which have not completed the licensing process provided for in the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992. The arrangements for temporary derogations will ensure that no small premises is required to comply with the full structural requirements of the directive until the Commission has completed its review.

My right hon. Friend the Minister and I intend to look in detail at any recommendations from officials to refuse or revoke licences. We will not hesitate to take action where there are real hygiene problems, but we are not prepared to see small businesses closed as a result of over-zealous application of the regulations.

We issued further guidance on 30 November 1992 making it easier for local authorities to provide a cost-effective veterinary ante-mortem inspection service at small abattoirs. We are also consulting on proposals to set statutory limits on the amount local authorities can charge for the inspection service based on the reasonable cost of providing the inspection service required by the new regulations. We remain concerned about some of the veterinary costs being quoted. We consider that work carried out on a guaranteed contract basis should be charged at a lower hourly rate than ad hoc visits. We shall continue to monitor the level of inspection costs very closely.

Green Pound

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how far the green pound has depreciated against the ecu since sterling left the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Curry: The answer is 15·3 per cent.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Ausin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether vessels owned abroad will be eligible for finance from his decommissioning fund.

Mr. Curry: The scheme will be confined to fishing vessels registered and licensed in this country. Rules on ownership will have to respect Community law.

Beef

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what reasons the passport system for cattle was introduced; and what is the estimated cost to the farming industry.

Mr. Curry: It is a requirement of the EC rules that cattle on which beef special premium is claimed must be accompanied by an administrative document showing the animal's premium status. The system of cattle identification documents which we are introducing is designed to meet this requirement. Since the industry will not have to pay for the issue of cattle identification documents the cost to the industry will be minimal.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will instruct his Department to make the advance payment of the beef special premium scheme within 28 days of application.

Mr. Curry: No. EC rules require that no advance payment is made on this scheme until after 1 November in the year of claim.

KPMG Management Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

Mr. Gummer: No such contracts have been awarded by my core-Department. The appointment of consultants by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food agencies is a matter delegated to chief executives. The chief executives of ADAS and the Central Science Laboratory advise me, however, that they made use of KPMG in 1992 and will write to the hon. Member with details.

Letter from P. Stanley to Ms. Marjorie Mowlam, dated 21 January 1993:

The contracts awarded to KPMG Management Consultants by the Central Science Laboratory over the past 12 months are as follows:

(1) Appraisal of laboratory information management systems

(2) Pay and Grading: Initial consideration of options

(3) Human resource database: User requirement definition

Letter from J. Walsh to Ms. Marjorie Mowlam, dated 29 January 1993:

I am responding on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to your Parliamentary Question regarding contracts awarded by his Department to KPMG Management Consultants over the past 12 months.

The following consultancy services were commissioned from KPMG by ADAS over that period:

Software support for the Toolbox runtime package.
UNIX system configuration.
A review of ADAS networking,

Food Irradiation

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state his policy towards the irradiation of food.

Mr. Soames: The Government have accepted the advice of expert bodies, including the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, that food irradiation is a safe and effective preservation process which can play a valuable role in enhancing food safety and extending consumer choice.

Accordingly, and taking account also of further advice from an independent scientific committee in the United Kingdom, the Government introduced the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1990 which lay down detailed licensing controls for the application of the process.

It is the policy of the Government to permit the irradiation of the foods listed in the regulations under the strict controls provided and to reach agreement on proposals from the EC Commission for a control measure covering the whole of the European Community.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence from which countries his Department is purchasing the Mk IV and Mk V bus for the Trident system.

Mr. Aitken: The United Kingdom is purchasing the bus, which forms part of the Trident D5 missile, from the United States.

Contracts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts his Department has with *(a)* Submarine Dismantlers Ltd. and *(b)* ENSC Ltd.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has no record of any contracts with either of these companies.

Nuclear Facilities

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his Department's outstanding liabilities for future decommissioning of nuclear facilities at *(a)* Calder hall, *(b)* Chapelcross and *(c)* Capenhurst.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. is responsible for assesssing the costs of decommissioning facilities at its sites. My Department's share of these costs is either subsumed in prices paid on supply contracts or is met when the costs are actually incurred, which in most cases will not be for some considerable time. It is not possible accurately to determine the cost of these liabilities as they will depend on a number of factors including future usage of the facilities by other customers.

Procurement Budget

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of his Department's procurement budget was spent in the United Kingdom for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The percentage of defence equipment expenditure spent with British companies in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available is estimated to be:

Year	*Per cent.*
1981-82	96
1982-83	96
1983-84	93
1984-85	93
1985-86	90
1986-87	91
1987-89	92

Year	Per cent.
1989-90	92
1990-91	90

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for disposal of nuclear submarines of the decisions of the meeting of the London dumping convention held in November 1992.

Mr. Aitken: I am not aware that there were any implications affecting disposal of our nuclear submarines. Our policy remains that when nuclear-powered submarines have been decommissioned the hulls should be stored afloat at a suitable berth, pending eventual disposal. This policy is kept under review.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department has commissioned with commercial organisations regarding the disposal of nuclear submarines; and with which organisations these contracts were placed.

Mr. Aitken: The details of studies on the disposal of nuclear submarines undertaken by commercial organisations on MOD's behalf since 1986 are as follows:

Year and company	Study
1986	
National Radiological Protection Board	Assessment of radiological impact of land disposal of radioactive wastes from a decommissioned nuclear submarine.
1986	
Rolls-Royce and Associates	Services in support of project manager nuclear submarine disposal.
1987	
National Radiological Protection Board	Assessment of radiological impact of land and sea disposal of radioactive wastes from a decommissioned nuclear submarine.
1988	
Taywood Engineering Ltd.	Feasibility of decommissioning submarine components by concrete encasement.
1988	
Osel Ulvertech Ltd.	Design and development of a recoverable underwater instrumental package.
1988	
Taywood Engineering Ltd.	Concrete encasement of submarine reactor compartments.
1988	
Electrowatt Engineering Services (UK) Ltd.	Environmental assessment document for the disposal of HMS Dreadnought.
1988	
British Maritime Technology	HMS Dreadnought—support contract.
1988	
Jet Research Centre	Linear cutting charge procurement.
1992	
Babcock Thorn Ltd.	Design study into the safe storage of submarine reactor compartments.

Note: Information is not available on any studies undertaken before 1986.

Herald Reactor

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's outstanding liability for decommissioning of the Herald reactor at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Herald reactor at AWE Aldermaston is in the initial stages of decommissioning in accordance with the International Atomic Energy Authority's guidelines. Defuelling has been completed. It is expected that that full decommissioning will take some considerable time to complete.

Parachute Training

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures exist for the reporting, monitoring and investigation of falls of, and accidents sustained by, service personnel undergoing parachute training.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A record of all military training descents is kept, including a note of all abnormalities and injuries. Unusual incidents are subject to further investigation and action as appropriate. Incidents resulting in death or serious injury are governed by regulations which set out the full investigative procedure to be taken, up to and including boards of inquiry.

Iraq

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the threat to allied aircraft from *(a)* Iraqi aircraft and *(b)* Iraqi surface-to-air missile installations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The recent coalition air attacks have seriously degraded the Iraqi ground-based air defence system in the south, and since 27 December the Iraqi air force has lost a number of its most sophisticated fighters in air-to-air engagements with coalition aircraft. As a result coalition aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone can do so in greater safety. We are continuing closely to monitor the potential threat posed to coalition aircraft from the Iraqi air defences.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the number of Iraqi *(a)* military personnel and *(b)* citizens who were killed or were injured and required hospital treatment as a result of the recent bombing raids on Iraq.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We do not have definitive casualty figures. Figures released by the Iraqi authorities indicate that 27 people died and eight were injured in the coalition military action on 13, 17 and 18 January. From the information available it is not possible to separate these figures into military civilian totals.

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *202*, what measures have been taken by his Department in fulfilment of obligations under article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government's policy continues to be to work for secure defence at the lowest possible level of armaments, both conventional and nuclear. To that end, we announced in 1991 substantial reductions in our nuclear weapons holdings including the giving up of the Lance missile and nuclear artillery roles; the reduction of the nuclear capable RAF squadrons from 11 to eight; the reduction of our WE177 bomb stockpile by more than half; and, in 1992, the elimination of our maritime sub-strategic capability. We are also party to, and are implementing, the conventional forces in Europe treaty and earlier this month we signed the chemical weapons convention.

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 January, *Official Report*, columns *645-46*, on expenditure on the refit of the royal yacht Britannia, if he will give a breakdown of the category listed as "other".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The category listed as "other" contained the following elements:

Cold, cool and provision rooms
Galley and laundry
Crew accommodation
Navigation and communications
Lobbies and passageways
Air conditioning and ventilation plant and systems
Asbestos removals in areas other than royal apartments
Anchors, cable and rigging
Opening and closing shipping routes
Docking and undocking the ship
Safety, security and other general activities
Ladders and brows
Jack and ensign staffs and upper deck lockers
Davits derricks and booms
Awnings and stanchions
Fixed eyeplates and miscellaneous lifting appliances
Auxiliary boiler and domestic steam system
Steering gear
Stabilisers
Winches
Lubrication oil systems and coolers
Feed systems and pumps
Fuel filling, storage and transfer systems including pumps
Fresh water system
Lifts
General fire protection
Rewiring outside royal apartments
Diesel and steam generators and associated switchboards
Conversion machinery
Miscellaneous update of equipment and systems.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the ranks and numbers serving within each rank on the Royal yacht Britannia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current personnel complement of Her Majesty's yacht Britannia is as follows:

	Number
Officers	
Rear admiral	1
Commander	4
Lieutenant commander	8
Lieutenant	6
Sub lieutenant	1
Total officers	20
Ratings	
Warrant officer	2
Charge chief petty officer	4
Chief petty officer	22
Sergeant	1
Petty officer	26
Corporal	1
Leading hand	60
Marine	7
Able rate	106
Total ratings	229

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the cost of the Royal yacht Britannia includes the cost of the support vessels which accompany her.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No, nor is it possible to identify such support element costs without incurring disproportionate cost.

Royal Flight

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 January, *Official Report*, column *646*, on flights by the royal flight in 1991, how many of the flights were made by members of the royal family and how many by Ministers; and how many flights undertaken by members of the royal family were for public duties.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of the 1,200 passenger-carrying flights made by the Queen's Flight in 1991, 1,149 were for members of the royal family and 71 were for other entitled passengers such as the Prime Minister and other Government Ministers. Her Majesty the Queen, Her Majesty the Queen Mother, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh and their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales are entitled to use the Queen's Flight on all occasions, and we do not therefore maintain records which indicate the purpose of journeys undertaken by them. Other members of the royal family are entitled to use the Queen's Flight only when travelling in pursuance of their royal functions.

RAF Brawdy

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 22 January, *Official Report*, column *464*, what account he took of the relative numbers of flying days lost at RAF Valley, RAF Chivenor and RAF Brawdy on reaching his decision to end flying training at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret to say that due to an administrative error in my Department the answer given to the hon. Member on 22 January was incorrect. The figures for RAF Brawdy and RAF Valley were transposed and the correct figures for days lost are shown below:

Per cent.

	RAF Brawdy	RAF Valley	RAF Chivenor
1987	26·5	12·7	8·7
1988	20·8	8·8	5·6
1989	16·5	8·9	4·1
1990	16·8	7·1	6·9
1991	24·0	10·0	6·9

The relative numbers of flying days lost at the above stations were a contributory, but not determining factor in reaching our decision to end flying training at RAF Brawdy.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many representations he has received on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield since November 1992; and how many came from abroad.

Mr. Eggar: Since the beginning of November 1992, my Department has received some 70 letters about the thermal oxide reprocessing plant constructed by British Nuclear Fuels plc at Sellafield. Two of these letters came from abroad.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has evaluated the report, "Fuel Reprocessing at Thorp" by Dr. Frans Berkhout, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has received a number of reports on Thorp, including the one referred to by the hon. Member, and these are being considered.

Concessionary Fuel

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he was consulted by British Coal over its decision to reduce by about 20 per cent. anthracite tonnage supplied to mining pensioners and widows in receipt of concessionary fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The administration of concessionary fuel agreements is a matter for British Coal. The corporation will be writing to the hon. Member on the issue raised.

Oil and Gas Exploration

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he hopes to announce the names of the successful applicants who have been granted licences in respect of the 14th round of coastal oil and gas exploration.

Mr. Eggar: An announcement on awards of licences offered in the 14th offshore licensing round is expected to be made in May 1993.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by *(a)* location and *(b)* name of applicant, the applications his Department has received in respect of the 14th round of coastal oil and gas exploration.

Mr. Eggar: Details of applications received in all offshore oil and gas licensing rounds are regarded as commercially confidential. The names of successful applicants will be announced.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names of the organisations he consulted before making his final decision on granting licences in respect of the 14th round of coastal oil and gas explorations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No decisions have yet been made on granting licences in respect of the 14th round of offshore licensing. Although a number of statutory and non-statutory bodies are consulted regarding their interests before blocks are announced to be available for licensing, any decision on the award of licences is a matter of ministerial discretion, based on the published criteria for awards.

GATT

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to propose amendments to the proposals to establish a multi-lateral trade organisation set out in the draft final act of the Uruguay round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade to secure *(a)* explicit commitments to the protection of the environment and incomes of the poor in third-world countries and *(b)* revisions to the disputes procedures enabling increased accountability of panel members.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 11 January, *Official Report*, col *567*.

British Coal

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of each report by Boyds concerning British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: Boyds has produced two reports concerning British Coal and is currently working on a third.

The 1992 report into productivity improvements and cost reductions at selected collieries has not been placed in the Library. It was commissioned on a confidential basis and contains detailed information which is commercially confidential. However, a copy was provided to the Trade and Industry Select Committee on a confidential basis.

A copy of the report published on 22 January on the viability of the 21 pits proposed for closure by British Coal has been placed in the Library.

Boyds is currently undertaking a review on whether British Coal's criteria for the closure of the 10 pits were met in relation to all or any of them. I have proposed to British Coal and the unions that the report be published and, if it is, it will of course be placed in the Library.

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give *(a)* the terms of reference and *(b)* the full cost of each contract entered into by his Department with Boyds in connection with the coal industry, for the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: My Department and the former Department of Energy have engaged the John T. Boyd Company to undertake three studies in connection with the coal industry. The terms of reference of the first study provide for Boyds to give advice on the technical issues which need to be taken into account when considering the future privatisation of the industry. In respect of the other two studies I refer to the reply my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade gave to my hon. Friend

the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 20 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *433* and to my reply to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 22 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *498*. On grounds of commercial confidentiality, the cost of individual contracts is not released.

International Co-operation and Development

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what policy initiatives he is planning to undertake in the next six months to promote international co-operation and development; what meetings he is planning to attend; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I and my ministerial colleagues and officials play a full part in all the relevant international bodies such as GATT, OECD and UNCTAD, including in this case participation in the restructuring of the organisation following UNCTAD VIII. We work in these bodies both through the European Community and in our own right. In the coming months my colleagues and I will make a number of overseas visits to strengthen the United Kingdom's trading links.

General Insurance Intermediaries

Mr. Conway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the regulation of general insurance intermediaries.

Mr. Heseltine: I have received a copy of the report of the code monitoring committee that, under the chairmanship of Sir Kenneth Clucas, has been monitoring the operation of the Association of British Insurers code of practice for the selling of general insurance. I am grateful to Sir Kenneth and his committee for their work. I shall be discussing the report with the Association of British Insurers.

I am placing a copy of the report in the Library of the House.

Mining Industry

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give a list of the mining jobs lost in each constituency and the percentage change in unemployment for each such constituency since June 1987.

Mr. Eggar: The information is given in the following table:

Constituency	*Registered unemployed*		*Change*	*Jobs lost through colliery closures since June 1987*
	June 1987	*December 1992*	*Per cent.*	
Dover	3,868	4,827	24·8	794
Mid Staffordshire	3,673	3,791	3·2	832
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3,682	3,706	0·7	557
North Warwickshire	4,740	4,849	2·3	1,984
Coventry North West	4,510	4,475	−0·8	
Bolsover	5,251	4,436	−15·5	861
North East Derbyshire	4,982	4,624	−7·2	129
South Derbyshire	3,907	3,811	−2·5	529
Bosworth	2,998	3,471	15·8	918
North West Leicestershire	3,902	3,520	−9·8	
Ashfield	4,900	4,863	−0·8	457
Bassetlaw	5,359	4,509	−16·0	927
Gedling	3,544	3,943	11·3	591
Mansfield	5,200	4,681	−10·0	1,686
Sherwood	4,946	4,475	−9·5	1,514
Barnsley Central	5,658	4,295	−24·1	215
Barnsley East	5,353	3,824	−28·6	926
Barnsley West and Penistone	5,479	3,909	−28·7	480
Doncaster North	7,967	6,371	−20·0	1,087
Rother Valley	5,698	4,751	−16·6	1,042
Wentworth	6,130	4,655	−24·1	497
Elmet	3,150	3,051	−3·1	309
Selby	3,195	3,120	−2·3	
Hemsworth	5,329	4,102	−23·0	1,298
Pontefract and Castleford	5,711	4,483	−21·5	550
Wakefield	4,835	4,260	−11·9	1,276
Eccles	5,045	4,135	−18·0	436
Leigh	5,510	4,453	−19·2	534
Makerfield	5,722	4,158	−27·3	
St. Helens South	7,088	5,339	−24·7	310
Easington	5,703	3,761	−34·1	1,487
Wansbeck	5,370	4,148	−22·8	304
Llanelli	4,146	3,328	−19·7	269
Blaenau Gwent	4,799	3,473	−27·6	756
Islwyn	3,597	2,403	−33·2	851
Caerphilly	4,945	4,453	−9·9	310
Cynon Valley	3,919	3,690	−5·8	591
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	4,598	4,221	−8·2	1,101
Gower	3,004	2,573	−14·3	595
Neath	3,649	2,771	−24·1	599
Clackmannan	4,406	3,019	−31·5	112
Kirkcaldy	4,781	3,745	−21·7	647
Midlothian	4,336	3,414	−21·3	596

Constituency	Registered unemployed		Change	Jobs lost through colliery closures since June 1987
	June 1987	December 1992	Per cent.	
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	6,288	4,583	−27·1	403
Perth and Kinross	3,715	2,791	−24·9	422

Sources: Employment data—Department of Employment NOMIS database.
Job losses due to colliery closures—British Coal.

Notes:

1. The constituencies listed are those where closures of coal mines have been identified. Colliery employees would not necessarily have resided in the same constituency.
2. The number of jobs lost through colliery closures may not reflect jobs lost in the run-down prior to closure.
3. The figures do not include reductions in employment at coal mines which remain open.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the level of manufacturing output as a percentage of gross national product in each member country of the European Community in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The figures requested are shown in the following table.

Manufacturing output as a percentage of GNP

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Denmark	17·0	17·1	17·4	18·0	17·8	17·5	16·9	16·8	16·4	[1]—
France	23·1	22·6	22·6	22·0	22·1	22·2	21·5	21·4	21·3	21·1
Germany	31·8	31·6	31·3	31·0	31·8	32·1	31·3	31·1	31·0	[1]—
Greece	17·1	16·1	16·2	16·1	16·4	16·7	15·7	15·4	15·5	[1]—
Italy	26·8	26·0	24·8	24·5	24·3	23·6	23·1	23·4	[1]—	[1]—
Netherlands	17·0	17·6	17·7	18·2	18·0	19·5	19·0	20·0	[1]—	[1]—
Portugal	32·7	31·3	31·0	32·7	32·2	30·3	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Spain	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	28·0	26·8	25·8	28·3	[1]—	[1]—
United Kingdom	21·4	21·1	20·3	20·4	20·6	20·7	19·8	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Belgium	22·8	23·8	23·8	23·5	23·9	23·5	23·1	23·4	23·5	[1]—

[1] Data not available.

Notes:
Figures for Luxembourg and Ireland are not available.
Figures calculated on a market prices basis.
Manufacturing industry is defined as division 3 of the International Standard Industrial Classifications.

Source: OECD International Structure Statistics, International Accounts.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the value of exports of manufactured goods from each member country of the European Community in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The figures requested are shown in the following table.

Exports of manufactures (US$ billion) at current prices

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Denmark	8·7	9·2	9·3	10·0	12·9	15·7	16·8	17·6	22·4	22·8
Greece	2·2	2·3	2·5	2·4	3·2	3·8	3·3	4·1	4·4	4·6
Ireland	4·9	5·3	6·0	6·6	8·1	10·2	12·2	13·9	16·4	16·9
Portugal	3·0	3·3	3·8	4·2	5·6	7·2	8·2	9·7	13·0	13·2
Spain	14·9	14·2	16·7	17·5	20·1	24·6	29·7	33·2	42·6	46·2
United Kingdom	65·2	60·7	62·1	68·0	80·0	100·3	117·9	124·9	150·3	152·0
France	70·0	68·7	70·5	73·7	92·2	111·7	126·1	134·6	169·6	172·5
Germany	152·6	146·5	148·6	161·6	217·3	264·5	293·2	309·6	360·8	352·7
Italy	61·5	62·3	63·1	67·8	86·1	104·0	115·8	127·2	151·7	150·4
Netherlands	32·9	33·2	33·8	35·5	46·8	56·9	63·6	65·5	84·0	84·5
Belgium/ Luxembourg	37·4	37·6	37·2	39·8	52·0	64·1	73·8	80·4	94·5	93·1

Note: Manufactures are defined in terms of sections 5 to 8 of the Standard International Trade Classification.

Source: OECD series A and C, national sources converted into United States dollars using annual average exchange rates.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the current level of per capita productivity in the manufacturing industry in each member country of the European Community.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The figures requested are shown in the table.

Per capita productivity in the manufacturing industry (US dollars)

	1989
Denmark	4,343
France	4,267
Germany	6,945

	1989
Greece	[1]778
Italy	2,191
Netherlands	2,783
Portugal	[2]742
Spain	1,698
United Kingdom	[3]3,929
Belgium	3,473

[1] Latest year 1987.
[2] Latest year 1986.
[3] Latest year 1988.

Notes:
Manufacturing is defined in terms of division 3 of the International Standard Industrial Classification.
Figures for Luxembourg and Ireland are not available.
Total resident population used as denominator.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the level of imports of manufactured goods in terms of percentage of total domestic expenditure in each member country of the European Community in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 January 1993]:* The figures requested are shown in the table.

Imports of manufactures as a percentage of total domestic expenditure

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Belgium/ Luxembourg	35·0	35·3	37·6	39·8	41·8	42·8	42·5	42·2	42·2	45·3	43·6
Denmark	17·1	17·6	18·1	18·3	20·3	20·9	20·4	18·6	18·2	18·9	19·2
France	11·4	11·3	11·9	11·8	12·4	12·8	12·5	13·1	14·1	15·1	15·0
Germany	12·8	13·2	13·3	13·7	14·9	15·7	15·2	15·2	16·0	17·6	18·1
Greece	14·7	13·0	12·8	13·5	14·9	14·8	16·2	16·2	15·1	19·4	19·1
Italy	10·3	9·5	9·2	8·5	9·4	10·1	9·7	10·1	10·7	11·3	10·7
Ireland	34·4	33·9	32·1	33·2	37·9	37·9	33·9	35·9	39·4	43·6	41·2
Netherlands	24·8	25·3	24·9	26·0	29·0	31·5	30·9	30·6	32·2	34·7	34·5
Portugal	17·4	17·7	18·2	18·3	17·7	17·6	19·8	24·6	28·6	28·0	28·6
Spain	6·0	6·3	6·8	7·1	7·5	8·0	9·4	10·9	12·1	12·8	12·3
United Kingdom	13·8	13·0	13·6	14·9	16·4	16·8	16·4	16·8	17·3	18·0	17·6

Notes:
Manufactured goods are defined in terms of divisions 5 to 8 of the Standard International Trade Classifications.
Imports converted from United States dollars to local currency using annual average exchange rates.

Source: OECD series C and Annual National Accounts Vol. I.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Allowances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what are the national average clearance times for *(a)* new claims, *(b)* top-up claims and *(c)* requests for review of disability living allowance for each month since September 1992; and if he will break down the figures by disability benefit centre;

(2) if he will list the number of appeals against a disability living allowance and attendance allowance decision broken down by outcome of appeal heard by the new disability appeal tribunals, and the number and percentage of appeals waiting to be heard;

(3) in how many cases a person has lost either a care or mobility component of the disability living allowance following a review of the other component;

(4) if he will provide details of in which parts of the Benefits Agency the 800 additional staff taken on to help clear the backlog of disability living allowance and attendance allowance cases were previously employed; what training on disability living allowance and attendance allowance they received, and the number and percentage that had to be relocated; and if he will make a statement on the Benefits Agency's future plans with regard to the employment of these additional staff to work on disability living allowance and attendance allowance;

(5) what number and percentage of *(a)* new claims and (b) top-up claims for disability living allowance claims to date have (i) resulted in an award, (ii) been rejected, broken down by whether (1) further evidence was requested or (2) the claim was decided solely on the statement of disability evidence provided by the claimant;

(6) how many staff, divided into full and part-time and permanent and temporary, have been employed by his Department at each disability benefit centre in each month since the beginning of February 1992;

(7) for what number and percentage of claims for disability living allowance and attendance allowance the adjudicating officer required further evidence; and if he will list the number and percentage requiring *(a)* an examining medical practitioner report, *(b)* evidence other than an examining medical practitioner report and *(c)* both;

(8) how many requests for reviews of disability living allowance and attendance allowance have been received by his Department since the introduction of self-assessment; and what number and percentage of these *(a)* resulted in an increase in the amount of benefit payable, *(b)* resulted in an orginal award being maintained, *(c)* resulted in a reduction in benefit and *(d)* remain outstanding;

(9) how many claims for the disability living allowance and attendance allowance have been received by the Department to date in total and in each month since the beginning of February 1992; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* the number and percentage of these that resulted in an award, *(b)* the number and percentage of these that were refused broken down by grounds for refusal *(c)* the number and percentage of these that required further evidence broken down by type of evidence and *(d)* the number and percentage of these that are awaiting a decision; and if these can be broken down by the totals for the country as a whole and by each of the regions covered by the 10 disability benefit centres.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 28 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA). I will deal with each of your points in turn.

Number of claims made and decided

You asked for the number of new claims and "top-up" claims for DLA together with the number and percentage of awards and refusals, including reasons for refusal. Annex 1 shows a breakdown of this information together with details of decisions based upon information provided on the claim form, medical examinations and other forms of evidence.

A further breakdown showing the complete picture of the outcome of claims within each of the DBC's from May 1992 to date for AA claims is shown at Annex 2 and Annex 3 for DLA claims from February 1992 to date. The first half of each Annex shows the actual numbers and the remainder reflects the percentages.

National average clearance times

Since the launch of DLA in February 1992 the performance to date has shown a 37 per cent. clearance rate against the primary target of 30 days. Performance has been improving steadily over recent months and the latest performance for the month of December shows 55 per cent of claims cleared within 30 days. The table at Annex 4 shows the clearance times for each Disability Benefit Centre (DBC) between February and December inclusive for new claims and those made under the special rules, for both the primary target (60 per cent. in 30 days for normal; 80 per cent. for special rules) and the secondary target (95 per cent. in 55 days for normal; 90 per cent. in 15 for special). The clearance of top-up claims is shown at Annex 5.

Reviews of decisions on DLA

You have asked how many requests for review of DLA and AA claims have been received. To date just under 56,000 requests for DLA reviews have been received whilst in the case of AA around 92,000 have been received. At the end of December 47,000 DLA reviews were outstanding and 30,000 AA reviews.

I should explain that figures are not routinely gathered to show instances whereby a claimant loses either a care or mobility element following a review of the other component. However, these occurrences are not thought to be significant, as protection exists within the Regulations so that the Adjudication Officer need not consider the other component to that which he is reviewing. Annex 6 shows details of the number and percentage of reviews that have resulted in *(a)* an increase, *(b)* an award maintained and *(c)* reduction in benefit.

Number of appeals against a DLA and AA decision

The number of appeals received by the AA Unit between 6 April 1992 and 31 December 1992 is 782. This figure includes both Disability Appeal Tribunal cases as well as Social Security Appeal Tribunal cases. Of these, 372 are still awaiting submission to the Independent Tribunal Service. For DLA the number of appeals registered by the end of December 1992 was 2,375. 246 have so far been cleared and 2,129 remain outstanding.

Staffing

You asked how many staff, divided into full-time, part-time, permanent and temporary have been employed at each of the DBC's since the beginning of February 1992. I presume you are referring to those staff employed on DLA and AA65+ operations within the Centres. This information is shown in Annex 7 attached.

The figures show a steady increase in the manpower deployed on the new benefits. Across the DBCs and Fylde Units, this increase amounts to around 800 additional staff. Approximately half of this total were redeployed from within the Agency, with just over 300 from the District Office network around the country and almost 100 from other operations within the Fylde Directorate. The remaining 400 are temporary staff recruited to assist in the clearance of the backlogs of cases which existed in the months surrounding the benefits' launch.

I am of course conscious of the need to ensure that the valuable support these additional resources have provided is not removed too early. We are constantly monitoring this situation and reviewing staff needs therefore on an ongoing basis.

You also asked about the training which these staff received. In most areas extra staff were taken on to deal with specific areas of work. In the main, training was therefore specifically designed to meet the needs of the individual circumstances which prevailed, often covering specific tasks. Formal computer system and adjudication training courses were arranged as appropriate.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

The information has been placed in the Library.

Samuel Skinnard

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Mrs. J. Skinnard of 29 Bowers Park drive, Woolwell, Plymouth PL6 7SH, will know the outcome of her appeal against the decision to refuse disability living allowance for her son, Samuel Skinnard.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 28 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when Mrs. J. Skinnard will know the outcome of her appeal against the decision to refuse Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for her son, Samuel.

As Mrs. Skinnard's letter of appeal was received within three months of the original decision, the claim fell to be reviewed under the new DLA adjudication procedures.

I can confirm that a review decision was given on 5 January 1993 and Mrs. Skinnard has now been notified of the outcome. I have replied to you separately in greater detail about the case.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Rosaleen Foster

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the consequences for his Department of the recent House of Lords judgment in the case of Rosaleen Foster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The judgment given in the House of Lords on 28 January in this case confirmed that the regulations under which the severe disability premium had been awarded in income support housing benefit and community charge benefit were validly made.

The Government have always intended that the severe disability premium should provide extra help to those particularly vulnerable severely disabled people who live independently of their families, and do not have anyone caring for them who receives invalid care allowance. The decision has put beyond doubt that the law enables Secretary of State to make such conditions. I am pleased that this matter has now been finally resolved, and I continue to believe that the SDP is an effective way of helping those severely disabled people who live independently and who are, therefore, most likely to have to rely on bought-in care.

Departmental Accounts

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he is taking to produce the accounts of his Department in a form which is acceptable to the Comptroller and Auditor General; on how many occasions the accounts of his Department have been subject to a qualified audit report; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The appropriation account recording expenditure of income support, family benefits and pension and disability benefits has been qualified on each occasion by the Comptroller and Auditor General for the years 1981-82 to 1991-92. There were a number of factors which caused the account to be qualified over the period. The main one, relating to the use of issues and encashment data, has not been a factor since 1989-90

The 1991-92 account was subject to a qualified audit report due to errors in the assessment and recording of payments of income support and inaccuracies in the awards of family credit. Action is in hand seeking to improve performance in these areas.

The reformed housing benefit scheme came into effect in 1982 and since that time the housing benefit appropriation account has been qualified by the Comptroller and Auditor General on three occasions; 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1991-92. To improve the Department's performance tighter subsidy arrangements have been introduced.

Since 1981-82 the administration and miscellaneous services account has been qualified on four occasions; 1981-82, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1986-87; the last occasion on which the account was subject to a qualified audit report from the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Claimants' Files, Liverpool

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many files relating to claims for social security benefits have been destroyed in each year since 1985 at the *(a)* Huyton, *(b)* Edge Hill, *(c)* Breckfield and *(d)* Childwell Valley social security offices in Liverpool.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Ms. Jane Kennedy, dated 28 January 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many files relating to claims for social security benefits have been destroyed in each year since 1985 at the *(a)* Huyton, *(b)* Edge Hill, *(c)* Breckfield and *(d)* Childwall Valley social security offices in Liverpool.

The information you requested is not available as offices do not record either the details of the numbers of records destroyed over any particular period or the names of the customers concerned. I have outlined below the normal practice for destruction of documents in Income Support and Contributory Benefit records.

The records of customers in receipt of Income Support are kept intact as long as they receive benefit. Only when a customer's benefit ceases and all outstanding action has been completed will clerical records be transferred to the dormant file. If the records are dormant for 18 months, they are destroyed but only if there is no ongoing activity such as an outstanding appeal or overpayment.

Contributory Benefit files are normally destroyed 18 months after death or 18 months after the final payment of benefit. However, from 1987 there has been an embargo on the destruction of any files relating to claims for Contributory Benefits. Such records are called General Benefit Units (GBUs).

In 1986 a national "one off" exercise allowed the destruction of all GBUs which had been inactive, (i.e. not the subject of claims or change of circumstances) for 5 years or more with certain exceptions.

If there is a particular case that is causing you concern please let me know the details and I will be happy to look into it for you.

A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 217**

SESSION 1992–93

18th January, 1993—29th January, 1993

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland' and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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